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Prudence and Controversy: The New York Public Library Responds to Post-War Anticommunist Pressures

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Abstract

As the New York Public Library entered the post-war era in the late 1940s, its operations fell under the zealous scrutiny of self-styled ‘redhunters’ intent upon rooting out library materials and staffers deemed un-American and politically subversive. The high point of attacks upon the New York Public Library came during the years 1947-1954, a period that witnessed the Soviet atomic bomb, the Berlin airlift, and the Korean War. This article charts the narrow and carefully wrought trail blazed by the library’s leadership during that period. Through a reading of materials in the library archives, we see how political pressures were perceived and handled by library management and staff. We witness remarkable examples of brave defense of intellectual freedom alongside episodes of prudent equivocation. At the heart of the library’s situation stood the contradictions between the principled commitments of individual library leaders and the practical political considerations underlying the library’s viability. As a general rule, the New York Public Library did not hesitate to acquire materials considered subversive by pressure groups, but the library frequently struck a course that sought to avoid controversy when possible.

Introduction

In the spring of 1953, with the Korean War coming to an indecisive conclusion and the witch hunt of the McCarthy hearings ever present on the horizon, John Mackenzie Cory, the Chief of the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library, made a remarkable speech before a meeting of the Library Public Relations Council in New York. In that speech, Cory did something unusual for a librarian. He declared himself an ‘extremist’. Specifically, he called himself ‘an extremist against any form of censorship’ who ‘often would like to go even beyond the Library Bill of Rights’ because ‘yielding to any pressure—even pressure to suppress a book that is abhorrent to you—creates problems which may make it difficult not to submit to other pressures’.¹

Cory’s ‘extremism’ had deep and broad roots. He was among the librarians who had earlier that year drafted the American Library Association’s ‘Freedom to Read’ statement, a seminal document that addressed the issue of censorship in libraries. Cory was deeply committed to defending intellectual freedom, and he was not afraid to make that defense in public. However, as an employee of the New York Public Library, Cory was, like other staff members of that complex institution, limited in the ways that he could respond to the external pressures put on the library by anticommunists. As will be examined here, the strategies employed by Cory and other New York Public Library employees to meet the pressures of anticommunism on their institution in the 1940s and 1950s was a complex and sometimes contradictory mix of direct opposition, quiet diplomacy, occasional silence, and even acquiescence.²

An examination of internal documents in the NYPL archives from 1945 to 1955 reveals a picture of an institution under attack.³ Employees found themselves embroiled in battles with self-proclaimed ‘100% loyal Americans’ eager to remove materials they deemed subversive. Acquisition policies and procedures were frequently targeted, as can be seen in a 1951 letter from an ‘Angry American’ complaining about the lack of ‘pro-American’ books in the collection and warning the librarians:

Some day you might be on a witness stand of the House Un-American Activities [Committee] and will have to do plenty of explaining to those who love our country. I can’t wait to see you pseudo-Americans squirm in a chair. Are you on the Moscow payroll? Maybe your board of directors can answer this?⁴

As is evident from this letter, the attacks sometimes extended to the librarians themselves. Librarians with politically suspicious past or present connections might be tarred with the brush of disloyalty or naiveté, as will be seen in the case of Joshua Bloch.

John Mackenzie Cory’s self-attributed ‘extremism’ in the defense of free speech remains a footnote in the history of American libraries. Although there is a growing literature describing how libraries and librarians fared during the peak years of American anticommunism (1947-1954), the NYPL has not figured large in those narratives.⁵ Scholarly attention has more frequently been directed toward

the libraries and librarians that were flashpoints for controversy. As will be discussed, the NYPL was occasionally the target of anticommunist pressure groups and lone critics, some of whom publicized their complaints. This essay will examine those attacks and how the library responded (ignoring the attack, mounting a public defense, or routing it quietly). More elusive stories from the library's past, though, will also be detailed here, ones in which the library took an action that can be best read as a precautionary response to a potential controversy. Connections will be drawn between larger historical events and forces in this era and actions in which the library administration seemed to be making prudent managerial decisions that would keep the library out of the line of fire; uncovering these stories requires sifting through the library's internal documents and its hidden history.

The New York Public Library and the Post-War Era

Any discussion of the NYPL must first note the unique structure of the institution. Since 1901, the NYPL had consisted of two distinct administrative units: a privately endowed Reference Department that oversaw the research library, which beginning in 1911 was housed in the 'central building' at Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, and a publicly supported Circulation Department that managed a network of branch libraries as well as a circulating collection housed in a section of the central building. The chiefs of the two departments reported to the director of the library, who in turn reported to a board of trustees. In 1946, the NYPL structure included the research library and sixty-three branch libraries located in the boroughs of Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx (the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn each had their own independent library systems funded by the New York municipal government).⁶ By 1956, the branch library system had expanded to include eighty branches and sub-branches and three bookmobiles.⁷

The end of the Second World War brought with it an increased number of visitors to the library as well as a flood of new acquisitions. In 1946, the library's collections included 3.1 million books and pamphlets in the Reference Department and 1.5 million in the Circulation Department. By 1956, the Reference Department boasted 3.7 million items and the Circulation Department, 2.5 million.⁸ With expenditures of nearly \$8.4 million in 1954, the NYPL spent more money than any other public library in the United States.⁹

But all was not well. Despite the seemingly large sums of money being spent, the library was chronically underfunded. As noted by historian Phyllis Dain:

The scale of funds needed to maintain such an immense library's usefulness was great and the need urgent: to improve salaries, keep up with the flood of new publications, deal with space problems, refurbish old buildings and construct new ones in growing neighborhoods, streamline library operations, serve the masses pursuing higher education, and meet the challenge of new populations with minimal education.¹⁰

Added to the challenges of tight budgets, growing fears about the security of the library's collections helped to create an atmosphere of an institution on the

brink. As the United States watched the Soviet Union detonate its first atomic weapon in 1949 and as the Cold War turned hot in 1950 with United States troops fighting in Korea, library leadership at NYPL became involved with civil defense efforts to protect the most valuable treasures of the collection. The library's main internal newsletter, the weekly *Staff News*, frequently featured items in 1950 and 1951 about how to prepare for air raid drills. One article noted that every library employee would soon be receiving a copy of 'You and the Atomic Bomb', a pamphlet published by the New York State Civil Defense Commission.¹¹ In January 1951, the library made 'a small evacuation of some 250 of [its] national treasures and greatest rarities on the basis of uniqueness, irreplaceability, and great historical or literary importance.' The materials were taken to Connecticut to safe deposit boxes at the Danbury National Bank, a location chosen because it 'stands high up on a hill; the safe deposit vaults are above ground; and it seems a town that is unlikely to suffer casualties from bombing, and yet convenient of access'.¹²

While NYPL librarians were securing highlights of the collection from atomic attack, they were simultaneously busy serving in key offices in national library and cultural organizations. While he was working as the chief of the Reference Department, Paul North Rice found time to serve as president of the American Library Association from 1947 to 1948.¹³ Ralph Beals, the director of NYPL from 1946-1954, was a member of the United States National Commission for UNESCO for most of those years. Just before beginning his employment at the NYPL in 1951 as the chief of the Circulation Department, John Mackenzie Cory served as the executive secretary to the ALA for three years, a position which gave him a monthly column in the *ALA Bulletin*, the association's main publication. The national prominence enjoyed by Cory and his colleagues provided an extended platform for defense of intellectual rights. Cory was not the only NYPL figure involved in the drafting of the 'Freedom to Read' statement in 1953. Library trustee Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., the president of Steuben Glass, and Francis R. St. John, the former chief of the Circulation Department who left the NYPL in 1946 to become the director of the Brooklyn Public Library, were also part of the group of several dozen librarians and publishers that met in Rye, New York, in May 1953 to discuss how the libraries and publishers should meet the rising tide of challenges to the independence of libraries.¹⁴

