

Read by Prof. Frans Albarillo, Brooklyn College, Library Department  
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Good afternoon,

My name is Frans Albarillo and I'm a faculty librarian at Brooklyn College. I am speaking now on behalf of Medgar Evers College Library Faculty and Staff who are dealing with such a crisis in their library that they cannot take time away to be here to deliver this testimony.

Since 2014, when we moved into our beautiful, renovated library, we have experienced damage throughout the library due to multiple leaks and floods caused by rain, improper drainage, and faulty pipes. Then, in 2021, Hurricane Ida flooded the whole Lower Level, and the Library faculty and staff were forced to work remotely for over a semester while the library was in repair. Many of our library and archival holdings were damaged.

In the Spring 2022, the staff of the Archives were moved out of the Archives area because of a black mold outbreak. Sometime in Fall of 2022, the HVAC system was upgraded. After that, humidity levels actually went up, and temperatures could not be controlled.

In August 2023, there was a mold outbreak in the Technical Services area, where cataloging and new book processing takes place. Books, archival materials, and chairs were affected. Library faculty and staff members had to be evacuated from that area.

In the Spring of 2024, a crew from DASNY came in to do mold abatement on the books and archival materials in the Technical Services area. They cleaned the materials. But since then, mold has spread on all the three floors of the Library. Laptop bags, chairs, desks, and personal belongings at other locations and people's offices in the library are moldy as well.

Some of the newly acquired books that were stored in the Chief Librarian's conference room for two months are covered with mold. Facilities may have discarded the books without consulting us. There is a library procedure for deleting books from the catalog before discarding them. This information was communicated to facilities, but it has been disregarded.

There is so much moisture in the air that facilities placed dehumidifiers in several areas including the Archives. The dehumidifiers are constantly on, and their tanks need to be emptied several times a day.

Mold has spread to the book stacks on the Lower Level of the Library. But this is not the only problem there. There have been no lights in the area for years, and staff and patrons need to use flashlights to be able to read call numbers. Mold has also spread to the reserved textbooks collection on the main floor.

The vinyl seats of the student chairs throughout the Library have deteriorated excessively from the climate conditions.

The Administration has not been communicating with anyone in the Library about how things are being resolved. No one deals with our complaints properly. For example, we were told that the suspicious stuff on the table in the Chief Librarian's office is bacteria from food (though the office has been vacant for over a year because we don't have a Chief Librarian, and no one has been in there).

We still have no Chief librarian, having only interim chiefs since 2016, and no chief for the past year. Library faculty have not been replaced. We are down from 9 to 5 library faculty; we have no acquisitions librarian, no cataloging librarian, no evening/weekend librarian, and 1 reference librarian was not replaced. We also haven't been able to replace any retired COA/CLT/HEO staff. We had to reduce library hours.

Overall, the current administration's attitude towards the Library staff has been dismissive and/or punitive. We are told that we have been complaining too much. The measures they take are cosmetic and do not address the causes of the situation: simply wiping the affected surfaces or painting over them does not resolve the issue. Library faculty and staff are all worried about the effects of mold in our work environment on our health.