

# City of New Haven

Toni N. Harp – Mayor



PRESS RELEASE

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## MAYOR HARP, NHFPL BOARD NAME JOHN JESSEN NEXT CITY LIBRARIAN, EFFECTIVE 12/23/19

New Haven – Mayor Toni N. Harp and members of the Board of Directors of the New Haven Free Public Library (NHFPL) have selected John Jessen, MLS, to lead the city’s library system and operations as the next City Librarian.

Jessen lives in New Haven and is the first person promoted from within the Library staff to its top job since Lindsey Brown in 1929.

The Library Board voted his appointment this month following a national search. Jessen has been Deputy Director of the NHFPL since 2017 and has served as acting director following Martha Brogan’s retirement October 31. His appointment is effective today, December 23, 2019.

“It gives me great pleasure to know NHFPL patrons will be the beneficiaries of continuity in library operations and services – that John Jessen will advance the momentum that has characterized the library system’s administration these past many years,” Mayor Harp said. “New Haven’s public library system has seamlessly adapted to the technology required of 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries and the evolving role they now play in the lives of city residents.”

Jessen came to New Haven in 2003, after more than a decade of professional work in publishing and bookselling in New York City and elsewhere. He earned a Master in Library Science degree from Southern Connecticut State University in 2008, and began his work with the NHFPL in 2004. Early in his New Haven library career, Jessen organized the *Writers Live!* Program, an author reading series, and other programming for adults and for children. From 2007 to 2012 he was an outreach specialist for the library, working with a wide range of community partners in the public schools, citywide civic organizations, and neighborhood groups.

Jessen served as the head of the Courtland Seymour Wilson Branch of the public library from 2012 to 2017. As Deputy Director since 2017, his work has included supervision of many library locations and departments and leading special projects, such as the collections for Ives Squared in the main library downtown and preparation for the opening day collections at the new Stetson Library. He has also been responsible for selecting, training, supervising, and evaluating library personnel.

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“It’s an incredible honor to be named City Librarian. I wake up every day knowing I have this amazing staff committed to welcoming and assisting the enormously diverse people of New Haven as well as those who visit our city,” Jessen said. “I’m so excited to lead the New Haven Free Public Library as it grows into an even more central hub of culture and community, a place where people naturally gather to be part of something bigger, and where we dissolve the boundaries between and within various institutions and communities.”

“It is important that we have a City Librarian who can lead the organization in a way that will continue to build on a history of accomplishments and dedicated service to our diverse community,” said Shana N. Schneider, president of the Board of Directors of the NHFPL. “We see our designation as an award winner of the 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Service as a springboard for John and the NHFPL team to keep the Library’s evolution going into this new decade and beyond.”

Schneider noted that the feedback the Search Committee received from library staff as part of its due diligence was consistently and enthusiastically positive. “The library’s staff members are its greatest asset, and developing and supporting their talent is a key objective for the new city librarian,” she said. “It’s clear they respect him and trust his leadership. Among the comments we heard were, ‘He understands and respects the diversity of New Haven;’ ‘John has been an incredible mentor;’ ‘he understands all the components of this system’ and has ‘an innovative vision for the future of NHFPL and a passion for the job.’”

Jessen earned his bachelor’s degree from St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota. As a New Haven resident since 2003, he has been actively involved in the community beyond his professional work in the library, including volunteering with groups such as LEAP and New Haven Reads and service on the board of Common Ground High School.

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