The Pressure from Anticommunism Ratchets Up

The first major library censorship battles in the postwar era began in 1947, a year that marked a dramatic increase in anticommunism efforts on the national level. In March, President Harry Truman promulgated the 'Truman Doctrine' that advocated a policy of aggressive containment to confront the growth of communism worldwide. In July, George Kennan, a high ranking figure in the State Department, published 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', an article in *Foreign Affairs* that helped lay the groundwork for America's policy of containment toward Soviet expansion. The House Un-American Activities Committee brought Hollywood writers and directors to Washington in October to

be grilled on their ties to subversive groups; many of those subpoenaed were later blacklisted by the studios. To combat subversive elements domestically, Truman had issued in March Executive Order 9835, which required loyalty oaths for employees of the federal government. Employees were required to state whether they had any past or current affiliations with subversive organizations; those employees whose denials were deemed suspicious would be investigated. A list that the attorney general's office had maintained since 1942 of such organizations was formalized in 1947 as the main list for investigations to refer to.¹⁵

This list, much discussed in the press, proved a useful tool for the NYPL's Readers' Adviser Service as well. Founded to help encourage book discussion groups and adult education efforts in the library, the Readers' Adviser Service maintained a collection of catalogues and pamphlets from various local schools that provided educational opportunities for adults. As a service to library patrons, Readers' Adviser staff provided a list of what school catalogues were in the collection. In an annual report from 1947-1948 about the Readers' Adviser Service, a document written by librarian Robert F. Kingery for the library administration, it is noted that:

Toward the end of the year, records for those schools which the Attorney General announced as 'un-American' were removed from the files as a matter of discretion. However, the catalogues of these schools were kept on file as a matter of information. In connection with the file, the following notice was posted:

Listing of schools, firms, organizations, etc., are provided as a matter of information only and the inclusion or non-inclusion of a school, firm, or organization in any list is not to be interpreted as constituting either a recommendation or non-recommendation of that school, firm, or organization.

As a further precaution, this paragraph was consistently included in all letter responses for such information.¹⁶

This example is illustrative of general NYPL policy. Although the library did not discard controversial materials in the collection, it did take them out of the spotlight. In response to the redhunting challenge, librarians apparently engaged in defensive ambiguity. With respect to the 'information' provided about controversial schools the library's Scholastic distinction between 'information' and 'recommendation' can be viewed in two ways. First, the library was perhaps afraid that some of the schools that remained on its lists might later be found to have subversive ties before the library had a chance to remove them; the boilerplate paragraph the library created for letter responses was thus a way to indemnify itself against unforeseen trouble in the future. Another perhaps more charitable way to view this paragraph, though, is that the library was trying its best to be neutral on matters that might turn out to be controversial.

A good number of the librarians at NYPL clearly felt that the library should try to maintain a balanced collection that presented all points of view, even those that were controversial. A ten-member Committee on Long Range Goals formed in November 1950 discussed a number of questions put to it by Director Ralph Beals. Among those questions was whether censorship was ever justified. The written response to that question by committee member Mary C. Hatch, a librarian from the 58th Street Branch, was typical:

The library should have available materials on all sides of a controversial question.... In making this material available, we should also try to encourage the reader to use it in such a way as to clarify his own thinking. By virtue of this freedom to present all views, however, the librarian takes upon himself a great responsibility to present only the best and fairest materials and to present them impersonally, keeping his views in the background. The librarian who uses this freedom as a screen behind which to make and fire the bullets for his own particular cause is betraying a public trust, and such actions should not be permitted. Professionally we should be neutral, presenting only the facts in so far as they are attainable. We are not ‘engineers of propaganda’ but defenders of the fact, and we should endeavor to maintain this defense as long as possible.¹⁷

In 1947, librarians began to see that their efforts to maintain balanced collections were increasingly coming under attack. The first sign of trouble came in February when it was reported that the New York City school system was banning Howard Fast’s novel, *Citizen Tom Paine*, because of ‘allegedly vulgar passages’.¹⁸ Concern over Fast’s membership in the Communist Party was probably the subtext for accusations of obscenity in his work. He had already been questioned by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1946 because of his Party ties and in 1947 was convicted for contempt for refusing to cooperate with HUAC. In September 1947, *Library Journal* reported another book banning effort directed at school libraries in California. At issue were many books deemed subversive by the California Committee on Un-American Activities, including Marguerite Stewart’s *Land of the Soviets* and textbooks from the *Building America* series. The author of the *Library Journal* article, who represented the California Library Association’s Committee on Intellectual Freedom, warned her readers that ‘librarians everywhere, therefore, need to be concerned about growing restrictions in radio, the movies and books and to resist “individual or organizational attempts to restrict library service to readers by censorship of library collections or by suppression of [a] particular book”’.¹⁹

As early as 1947, librarians not only found their collections coming under scrutiny by outsiders but began to realize that their personal lives were beginning to be questioned. Truman’s creation of a federal loyalty oath program in March 1947 gave rise later that year to similar programs at the state, county, and city level. In Los Angeles County, a librarian led the first lawsuit protesting the new loyalty oath required of all county employees.²⁰ A lengthy article in the May 1948

issue of *ALA Bulletin* by the chair of the ALA's Committee on Intellectual Freedom, David Berninghausen (who was at the time a librarian at the Cooper Union in New York), detailed the current loyalty oath battles and censorship fights going on at libraries around the country. Berninghausen encouraged his readers to give the issue of 'freedom of inquiry' a 'prominent place on the program' of the ALA's upcoming annual conference in Atlantic City.²¹

ALA leadership was indeed already planning to focus its conference on this issue, as is clear from the correspondence of the ALA president, NYPL's own Paul North Rice, who showed himself dedicated to the issue of freedom of inquiry and access. One of Rice's tasks as ALA president and member of the conference planning committee was to secure keynote speakers for the conference. His letters inviting various luminaries to give a keynote address featured stirring talk about the urgent need to defend intellectual freedom. In each of his letters to potential speakers, such as the one he wrote in March 1948 to Archibald MacLeish, the poet and former Librarian of Congress, he included the line that he was 'anxious that we should secure speakers on this day who feel so strongly about the perils besetting us that they will speak vigorously and help to wake up those librarians who now do not realize how dangerous the situation is'.²²

As it would turn out, attendees at the Atlantic City conference heard a keynote address from Arthur E. Farmer, a lawyer representing the Book Publishers Council, the main trade association that publishing companies belonged to, in a lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia after police had raided local bookstores for controversial books. Farmer addressed the conference on useful tactics in fighting against censorship from pressure groups. Among other speakers at the conference, author Pearl S. Buck spoke on reading as a way of promoting tolerance; and political scientist Robert D. Leigh, who had helped lead the Public Library Inquiry project surveying libraries and library use, spoke on intellectual freedom and libraries. At the conference, the Council of the ALA passed two landmark resolutions.²³ First, ALA adopted a revision of the 1939 'Library's Bill of Rights' that renamed the document as the 'Library Bill of Rights' and added a key clause indicating that it was the responsibility of libraries to challenge 'censorship of books, urged or practiced by volunteer arbiters of morals or political opinion or by organizations that would establish a coercive concept of Americanism'.²⁴ The second resolution condemned the use of loyalty oaths. This resolution in subsequent years was revised twice as librarians debated whether they should be protesting the 'use' or the 'abuse' of loyalty oaths.²⁵ Several days after the conference, Rice thanked Farmer for giving his speech and noted that he was 'sure this Atlantic City meeting will be remembered for its stand on intellectual freedom', a sentiment echoed in the daily coverage of the conference in the *New York Times*, which noted that the 'question of censorship overshadowed all others at the conference'.²⁶

