

## Read this: Programs and staffing are at great risk

Blacks impacted by Miami-Dade Public Library budget cuts

[Ashley Montgomery](#) |

Once upon a time, the City of Miami had libraries where children, adults and senior citizens went to read and research. Thanks to budget cuts set by Mayor Carlos Gimenez, the Miami-Dade County Public Library System is close to becoming a thing of the past.

In August, Mayor Gimenez made it public that he would no longer be closing a number of libraries around the county, but now the mayor is telling a different story.

“The mayor originally proposed a \$30 million budget but he is now proposing \$45 million which is still almost ten short from last year,” [John Quick, Friends of Library president](#) said.

According to Coalition to Save Our Libraries, revenues were cut \$13 million by the County. In 2013, Mayor Gimenez announced that he would close 22 of Miami-Dade County’s 49 Library Branches (which included: California Club, Opa-locka, Golden Glades, Civic Center Kiosk, Lemon City, Little River, Model City, Culmer, North Shore, Shenandoah, South Shore, Fairlawn, Virrick Park, Country Walk, Concord, Sunset, Lakes of the Meadow, Tamiami, West Kendall Regional, Doral, Hialeah Gardens and Palm Springs North). However, thanks to the community and several campaigns like Friends of Library Mayor Gimenez reversed his decision in August.

### IMPACT ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY

This impacts everyone in Miami-Dade County, but minorities will seem to take the hardest hit. Take for instance this scenario: Recently, Hialeah Section 8 Housing was taking applications outside of the Curtis e-library for hours. Aside from the website being overloaded — workers at the library were unable to properly assist those seeking help because they were short-staffed.

“The reality is if you’re closing libraries in those areas, in turn it could displace people around the community,” Quick said.

Elroy Phillips, owner of Perfection Design Central is a Miami resident that is thankful for the Miami-Dade County Public Library System.

“The library has been a huge asset and positive influence for me,” Phillips said. “Through the library in general, I have met so many people that has helped me to grow my business, it has been a great experience.”

M-DCPLS offers numerous assistance programs throughout the year. Quick says that plenty programs will be cut because of the decrease in the budget.

Due to the cuts, programs like S.M.A.R.T. — a free tutoring program that helps children with their homework to allow them to learn at their own pace. Another literacy program, Reading Ready — geared towards teaching the parents how to teach their child at home and the adult literacy program — will no longer exist.

“Early childcare learning is important to the development of our youth to grow up effectively to be outstanding citizens,” Quick said. “I grew up with libraries so I know the value of them — anyone who says they are outdated, it’s just a matter of how you utilize it.”

### TECHNOLOGY ON THE RISE

Libraries were established to empower people, support literacy and lifelong learning, strengthen families, build communities, protect our right to know, preserve our cultural heritage.

According to Coalition to Save Our Libraries, a \$64 million library budget could achieve a lot for Miami-Dade County residents. The group said a healthy budget could provide more advanced technology options at public work stations, teen centers at all regional libraries, more advanced technology classes for children and seniors and new books and e-resources.

Some libraries around the county are currently operating on less than part-time schedules. This is disproportionately affecting people in different communities.

“Our children are going to be the new leaders and they must have the resources to do so,” Quick said. “Technology is on the rise, but the library isn’t just about books, it’s a community space.”

Phillips overwhelmingly agrees.

“I don’t understand why they would want to close the library. It has kept so many kids out of trouble — especially the You Media kids,” he said.