

Rudy's Library Budget Ax Draws Officials' Ire

By Craig McGuire

Outraged officials from the Brooklyn Public Library system and Borough President Howard Golden are denouncing Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's proposed reduction in funding to Brooklyn libraries.

While budget cuts will hit all three of the library systems in New York City, Brooklyn will absorb the largest hit.

Cutbacks threaten to eliminate or prevent expansion to six-day-a-week service at many of the 60 branch libraries in the borough.

"It is ironic that the area with the greatest need will be receiving the least assistance," said Golden at a March public hearing at Borough Hall.

Giuliani spokesman Forrest Taylor said the Brooklyn Public Library and the New York Public Library servicing Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island would receive the bulk of the cuts due to mismanagement.

"Both the Brooklyn and New York public libraries were asked to operate as ef-

ficiently as the Queens system," said Taylor. "And because they haven't operated as efficiently as the Queens system, they will not receive all of the funds they have requested."

Brooklyn Public Libraries spokesman Donald Kaplan blasted Taylor's reasoning, calling it "completely flawed."

Said Kaplan, "It is difficult to create an efficiency standard that can measure the quality of library service. Libraries are not retail outlets. You do not measure the impact of library service by looking at circulation statistics."

He added, "How do you rate the efficiency of opening the world of knowledge to a child?"

Kaplan noted that when library service was extended to five days a week citywide, the Brooklyn Public Library added seven-hour days to its branches, while the other two systems added five-hour days. "So we were able to provide two additional hours of library service per day for the same amount of money," said the



Brooklyn Public Library Director Larry Brandwein testifying at an early March hearing at Borough Hall. Photos by Craig McGuire