Rice's own address at the conference gained him some fame as well. Rice's comments on maintaining a balanced collection were quoted:

We librarians must continue to select the best books, but not merely the books we believe in. Of course, we shall have books with which we do not agree.²⁷

The *New York Times* coverage caught the eye of a sociology professor at the University of Chicago, Arthur J. Todd, who wrote Rice to say that although he agreed that censorship was bad, he also believed that taxpayers had not given up all their rights to government and should have some say in what gets added to the library's collection. Todd wanted to know what the book selection policies were for the NYPL and how it decided what to buy if it couldn't buy every single book. The question put Rice in a difficult spot as it, intentionally or not, implicitly invited him to merge personal belief and professional obligation. Rice wrote back that his opinions expressed in Atlantic City were personal ones and did not necessarily represent those of NYPL. He also found a convenient way to dodge Todd's suggestion that the NYPL should be listening to the concerns of New Yorkers; rather than debate the issue, Rice suggested it was a moot point at the NYPL because 'our book funds do not come from taxpayers but from the endowment of the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations'.²⁸

Rice's effort to keep his personal activities in defense of intellectual freedom separate from his work responsibilities at the NYPL can also be seen in his response to the ban of the weekly political news magazine, *The Nation*, from the public schools (state schools) of New York. In the spring of 1948, the New York Board of Education announced a ban of *The Nation* on the basis of allegedly anti-Catholic articles written in the magazine's pages the previous year and in 1948. The ALA protested the Board of Education's decision in a couple of ways. First, it issued a formal statement that the city's actions were 'a threat to freedom of expression and contrary to the Library Bill of Rights and the United States Bill of Rights' and then, on behalf of the ALA's Committee on Intellectual Freedom, David Berninghausen testified against the ban before a July 13 hearing of the Board of Education on the matter.²⁹ Wanting to lend his voice to the protests, Rice planned to write a postcard to the Board of Education. Before he did so, he first contacted Ralph Beals, the director of the NYPL, to get his advice about the wisdom of including his institutional affiliation to his signature on the postcard. Rice explained to Beals that 'as an individual I would certainly like to join the protest, but I don't want to do anything that embarrasses the Library'. At the bottom of the letter, Beals replied that Rice 'may of course sign anything you wish' and suggested that Rice identify himself 'as a Past President of the ALA as well as the Chief of the RD [Reference Department] in the NYPL'. Rice followed this advice.³⁰

Rice's interest in *The Nation* case continued on for a number of years, as can be seen by the inclusion of his name on the letterhead of the Ad Hoc Committee to Lift the Ban on *The Nation*, a national organization that counted as supporters many prominent scholars and cultural figures. It is interesting that Rice's year as ALA president, which coincided with the first major library censorship battles in the post-war years and concluded with an ALA conference

that took a bold stance in defense of intellectual freedom, did not lead Rice to advocate more strongly at NYPL on those same issues. As can be seen in his letter to Beals, Rice did not want to do anything to embarrass the library and seemed, in general, to have kept his personal enthusiasm for joining the fight against the censors and redbaiters from affecting his work at the library.

It is worth pointing out that a number of libraries responded to the 1948 'Library Bill of Rights' by passing resolutions adopting the document, as was the case in Kalamazoo, Michigan; Birmingham, Alabama; Washoe County, Nevada; Des Moines, Iowa;³¹ Worcester, Massachusetts;³² and the Mountain Plains Library Association.³³ The NYPL never did this, though. In fact, there seems to be no mention at all of the 'Library Bill of Rights' in the publications or the internal documents of the NYPL from this era. Although the weekly newsletter for NYPL employees, *Staff News*, featured reminders in the years following 1948 to join the ALA or take note of upcoming conferences, there was no mention of the 1948 conference or the positive newspaper coverage of the conference's defense of intellectual freedom even though the head of the library's Reference Department had been instrumental in shaping the meeting.

It seems that the NYPL's low level of interest in the activities of the American Library Association were systemic in this era. In a 1952 memo to division chiefs, Rice expresses his frustration over the small number of staff members who have joined the association:

I am disturbed by the small number of A.L.A. members on the Reference Department staff. It is hard for me to understand how a professional librarian can fail to wish to belong to his national association. While no pressure should be brought to bear on any member of the staff to join the A.L.A., it is my hope that with the meeting here in New York City a great many of our professional librarians will realize their responsibility to support the national library association.³⁴

The Anticommunists Focus on the NYPL

Censorious pressure groups and disgruntled individuals targeting books and librarians themselves had for some time been thorns in the side of NYPL. In earlier years, there had been the occasional crank letter, such as one from 1930 accusing the chief of the Slavonic Division of the NYPL, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, of being on the payroll of the Soviet Union because the library's collections were, according to the letter's author, lacking in anti-Soviet and pro-American literature. The reply of Keyes D. Metcalf, the chief of the Reference Department to Gregory Bernadsky, the individual who complained, was pointed. Metcalf told Bernadsky that his 'statements seem to me so absurd as to be hardly worthy of a reply' and that Bernadsky seemed to 'fail utterly to understand the situation in this Library'. Had the library 'more...help rather than such irresponsible criticism,... the Library would be better able to serve the public'.³⁵

These kinds of attacks on a person's or organization's loyalty gained speed and strength in the late 1940s. In September 1949, the library deftly put

down public criticism of supposed subversive political leanings, when the American Jewish League Against Communism accused the library of being sympathetic to Communists and communism. The charge, which was detailed in articles in the *New York Times* and the *New York Sun*, argued that Joshua Bloch, the chief of the Jewish Division, was tied to the School of Jewish Studies, an institution that appeared on Attorney General Tom Clark's list of subversive organizations.³⁶ The chairman of the American Jewish League Against Communism, Alfred Kohlberg, offered as further evidence of the library's dangerous sympathies the recent publication of a three-part article on the letters of Emma Lazarus in the library's monthly journal, the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*.³⁷ The content of the article was innocuous enough; it was the author of the article, Morris U. Schappes, who was considered dangerous. A former professor of English at City College, Schappes had been fired in 1941 by the school because of his connections to politically suspect groups. The charges about Bloch and the library were also repeated in a *Counterattack*, a controversial newsletter founded in 1947 and dedicated to publishing a mix of facts, rumors, and slander about notable Americans who had once been or continued to be Communist Party members or fellow travelers. *Counterattack* urged the library's board of trustees to investigate not just Bloch but the 'whole staff of his division'.³⁸

Ralph Beals immediately deflected the complaint by noting that Schappes was not employed by the library, that the article was not a propaganda piece but solid scholarly work, and that Bloch was a 'scholar of great learning and integrity'.³⁹ Responding to Beals' comments, *Counterattack* suggested that the director of the NYPL failed to 'understand how a Communist [like Schappes] can slant an article' and argued that the article was a 'clever, indirect plug for such fronts as CP's [Communist Party] fraternal insurance society'. According to *Counterattack*, the behavior of Beals was typical of 'many administrators in Govt, libraries, universities, and even business', who, 'when the subject of Communist infiltration in their staffs is first mentioned... just don't believe it's possible' and declare the charge to be 'absurd' or 'preposterous'.⁴⁰

On the surface, the accusations seemed like the kind of redbaiting typical of the era: a person's past or current affiliations with politically suspect organizations and groups, however slight or even accidental, were made to appear dangerous and subversive. As it would turn out, behind the accusations was a longstanding feud between Bloch, who was a rabbi as well as a librarian, and Rabbi Benjamin Schultz, who led the group that made the charges against Bloch. For the next year, Bloch worked behind the scenes to clear his name in the community of Jewish scholars in which he was a noted figure. He also tried to have Rabbi Schultz exposed as a slanderer and disciplined by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, a group to which both Schultz and Bloch belonged. In a letter to the chairman of the Committee on Ethics and Arbitration of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Bloch wrote that 'in the last few years [Schultz] has made it a practice to vilify many of his colleagues in the rabbinate by resorting to slander, through the press, usually unfounded, but calculated to create the impression that his victims are actively engaged in

promoting communistic interests and thus tending to undermine that measure of confidence which each one of them normally enjoys in the community'.⁴¹

