

**NYPL 2018 Spring Dinner Remarks**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Good evening. It is a real pleasure and honor to be here with you tonight. First, and on behalf of all of us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), let me begin by extending a warm thank you to Tony Marx and to the Board of the New York Public Library (NYPL) for hosting us tonight and for recognizing our long partnership with the NYPL, it is much appreciated! Under Tony's leadership, the NYPL has continued to set an example globally for what a successful public library system should look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is our foundation's sincere hope that the renovation, currently underway across the street of the Mid-Manhattan Library, and most importantly, the programs and resources the new building will enable, will help ensure that the NYPL is equipped to thrive long into the future.**

**The British journalist and author Caitlin Moran has called Libraries "Cathedrals of our soul". Mecanoo's lead architect for the Mid-Manhattan project, Francine Houben, has said "Libraries are the most important public buildings, like cathedrals were many years ago", not in a religious sense but as acknowledgement of the central role libraries have as public places in our communities today—for gathering, learning, reading, and even for providing safety and refuge.**

**Despite the changes that digitization continues to bring in how we share knowledge and how we communicate, and perhaps because of it, we believe deeply in the enduring power of libraries' physical space. We do not need to look farther than the Rose Main Reading Room to understand the timeless quality of what the library offers. It is our hope for the new Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library to complement the research main building where we are gathered here tonight by providing New Yorkers and beyond a state of the art circulating library. A library that belongs to every visitor. A library that is equipped to meet their diverse needs—from children and teens downstairs all the way up to the adults in the learning center.**

**This will become the main new campus of the NYPL system, the main Research building on the one side and the new main circulating library across 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.**

**NYPL's mission of "inspiring lifelong learning, advancing knowledge, strengthening our communities" is expressed every day via the operations of 88 branches. These branches offer neighborhoods extending from the Bronx to the tip of Staten Island a remarkable network of spaces in which everyone, of all ages, races and backgrounds, is welcome and safe, and where knowledge is free and accessible to all. We live in very challenging times. Extreme polarization has taken over our collective daily lives. The need for true public spaces as the ones that the NYPL provides is of outmost importance. It is places such as the NYPL that comprise this, many times taken for granted, web of institutions that provide all of us with the security of knowing that no matter what, life will and does go on. It is through such institutions that we can eliminate the noise happening around us, dilute the poison of polarization, help support, and strengthen our citizens and our communities. So**

that we can still feel like members of a truly civil society. However, nothing comes free. We all need to engage, now more than ever. When one looks into how the budget of the NYPL is funded year after year, one can realize how well the public and private sectors can indeed work together. Collaborations are essential, across all levels.

**The library brings to life the highest ideals of civic engagement, civil discourse, and democratic participation for New Yorkers all over the city and beyond.**

**At our current time of severe polarization throughout the United States and around the world, the SNF remains committed to continuing our long and extensive support for libraries globally and for all they represent. The SNF's largest grant to date for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC) in Athens, Greece, included construction of a new facility and home for the National Library of Greece. Our foundation formally donated the cultural center to the Greek people last year. The enthusiasm we have seen from the thousands of visitors to this new library in its early days, together of course with the charming and very effective fundraising efforts of Tony Marx, inspired us even more to contribute towards the new Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library here in New York.**

**While buildings are important, it is of course the people, librarians and staff that make the work of the New York Public Library possible day in and day out, that make the heart of these spaces beat. I would like to thank Julie Sandorf and the Charles H. Revson Foundation for the idea they had several years ago to highlight the incredible work of neighborhood libraries by presenting annual "NYC Neighborhood Library Awards." It has been an honor and pleasure for our Foundation to join Revson in co-hosting this event and supporting the individuals that truly make libraries so important for our communities. It is an honor to be recognized together with the Revson Foundation and all the great works it does.**

**I was privileged to serve on the Board of the NYPL for eight years starting back in 2003. One of my favorite moments attending the Trustee meetings was reading Thomas Jefferson's inscribed words in the Trustee room's wall, "I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition promoting the virtue and advancing the happiness of man".**

**It is all about education; it is all about providing for the right to hope and offering the possibility of the American dream for every citizen.**

**Thank you all for joining us this evening and for supporting the mission of this amazing institution. Let me leave you with Winston Churchill's words of wisdom: "we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."**

**Thank you.**