

**Testimony of Johanna Bockman, Associate Professor of Sociology, George Mason University, and Blogger, Sociology in My Neighborhood: DC Ward 6
Monday, March 7, 2016, 10:00 AM, Room 412**

**District of Columbia Committee of the Whole
Chair: Phil Mendelson**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the DC Council. My name is Johanna Bockman, and I am an Associate Professor of Sociology at George Mason University. I live in Ward 6. Since 2011, I have written about the history and sociology of Washington, DC, for my blog “Sociology in My Neighborhood: DC Ward 6.” I also publish scholarly books and articles based primarily on archival materials. I am writing today because my nationally and internationally recognized research relies on records housed at the DC Archives, as well as on records that should be protected by the DC Archives. In addition, my exceptional colleagues working in the area of DC Studies also rely on archival documents, including those at the DC Archives.

On many occasions over the past five years, I have used the DC Archives. The archivists there have always been kind and helpful. However, it has been clear that they have been working diligently under very trying circumstances.

1) It is essential that the building receive annual funding for repairs. When I work there, especially during the summer, the building is immensely hot and muggy. The research space where I read documents is filled with shelves of documents that are exposed to this heat and humidity, which is terrible for the integrity of these documents. The air conditioning at the very least needs to be repaired and maintained. Many of the documents should be re-packaged in traditional archival boxes to protect the documents. I have received files crushed into inappropriate boxes, which endanger the materials. Finally, the researcher area could also use some inexpensive repairs. The researcher area is just a couple of folding tables in the midst of the document shelves. There are no electrical outlets for researchers to plug in laptops. It would be very helpful to add electrical outlets.

2) The DC Archives needs more staff to implement records management and to make government agencies comply with the records management law. It is immensely difficult for researchers to do any research on Washington, DC, because there is no inventory of the DC Archives holdings or the DC government documents being held haphazardly all over the District. Some kind of inventory list or finding aid is extremely important. It is equally important to make certain that the government agencies follow the records collection and management laws. At the moment, I just finished using DC Housing Authority (DCHA) documents. While I know that the DCHA has had a special government status, DCHA was part of the DC government at one time. The DC Archives has a few binders of legal minutes from the 1950s and 1960s, as well as a couple of files in the Mayor Barry papers. DCHA itself has very very few documents. For example, for the entire history of the Ellen Wilson Dwellings, there were about 8 small binders about the buildings’ demolition. There were no documents about its construction or its nearly 50-year existence.

3) *A state-of-art DC archives is needed.* In such a facility, DC government documents could be preserved for generations to come.

Many of the historical documents of DC government have already been lost, and thus parts of DC history itself have already been lost. We must stop the future loss of materials, as well as protect and inventory the documents that the DC Archives and related agencies already have. The historians and sociologists of Washington, DC, need the DC Archives to write the history of Washington, DC, and to develop the exciting field of DC Studies.

Funds are needed to upgrade the current facility for conservation and preservation of the collection materials, proper storage and a climate controlled environment. They are also needed for additional staffing; and to begin preparations for the new state of the art facility that will provide the amount of space needed for the existing and expanding archival collections. I urge the DC Council to support the necessary funding for the DC Archives.

Thank you for your consideration.