Bloch's predicament caused him considerable distress. Although there had been a 'strenuous' effort to 'undermine' his 'position in the Library, it [did] not meet with the success Rabbi Schultz and his friends had hoped for'. In fact, he believed that 'the Director of the Library and the Board of Trustees, presumably after such an investigation as the conditions warranted, have taken a definite stand whereby [his] relationship with the Library has not at all been injured' but instead 'strengthened'. But he did worry about the 'impression which [was] calculated in the long run to injure [him]' that had been generated in his community of fellow scholars.⁴²

Despite the very public charges made against Bloch, he did not appear to shy away from maintaining a close scholarly friendship with Schappes, who continued to publish scholarly works, or others whose politics might have gotten him into further trouble. In 1950, when Schappes published *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, Bloch wrote the book's preface.⁴³ In 1951, when Schappes was applying for a Guggenheim fellowship, Bloch wrote a letter of recommendation.⁴⁴ After Schappes was called before Senator Joseph McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in 1953, he personally appeared at the NYPL as soon as he could to advise Bloch of the details and to state that Bloch's name was not raised during the testimony, a fact that 'pleased' Schappes.⁴⁵ Bloch also regularly corresponded with Philip Foner, a former City College professor who, like Schappes, had been fired from the school in 1941 because of his political ties. By the time Bloch retired from the NYPL in 1955, there had been no further accusations against him; the matter from 1949 quickly faded from view.

As a stunning example of its evenhandedness, while the library was defending Bloch in 1949 from his accusers, it was also supplying materials to federal prosecutors and investigators as the government tried to use the courts to cripple the Communist Party USA. Copies of subpoenas in the library archives show that its extensive collection of books, magazines, pamphlets, and other materials was frequently mined by prosecutors working on a number of high-profile cases. In April 1949, five months before the Bloch episode, the NYPL received a subpoena for several 1931 issues of the *Communist*, a magazine published by the Communist Party, which was needed by the federal government in its case against William Z. Foster and other top leaders of the Communist Party. In January 1950, the library found itself supplying novels such as Herman Melville's *Pierre* and poetry by T. S. Eliot to prosecutors in the case against Alger Hiss as the government tried to prove he had spied for the Soviet Union. 1951 brought subpoenas for the cases against two other Communist Party leaders being tried under the Smith Act, the 1940 federal statute that made it illegal to discuss or agitate for the overthrow of the government: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Gus Hall.⁴⁶

Sometimes the requests hit a little close to home. In 1954, the library received a subpoena from the Subversive Activities Control Board for materials needed for the board's investigation into the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln

Brigade, an association of those Americans who had fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Republicans. The association had long been under the scrutiny of the government because of the group's links to leftist organizations and parties. Since 1952, the library had been housing a large portion of the archives of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade association. While the earlier subpoenas received by the library had been for materials that could have been obtained from any number of libraries, in this 1954 subpoena the request was for materials held only by the library as part of a special collection.⁴⁷

The Subversive Activities Control Board had been created in 1950 as part of the McCarran Act (also known as the Internal Security Act), an effort by the government to compel Communist Party members to register with the board. A 1954 amendment to the act required groups that were considered to be heavily infiltrated by party members to also register, a development that brought the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade under the board's scrutiny. When the veterans' association refused to comply, it was dragged before the board, which intended to hear testimony and look at evidence which it felt would decide whether or not the group should be listed.⁴⁸

From the moment the library agreed in 1951 to accept the donated archives from the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the library administration was aware of the sensitive legal and political terrain they were entering. As negotiations over the terms of the donation were underway in 1951, the library recognized the likelihood that materials in the collection might be subpoenaed. In the back and forth between the veterans' group and the library over the contract detailing the terms of the donation, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade requested that certain portions of the collection be closed to public access for ten years; the library agreed but added a line to the contract stating that these access 'restrictions are over-ruled by subpoena'.⁴⁹

Later, as the collection was being moved to the library, the executive secretary of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Moe Fishman, wrote to the NYPL asking 'if it would be possible for a small group of members of our organization to come up to officially attend the opening' of the collection. The library's response suggested that it was interested in avoiding any public ceremony, which would surely ignite unwanted controversy.⁵⁰ Attached to the copy of the letter in the NYPL archives is a scrap of paper with a handwritten memorandum from the letter's recipient, Robert W. Hill, to Robert Kingery, the chief of the Preparation Division. Hill wrote, 'I think we better let this sleep; there was no such agreement or encouragement of such a thing'.⁵¹ It would seem as though the library wanted to quietly add the collection to the library's vast holdings but make no public mention of it for fear of attracting unwanted scrutiny from anticommunist pressure groups or from the government.

The reply that the chief of the Reference Department, Paul North Rice, sent to Fishman supports this view. His letter did not say there would be no opening because the library never agreed to one during negotiations the prior year. Instead, Rice wrote:

It seems hardly feasible to have an official opening as you suggest. Some of the material is already available. The printed material will gradually become available as the printed cards are filed in the catalogue. Since the collection is not kept in one place and is being made gradually available, there would seem to be no need for a formal opening.⁵²

Rice's rationale for passing up the chance to have an opening is not particularly convincing, as one could have a 'formal opening' for whatever is available. The Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade did not ask about the matter again.

The library's unwillingness to put itself in the spotlight with such a collection is not surprising, though. Libraries across the United States were increasingly reporting efforts of groups or individuals bent on rooting out subversive materials in the stacks. Writing long after the McCarthy-era attacks on libraries, intellectual freedom advocate and librarian David Berninghausen wrote that 'the climate of repression of the period between 1950 and 1954 is almost unimaginable today'.⁵³ During the two years that the NYPL had been processing the collection from the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, widely reported battles occurred over library materials deemed subversive: in Baltimore, Maryland;⁵⁴ Bartlesville, Oklahoma;⁵⁵ Burbank, California;⁵⁶ Cleveland, Ohio;⁵⁷ Montclair, New Jersey;⁵⁸ and Peoria, Illinois.⁵⁹ At the same time, loyalty oath programs were creating problems at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland and at the Library of Congress.⁶⁰

The NYPL was also beginning to witness more pressure from anticommunists during this time. The complaint letters that the library occasionally received now began to feature self-styled 'patriotic' criticism dealing with themes of subversion. One anonymous postcard pointed out 'subversive workers' holding forth in the Economics Division in the central building.⁶¹ Another postcard from a '100% American' voiced concern about the color schemes in the central building:

Yellow is a symbol of cowardice. You display Yellow, White and Blue, un-American colors, instead of Red, White and Blue in your Reading Room (3rd floor) Telephone Notice. America needs 100% patriotism in her present crisis. This yellow emphasizing disloyalty is spreading. Please help check it.⁶²

The board of trustees was aware of the increasing pressure on the library. At the January 2, 1951, meeting of the Committee on Circulation (one of the many committees that the board maintained), a report was presented on the subject of pressure groups. It was noted that 'although the cosmopolitan citizenry of New York has been a safeguard against these pressures, the tension of the times intensified them even in this City'. The report categorized the kinds of pressures as follows:

1. Inclusion (or exclusion) of books for political, religious, racial or moral content.
2. Gifts of propaganda material and their display.
3. Discussion groups unrelated to Library activities.
4. Service to left-wing unions.⁶³

