

15,000 Library Books Are Found In Lawyer's 'Village' Apartment

By MARCIA CHAMBERS

Joseph Feldman, a 58-year-old lawyer, was arraigned here yesterday after firemen discovered more than 15,000 New York Public Library books in his Greenwich Village apartment—piled to the ceiling, covering the stove and filling the bathtub and sinks.

The collection was discovered Sept. 19, during a check of apartment 4-A following a fire on the first and second floors of the building at 164 Waverly Place. Mr. Feldman, who explained outside the courtroom that "I like to read," was charged with criminal possession of stolen property.

The police said the books were taken over the last decade, principally from the library's Jefferson Market and Hudson Park branches.

Twenty men, working three days, removed the books in seven truckloads to the library annex at 531 West 43d Street for sorting. The value of the books was estimated at \$125,000.

Mr. Feldman, who lives at 177 West Fourth Street, apparently used the Waverly Street apartment strictly for storage of the books, which included a Chinese dictionary, volumes on art and philosophy and also contemporary novels. No rare books were included.

"There was only a two-foot pathway through the four-room apartment, said Detective Charles Pendergrass, who added that Mr. Feldman had yet another apartment, at 57 Leroy Street, where several hundred

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LAWYER ACCUSED IN LIBRARY THEFT

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more books are stored. The police plan to inspect that collection.

John M. Cory, director of the New York Public Library, said:

"I don't know of anybody who's stolen more. I hope there never was anybody who stole that much—or ever does in future."

Restrict Reading

Edwin S. Holmgren, director of the New York Public Library's branch system, said last night that it was too early to tell if Mr. Feldman's alleged thefts had been noticed by librarians at either the Jefferson Market or Hudson Park branches.

"It will take time to go over the records," he said, adding "We have had a problem with thefts at Jefferson Market."

It could not be determined last night if Mr. Feldman had ever held a library card.

After surrendering yesterday, Mr. Feldman stood mute during the three-minute proceeding while his lawyer described him as a lawyer who had worked for various city agencies, including the City Controller's office in 1966.

Mr. Feldman's lawyer, Edward Bobick, asked for a psychiatric examination, and Judge Howard Goldfluss agreed. Mr. Feldman was paroled on his own recognizance, and his case is scheduled for a hearing Oct. 31. He is charged with a Class D felony, and if convicted could be sent to prison for up to seven years.

The judge directed Mr. Feldman to restrict his reading in the interim to books not taken from the library, in fact to "stay away from the library."

A spokesman for the library said that some of the books might have been checked out by library card and that Mr. Feldman might be charged the usual overdue fine of 10 cents per book per day, up to the cost of the book. But the library is holding off, pending outcome of the criminal proceedings.

George Labalme Jr., a vice president of the library, said: "We keep telling people to borrow books, but this man took us too seriously."

After the arraignment, James Brown, an investigator for the library, asked Mr. Feldman, "Do you have your library card?" Mr. Feldman said he did not.

When an associate asked Mr. Feldman how he had got the books out of the library, he replied: "In large quantities."