As in the 1949 incident involving Joshua Bloch and the Jewish Division, there were situations in which the pressures were amplified by one of the many media outlets in the city. In August 1950, Jack Lait, a columnist for a New York tabloid, the *Daily Mirror*, wrote an article complaining that the NYPL was a 'stuffy, censorious, prissy institution which arbitrarily bars books at will, ignoring public demand, overruling popular choice' and, worse still, noted that 'literature pleasing to Communists is not generally blacklisted'.⁶⁴ A bit of sleuthing by the NYPL's chief of public relations, Anna Glantz, revealed that Lait wrote the column in a fit of pique when he learned that *New York: Confidential!* and *Chicago: Confidential!*, guidebooks he co-authored that featured the inside dope on the highs and, more notably, the lows of urban culture, were not available in the library's collection. Glantz discovered that Lait was mistaken about the books; they were in fact available and subject to 'heavy demand' (although one had been recently stolen from the collection).⁶⁵ As Glantz conferred with the director of the NYPL, Ralph Beals, about how to respond, they agreed that they would lodge their complaint not to the editor of the *Daily Mirror*, who happened be Lait himself, but to the publisher of the paper, Charles McCabe. The library had a board of trustees comprised of powerful and eminent figures in the New York business world, and Beals was able to reach out to a board member, Roy E. Larsen, (the publisher at Time, Inc.) who happened to be friends with Lait's boss, Charles McCabe, and who was in a position to do something about the column. Before a planned meeting between Larsen and McCabe could take place, word reached Lait that his books actually were in the library and he recanted his charges about the library being prissy (though he did not offer any regrets about his comments about red-friendly publications at the library). It was a notable sign of the times that when Lait felt like striking out at the library, redbaiting was a weapon of choice.

In 1955, the *New Counterattack* magazine was behind another minor assault on the library. An article featured the story of one of the magazine's readers who had encountered difficulties in borrowing a copy of Eugene Castle's *Billions, Blunders and Baloney: The Fantastic Story of How Uncle Sam Is Squandering Your Money Overseas*. The book, whose author founded Castle Films, a leading producer of industrial films, travelogues, and news reels, argued that American propaganda efforts from the United States Information Agency and the Voice of America 'had been piddling around', 'had not emerged yet from amateurhood', and 'while they wasted time, world Communism was marching on'.⁶⁶ The reader featured in the *New Counterattack* story noted that the library's copy of the book had been stamped 'closed shelf'. When he asked a librarian about the significance of the stamp, he was told that 'it referred to a locked section in which are kept expensive art books and books of a salacious or

otherwise dangerous nature that the librarian wants to keep away from young people especially'. The article noted that books by those authors that the *New Counterattack* deemed subversive were not kept on the closed shelf as the Castle book was. The end of the story featured advice that regularly appeared in the pages of *Counterattack* and the *New Counterattack*:

Check your public and school libraries, a privilege you certainly enjoy as a taxpayer. See if sound anti-Communist books...are included in the collections and, if included, if they are readily available to readers. In schools, of course, all such books might be not be appropriate, but if left-wing or Soviet-soft books are included, books of an anti-Soviet, anti-Communist nature are not only appropriate, they are vital.⁶⁷

The article caught the eye of John Mackenzie Cory, as noted above the chief of the Circulation Department. From correspondence in the NYPL archives, it appears that Cory wrote a letter to the editor of the *New Counterattack*; although Cory's letter is not in the archives, it is likely that he took exception to the way the incident was characterized in the magazine.⁶⁸

The Library Reacts to Pressure

In the 1940s and 1950s, the pressure from anticommunists that NYPL faced was both direct, as in the case of the attacks on Joshua Bloch and the publication of Morris Schappes' article of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, and indirect, which can be seen in the library's unwillingness to stir up controversy with a public opening for the archives of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. With incidents of direct pressure, there is usually evidence documenting the library's reaction. When Bloch was attacked in the press, the director of the library made statements to reporters defending Bloch. When letters came in to the library complaining about subversive employees or imbalances in the collection, as long as the sender provided an address, the librarians wrote replies back defending the library (such as Paul North Rice's letter to Arthur J. Todd, who had wondered whether taxpayers should have a say in shaping a library's collection). If needed, the library knew it might be able to call upon one of the powerful members of the board of trustees to address a direct challenge (as was planned during the incident with Jack Lait, the editor of the *New York Daily Mirror*).

Trying to find evidence that will connect causes with effects in situations where the pressure was indirect is a challenging problem for a researcher. While it may be possible to identify a particular effect, locating the right cause is usually difficult. Consider, for example, the case of the library's 1947 decision to drop schools from the list of adult education opportunities that the Readers' Adviser service provided to the public. There is an internal report written by a librarian in which he states that the list of schools was altered after the Attorney General's office released a list of subversive organizations.⁶⁹ Although the release of the Attorney General's list was a factor in the library's decision to revise its list of

schools, there was no direct pressure involved. Instead, the library's employees thought that given the times they lived in it was merely prudent to alter the list.

A desire, borne out of prudence, to stay out of trouble was also behind the library's decision not to hold any sort of a public opening for the archives of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade association. Again, the pressure felt by the library was indirect. In explaining to the association why the library was not going to hold an opening, the library could have explained that it was afraid of potential controversy. Instead, the library chose to let the matter 'sleep' by offering a bureaucratic response to the association that would seem plausible and encourage the association to let the matter drop.⁷⁰ Had the library written a more forthright letter to the association, though, the matter would likely have grown into a public controversy and brought the kind of publicity and attention that the library was trying to avoid.

Another example of the way that indirect pressures on the library usually led the institution to avoid controversy can be seen in the response of the library in 1955 to a survey it received from the Institute of Legal Research at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. The institute wanted to study whether obscene, subversive, or defamatory materials were being held up by the Customs Bureau or by the United States Postal Service. After the passage in 1938 of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, the Customs Bureau and the Postal Service were expected to monitor the distribution of published materials regarded as propaganda. Publications from behind the Iron Curtain fell into this category of materials to be watched. The survey was sent out to major research libraries (including Harvard and the Library of Congress as well as NYPL) to find out whether they had been having problems receiving materials deemed political propaganda.

The survey asked library directors to answer four questions. The first question asked if the library had ever been affected by the administration of the Foreign Services Registration Act laws by the Postal Service and the Customs Bureau. Next, the survey asked what specific experiences the library encountered. The third question inquired whether the library knew of experiences at other libraries relating to this issue. Finally, the recipient of the survey was asked, 'based on your experience and on what you have heard about this subject, have you any general comments or observations about the subject of this questionnaire and the subject of our project?'⁷¹

At the NYPL, the survey letter was addressed to Edward G. Freehafer, who had succeeded Ralph Beals in 1954 as the director of the library. The copy of the letter in the NYPL archives bears in the margins handwritten reactions to the questions, something perhaps penciled in by the recipient as he first thought about how the library might respond. The word 'no' was scribbled in the margin next to the first two questions, which asked whether the library had any problems with Customs or the Postal Service. To the third question about whether the library knew of any specific incidents at other libraries, the annotation again said, 'no'. To the fourth question, which asked for comments or observations (in other words, opinions), someone had written, 'avoid'.⁷² Although the letter is in the files of the director of the library, it is not certain whether the handwritten

comments were his or someone else's. Even if it cannot be proved which library employee wrote the comments (in particular, if they came from the director), they do add to a characterization of the library as an institution that would generally stand up to a direct attack from pressure groups, but in cases of indirect pressure (or self-imposed pressure, perhaps) the library would try to avoid entering a controversy if there was a way to do so.

A more ambiguous case of avoidance of controversy can be found in the pages of the library's monthly journal, the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*. It was in this journal that Morris Schappes' article on Emma Lazarus was published and caught the eye of the Jewish League Against Communism. Of all the attacks upon the library between 1947 and 1955, the 1949 one that focused on the Schappes article and the suspicions over Joshua Bloch received the greatest coverage in the press. The board of trustees and the director of the library worked together to craft a reply to reporters' inquiries. Fortunately for the library, the Jewish League Against Communism did not press the matter further after the initial accusations. It may be purely coincidental that shortly after the Bloch episode in late 1949, the content of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* changed by being less likely to cause controversy.

First published in 1897, the monthly journal regularly featured in the 1940s a mix of news about NYPL and scholarship. The scholarly articles tended to be long bibliographies, usually published over multiple issues. The library news consisted of annual statistics of holdings and circulation; announcements of current exhibitions; changes in library leadership; and representative lists of books and other materials received as gifts. It was in this gift section that the content began to change in 1950. The 'Gifts' article in each issue would highlight just a handful of the thousands of items received each month as donations. The list mentioned the items donated as well as the person or group who gave them. Before 1950, the list often featured donations from groups that happened to also be on a more notorious list, the 1947 Attorney General's list of subversive organizations. It was also common before 1950 to find donations from individuals who had been publicly attacked for their ties to subversive groups and parties.

For example, the 'Gifts' article in the issue of July 1948 notes that the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (a group that was on the list of subversive organizations) gave several books on the history of printing in Lithuania. The March 1949 issue noted in the 'Interesting Items' section of the Gifts article the receipt of *The Decline of the Left Wing of American Labor* by Earl Browder, the leader of the Communist Party USA from 1932 to 1945. After 1950, it became very rare to find donations of this sort listed in the *Bulletin*. Although the library's archives do not include memos to *Bulletin* staff asking them to be cautious with the content, a close reading of the Gifts section does show a notable change in the issues published after 1949.

Interpreting the Library's Responses to Pressure

Any attempt to explain why the library responded the way that it did to the direct and indirect pressures of anticommunism in the 1940s and 1950s must set the

institutional history of the NYPL against the larger backdrop of the history of American libraries. The aim of this article has been to recover a history that had been hidden in the NYPL's archives and to make connections between the library's story and that of other American libraries that were under fire, often more dramatically so, for collections and staff deemed politically suspect. It is beyond the scope of this article to try to explain in depth why the library acted as it did, but there are some markers on the road to understanding. First, it must be pointed out that the library's board of trustees likely played a key role in directly guiding the decisions of the library's leadership in certain cases (such as the 1949 incident involving Joshua Bloch or the 1950 one with Jack Lait's newspaper column impugning the balance of the library's collections).

As noted by Phyllis Dain in her detailed analysis of the biographical backgrounds of all 110 members of the board of trustees from 1895 to 1970, the trustees 'constituted an interlocking group of predominantly white, male, middle-aged, well-educated, upper-class, Protestant persons with powerful positions in society'.⁷³ She also discovered that by a ratio of two-to-one, the trustees were Republicans. The board in this era, as it long had, consisted mostly of nationally and locally prominent bankers and financiers (including Junius S. Morgan) and lawyers (such as Morris Hadley and Newbold Morris) and the Archbishop of New York (Cardinal Francis Spellman). Other notable figures on the board at this time were John Foster Dulles, who left the board in 1953 to become President Eisenhower's Secretary of State and whose brother, Allen Dulles, went on in the same year to lead the Central Intelligence Agency. Such a board was unlikely in the 1940s and 1950s to take controversial positions on civil liberties and intellectual freedom. The board was probably also not sympathetic to the plight of individuals and groups being targeted for their left-wing political views. While it is true that one member of the board, Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., helped draft the 'Freedom to Read' document in 1953, it was probably the case that the board would have been displeased had the librarians done something bound to be controversial (such as hold a public event to celebrate the opening of the archives of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade).

It is important to recognize that even though a number of librarians at the NYPL served key roles in the ALA during the era that saw the creation of foundational documents in intellectual freedom (especially the 'Library Bill of Rights' and the 'Freedom to Read'), it was common for librarians to distinguish their personal views as librarians and ALA members from their work as NYPL employees (as can be seen in the example of Paul North Rice in his 1948 letter where he discussed NYPL policies for acquisitions and his opinions on the 'Library Bill of Rights'). Such a disconnect was discovered in the mid-1950s among California librarians. A study by Marjorie Fiske found that 'among those [librarians] who expressed strong freedom-to-read convictions, 40 per cent take controversiality into account under some circumstances' when considering whether or not to acquire an item for a library's collection, 'particularly if another, more 'legitimate', reason can be found for avoiding a book'.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The NYPL was fortunate that the direct attacks made upon it in the 1940s and the 1950s were not sustained. Many libraries in the 1940s and the 1950s expended considerable time defending themselves from pressure groups, dealing with loyalty oath programs, and moving to closed stacks items that had been objected to as ‘subversive’ or ‘anti-American’. The indirect pressure that was felt by the NYPL, the librarians’ fears that the library might get attract controversy with some outside group, led the institution to play it safe. While the library was more than happy to accept into its collections all sorts of controversial material, it did not go out of its way to tell the world about such items. Although some of its staff members were particularly outspoken about defending intellectual freedom, they hesitated in having the institution needlessly become a lightning rod in an era where the political atmosphere was highly charged.

Notes

¹ ‘The Attack on Books in Libraries,’ *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 27 June 1953, pp. 807-812 (p. 809).

² For the sake of brevity, New York Public Library will be abbreviated as ‘NYPL.’ ‘Librarians’ will be understood to mean those whose actual job description was ‘librarian’ and ‘staff member’ to mean those whose title was something other than librarian. ‘Employees’ will refer to both librarians and staff members of the NYPL.

³ Documents analyzed included letters, memoranda, reports, annual reports, official NYPL publications (*Staff News*, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*), and contemporary professional publications (especially *Library Journal*, *ALA Bulletin*, and the *Wilson Library Bulletin*).

⁴ Anonymous to Mr. Supt, 27 July 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Ralph A. Beals Records, 1946-1954. Box 7, Folder ‘Letters of Praise and Complaint, 1949-1951’.

⁵ For the only scholarly research into the NYPL’s experiences in this era, see Jean Preer, ‘Exploring the American Idea at the New York Public Library,’ *American Studies* 42 (2001) 135-154, and, by the same author, ‘The American Heritage Project: Librarians and the Democratic tradition in the Early Cold War.’ *Libraries and Culture* 28 (1993) 165-188. These articles detail the history of the NYPL’s group book discussion program, Exploring the American Idea, and the American Library Association’s book discussion program that was modeled on the NYPL’s. Preer argues that the NYPL program, in which participants read notable texts and documents from American history, encouraged participants to question and challenge the consensus view of history. By creating a space for an interrogation of American ideas, Preer suggests that the NYPL’s program ran counter to the prevailing trends of political conformity and acquiescence. There are a handful of

other scholars who have made notable efforts to examine how libraries responded to the pressures of anticommunism. Louise S. Robbins has written extensively on the forces that pushed a librarian in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, out of her position in that town's public library; see *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown: Civil Rights, Censorship, and the American Library* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000). Robbins explores the controversy over loyalty oaths at the Library of Congress in 'The Library of Congress and Federal Loyalty Programs, 1947-1956: No "Communists or Cocksuckers"', *The Library Quarterly* 64 (1994) 365-385. For Robbins' exploration of the debate in the American Library Association over how to word a resolution about loyalty oaths in libraries, see 'After Brave Words, Silence: American Librarianship Responds to Cold War Loyalty Programs, 1947-1957', *Libraries & Culture* 30 (1995) 345-365. The changing way that the American Library Association interpreted and used the Library Bill of Rights amidst intellectual freedom battles of the 1950s is the focus on Robbins' article, 'Champions of a Cause: American Librarians and the Library Bill of Rights in the 1950s', *Library Trends* 45 (1996) 28-49. Robbins' account of the birth of the Freedom to Read document is offered in 'The Overseas Libraries Controversy and the Freedom to Read: U.S. Librarians and Publishers Confront Joseph McCarthy', *Libraries & Culture* 36 (2001) 27-39. Christine Jenkins has made important contributions to the story of how libraries adapted to Cold War pressures, specifically with regard to youth services and book selection; see 'ALA Youth Services and the CARE-UNESCO Children's Book Fund: Selecting the "Right Book" for Children in Cold War America, 1950-1958', *Libraries & Culture* 31 (1996) 209-234, and 'International Harmony: Threat or Menace? U.S. Youth Services Librarians and Cold War Censorship, 1946-1955', *Libraries & Culture* 36 (2001) 116-130. Cindy Mediavilla provides a detailed account of the responses of the California Library Association to book challenges and loyalty oath programs in 'The War on Books and Ideas: The California Library Association and Anti-Communist Censorship in the 1940s and 1950s', *Library Trends* 46 (1997) 331-347. In *Reading Places: Literacy, Democracy, and the Public Library in Cold War America* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), Christine Pawley describes how some in rural Wisconsin expressed concern over a bookmobile service because it might siphon federal funds from efforts to confront the Soviet Union. She also situates local book selection controversies over materials deemed by some as politically subversive into her larger narrative about the experience of reading in 1950s Wisconsin. Wayne Wiegand's mining of the accession records of five public libraries in the American Midwest yields some interesting insights to the acquisition habits of librarians across a nearly seventy-year timespan that includes the height of the McCarthy era; see 'Main Street Public Library: The Availability of Controversial Materials in the Rural Heartland, 1890-1956', *Libraries & Culture* 33 (1998) 127-133, and 'Collecting Contested Titles: The Experience of Five Small Public Libraries in the Rural Midwest, 1893-1956', *Libraries & Culture* 40 (2005) 368-384. Wiegand's survey of the history of American librarianship in the 1900s offers a useful overview of how intellectual freedom

battles in libraries during the Cold War fit into a larger history of American libraries, see ‘Tunnel Vision and Blind Spots: What the Past Tells Us About the Present; Reflections on the Twentieth-Century History of American Librarianship’, *Library Quarterly* 69 (1999) 1-32. Finally, Shirley Wiegand and Wayne Wiegand’s book detailing the 1940 raid of a bookstore in Oklahoma City and the trials of Communist Party members connected to the store, *Books on Trial: Red Scare in the Heartland* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), provides examples of the way that ‘dissent from the nation’s library community was muted and highly localized’ while at the same time ‘the fact that many of the books on trial were easily accessible on library shelves was cited repeatedly by the media to demonstrate the absurdity of the trials’ (p. 232).

⁶ New York Public Library, *Report of the New York Public Library for 1946* (New York: New York Public Library, 1946).

⁷ New York Public Library, *Statistical Annual Report* (New York: New York Public Library, 1956). The focus of this article will be on the Reference Department at the NYPL. From my reading of the work of other scholars of NYPL history (especially Jean Preer) and from the items I ran across in the archives relating to intellectual freedom in the Circulation Department and the branch libraries, it is clear that a full analysis of this other half of the library is a worthy (and major) future endeavor. For the benefit of those who may delve into the records of the Circulation Department, I will footnote incidents from the Circulation Department and the branches that touch on the defense of intellectual freedom and anticommunist pressures.

⁸ New York Public Library, *Report of the New York Public Library for 1946* (New York: New York Public Library, 1946); New York Public Library, *Statistical Annual Report* (New York: New York Public Library, 1956).

⁹ *American Library Annual for 1955-1956* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1956).

¹⁰ Phyllis Dain, ‘Public Library Governance and a Changing New York City’, *Libraries & Culture* 26 (1991) 219-50 (p. 234).

¹¹ *Staff News* 40 (26 October 1950) 135.

¹² ‘Report on Reference Department’, 6 February 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 21, Folder ‘NYPL Board of Trustees: Library Committee, 1946-1951.’

¹³ American Library Association will be hereafter abbreviated as ‘ALA’.

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- ¹⁴ Robbins, 'The Overseas Libraries Controversy and the Freedom to Read'. Everett T. Moore, 'Intellectual Freedom', in *Research Librarianship: Essays in Honor of Robert B. Downs*, ed. by J. Orne (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1971), pp. 1-17 (pp. 7-8).
- ¹⁵ Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 68.
- ¹⁶ 'Annual Report – 1947'. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Director's Office. Central Administration. Edward Geier Freehafer Records, 1948-1971. Box 41. Folder 'NYPL RD: Readers' Adviser 1939-1948'.
- ¹⁷ Mary C. Hatch, 'Long Range Goals Committee Topics 4 – 7 Hatch Report'. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 22. Folder 'NYPL Committee on Long Range Goals, 1950-51'.
- ¹⁸ 'Two Groups Protest Ban on "Tom Paine"', *New York Times*, 26 February 1947, p. 27.
- ¹⁹ Miriam Matthews, 'C.L.A. and California Librarians Join Censorship Fight', *Library Journal*, 1 September 1947, pp. 1172-1173.
- ²⁰ Meyer Rosen, 'Pacific States: Los Angeles Loyalty Survey Is Under Challenge', *New York Times*, 19 October 1947, p. E8; Mediavilla, 'The War on Books and Ideas'.
- ²¹ David K. Berninghausen, 'Book-banning and Witch-hunts', *ALA Bulletin*, May 1948, pp. 204-207 (p. 207).
- ²² Paul North Rice to Archibald MacLeish, 13 March 1948. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 3, Folder 'A.L.A. – Conference – 1948 General Sessions Program.'
- ²³ John J. Boll, 'The American Library Association and Intellectual Freedom', *University of Illinois Library School Occasional Papers*, no. 35 (1953), 1-17; Robbins, 'Champions of a Cause'.
- ²⁴ *American Library Annual for 1955-1956*, p. 7.
- ²⁵ Boll, 'The American Library Association and Intellectual Freedom'; Robbins, 'The Library of Congress and Federal Loyalty Programs'.

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- ²⁶ Paul North Rice to Arthur E. Farmer. 21 June 1948. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 3, Folder 'A.L.A. – Conference – 1948 General Sessions Program'; Benjamin Fine, 'Education in Review: Library Association Asks Support for Fight Against Various Forms of Censorship'. *New York Times*, 20 June 1948, p. E9.
- ²⁷ Benjamin Fine, 'Rising Censorship of Books Assailed', *New York Times*, 15 June 1948, p. 29.
- ²⁸ Paul North Rice to Arthur J. Todd. 22 June 1948. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Ralph A. Beals Records, 1946-1954. Box 3, Folder 'Correspondence, 1947-1951 Tin – Tre'.
- ²⁹ Harold F. Brigham, 'A.L.A. Protest Against New York City Ban of the *Nation*', *ALA Bulletin*, September 1948, p. 339.
- ³⁰ Paul North Rice to Ralph A. Beals. 24 August 1948. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 4, Folder 'A.L.A. – Nation, Banning of'.
- ³¹ David K. Berninghausen, 'Publicity Wins Intellectual Freedom', *ALA Bulletin*, February 1949, pp. 73-75.
- ³² 'Worcester Library Directors Support Their Librarian', *Library Journal*, 15 April 1949, p. 649.
- ³³ John Mackenzie Cory, 'Memo to Members', *ALA Bulletin*, September 1950, pp. 302-303.
- ³⁴ Paul North Rice to Division Chiefs. Memorandum. n.d. NYPL Archives. RG7. Research Libraries Department. Jewish Division Correspondence. Box 11, Folder 'Jan-June 1952, L-O'.
- ³⁵ Keyes D. Metcalf to Gregory Bernadsky. 27 September 1930. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Edwin Hatfield Anderson Records, 1913-1934. Box 25, Folder 'Ben-Ber'.
- ³⁶ 'Beals Answers Kohlberg Charge', *New York Sun* 21 September 1949; 'Red Charge Denied by Public Library', *New York Times* 21 September 1949, p. 20. The copy of the *New York Sun* article I found in the NYPL did not include a page number.
- ³⁷ Emma Lazarus, 'The Letters of Emma Lazarus, 1868-1885', ed. by Morris U. Schappes, Parts 1-3, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 53 (1949) 315-334,

367-386, 419-446. The article was spread across three issues of the *Bulletin*. The first installment included an introduction by Schappes in which he noted the scant details then available about the life of Lazarus, a poet best known for ‘The New Colossus’, the poem whose text is engraved upon the base of the Statue of Liberty and features the lines, ‘Give me your tired, your poor,/ Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free’. The three-part article included letters Lazarus wrote to Ralph Waldo Emerson, seeking his advice on her poetry; to the political economist Henry George, praising his ideas expressed in his bestselling book, *Progress and Poverty*; and to Philip Cowen, a founder and editor of the magazine *The American Hebrew*.

³⁸ ‘Communist Infiltration in Greatest Municipal Public Library in U. S.’, *Counterattack*, 23 September 1949, p. 2-3.

³⁹ ‘Beals Answers Kohlberg Charge’, *New York Sun*.

⁴⁰ ‘Communist Infiltration’, *Counterattack*.

⁴¹ Joshua Bloch to Emil W. Leipzinger, 3 February 1950. NYPL Archives. RG 7. Research Libraries Department. Jewish Division Correspondence. Box 11, Folder ‘Jan – June 1950 L-O’.

⁴² Joshua Bloch to Emil W. Leipzinger, 24 March 24 1950. NYPL Archives. RG 7. Research Libraries Department. Jewish Division Correspondence. Box 11, Folder ‘Jan – June 1950 L-O’.

⁴³ *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, ed. by Morris U. Schappes (New York: Citadel Press, 1950). As noted by Bloch in his preface, Schappes’ book ‘offers documentary material, culled from a variety of authentic sources, bearing on the most important historic episodes in the life and experience of individuals and groups in the American Jewish community’, (p. v). Bloch also notes the ‘prodigious amount of original, indeed brilliant, research that went into the making of this work, (p. vi). In his introduction, Schappes explains that the book is intended to be a ‘tool’ of history that may help Jews ‘to achieve full equality, economic, political, social, and cultural’ (p. x). Among the documents included are a newspaper account of the dual lynching of a Jewish store owner and his black clerk in 1868 and a plea by the leader of Congregation Shearith Isreal in New York for his congregation to make contributions to famine relief in 1847 for Ireland.

⁴⁴ Joshua Bloch to Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, [1951] NYPL Archives. RG 7. Research Libraries Department. Jewish Division Correspondence. Box 11, Folder ‘Jan – June 1951 G-K’.

⁴⁵ Morris Schappes to Joshua Bloch, 4 April 1953. NYPL Archives. RG 7. Research Libraries Department. Jewish Division Correspondence. Box 11, Folder 'Jan – June 1953, P-Z'.

⁴⁶ The President of the United States of America to the Librarian, New York Public Library. Subpoena. 19 April 1949. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Central Administrative Office. Box 52, Folder 'NYPL RD Subpoenas, 1946-'; The President of the United States of America to Ralph Beals. Subpoena. 10 January 1950. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Central Administrative Office. Box 52, Folder 'NYPL RD Subpoenas, 1946-'; Myles J. Lane to Ivor F. Hettich, 7 January 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Central Administrative Office. Box 52, Folder 'NYPL RD Subpoenas, 1951-1953'; Roger B. Francis to Roy M. Cohn 13 November 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Central Administrative Office. Box 52, Folder 'NYPL RD Subpoenas, 1951-1953'.

⁴⁷ Thomas J. Herbert to Librarian, New York Public Library. Subpoena. [n.d.] NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 44, Folder 'NYPL RD Special Collections: Lincoln Brigade'.

⁴⁸ *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, ed. by Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 229-230.

⁴⁹ Chief of Reference Department [Paul North Rice] to Chief of Preparation Division [Robert E. Kingery]. Memorandum. 11 January 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 44, Folder 'NYPL RD Special Collections: Lincoln Brigade'.

⁵⁰ Moe Fishman to Robert W. Hill, 19 September 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 44, Folder 'NYPL RD Special Collections: Lincoln Brigade'.

⁵¹ RWH [Robert W. Hill] to [Robert E.] Kingery. Memorandum. [n.d.] NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 44, Folder 'NYPL RD Special Collections: Lincoln Brigade'.

⁵² Paul North Rice to Moe Fishman, 26 September 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1926-1957. Box 44, Folder 'NYPL RD Special Collections: Lincoln Brigade'.

⁵³ David K. Berninghausen, *The Flight From Reason: Essays on Intellectual Freedom in the Academy, the Press, and the Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975), p. 34.

⁵⁴ ‘Dr. Evans Charges Library Censoring’, *New York Times*, 21 October 1951, p. 51.

⁵⁵ Robbins, *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown*.

⁵⁶ Mediavilla, ‘The War on Books and Ideas’.

⁵⁷ Matthew Josephson, ‘The Battle of the Books’, *The Nation* 28 June 1952, pp. 619-624.

⁵⁸ ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom, ‘Labeling--A Report of the ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom’, *ALA Bulletin*, July - August 1951, pp. 241-244.

⁵⁹ Berninghausen, *The Flight From Reason*.

⁶⁰ Robbins, ‘After Brave Words, Silence’; Robbins, ‘The Library of Congress and Federal Loyalty Programs’.

⁶¹ Anonymous to Superintendent, 6 July 1950. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Ralph A. Beals Records, 1946-1954. Box 7, Folder ‘Letters of Praise and Complaint, 1949-1951’.

⁶² Anonymous to Head Librarian, 28 April 1951. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Ralph A. Beals Records, 1946-1954. Box 7, Folder ‘Letters of Praise and Complaint, 1949-1951’.

⁶³ ‘Pressure Groups’, NYPL Archives. RG 5. Board of Trustees. Committee on Branch Libraries Records, ca.1910-1970, 1910-1927. Minutes. Volume L, 1950-1951, p. 201.

⁶⁴ Jack Lait, ‘All in the Family’, *Daily Mirror*, 9 August 1950. The copy of this that I found in the NYPL Archives didn't include the page number.

⁶⁵ Miss [Anna L.] Glantz to Mr. [Ralph A.] Beals. Memorandum. 9 August 1950. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director's Office. Ralph A. Beals Records, 1946-1954. Box 3, Folder ‘Correspondence, 1947-1951 Tib-Tim’.

⁶⁶ Eugene W. Castle, *Billions, Blunders and Baloney: The Fantastic Story of How Uncle Sam Is Squandering Your Money Overseas* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1955), p. 155.

⁶⁷ ‘Book Banning’, *The New Counterattack*, 10 June 1955, pp. 90-91.

⁶⁸ Marjorie Behnken to Dr. Louis Joughlin, 23 June 1955. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Central Administration. Director’s Office. Edward Geier Freehafer Records, 1948-1971. Box 44, Folder ‘RD: Special Collections Am. Civil Liberties Union 1955-1957’.

⁶⁹ ‘Annual Report – 1947’, NYPL Archives.

⁷⁰ RWH [Robert W. Hill] to [Robert E.] Kingery, NYPL Archives.

⁷¹ James C.N. Paul to Edward G. Freehafer, 11 November 1955. NYPL Archives. RG 6. Director’s Office. Central Administration. Edward Geier Freehafer Records, 1948-1971. Box 9, Folder ‘Fund for the Republic’.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Dain, ‘Public Library Governance and a Changing New York City’, p. 226.

⁷⁴ Marjorie Fiske, *Book Selection and Censorship: A Study of Public Libraries in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 74.