

## A Banner Year for the Friends!

### 2006 Baker & Taylor Award Application Summary submitted by The Friends of the Minneapolis Public Library

Founded in 1949, The Friends of the Minneapolis Public Library (FMPL) have had many notable years, but 2006 outpaces all others. In this single calendar year, the FMPL:

1. Contributed \$14,160,408 to the Minneapolis Public Library (MPL);
2. Co-coordinated the grand opening of the new Minneapolis Central Library; and
3. Organized a major advocacy effort that laid the groundwork for consolidation between MPL and the Hennepin County Library.

### Financial Support for the Minneapolis Public Library

In 2000, the FMPL contributed \$25,000 to MPL - a slight increase from 1999.

Fundraising had historically been a minor part of our organizational mission, and we recognized that we needed to change to keep pace with MPL's evolving needs. We overhauled our board, committee structure, and staff to support major gift fundraising. We engaged high level development consultants and invested in a new database and improved communications. We aimed high, and we have exceeded our goals. In

2006, our total contributions to MPL reached \$14,160,408 - a 566-fold increase from 2000. This included \$12 million to complete the new Minneapolis Central Library; \$1,400,408 for educational programs, outreach initiatives, technology upgrades, and other needs; and \$760,000 for collections.

Much of our fundraising efforts were centered on "Be Part of the Story," a \$15 million capital campaign for the new Minneapolis Central Library. This was the first effort to raise significant private funds for MPL since our first public library was built in 1885. The campaign, which was

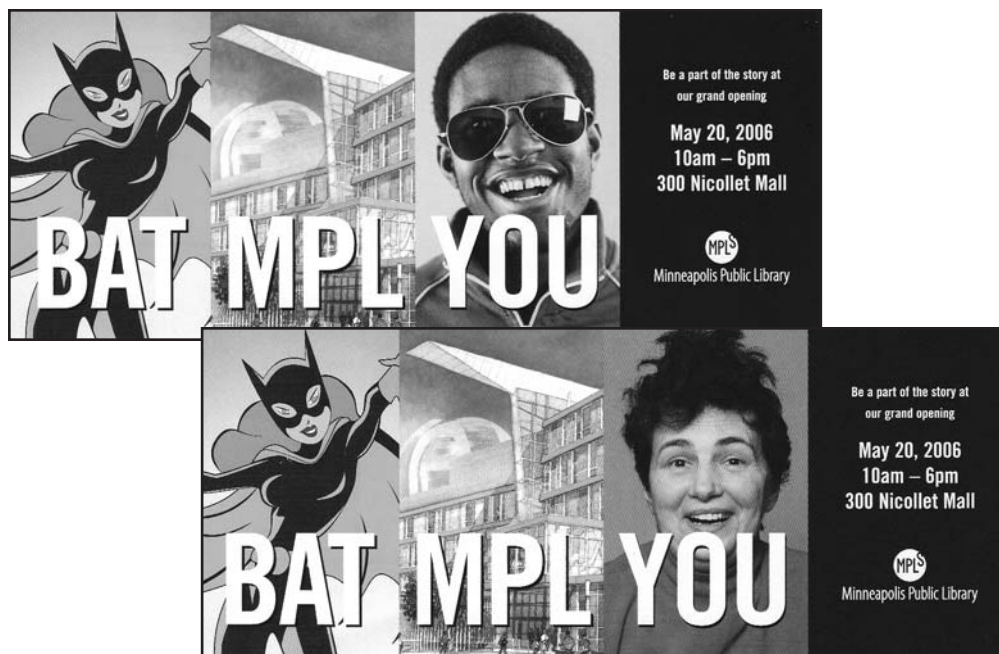
completed in 2006, ultimately exceeded its goal, raising a total of \$16.4 million. Nearly 70% of contributors were first-time donors to the library. To help retain these high-level donors, in 2006 we also launched the "Minerva Circle," a society of individuals who contribute at least \$1,000 annually. In the Minerva Circle's first 10 months, 166 members have enrolled; in the previous year, we had 37 donors at the \$1,000+ level.

### The Grand Opening of the New Minneapolis Central Library

In May 2006, the new Minneapolis Central Library opened after a three-year construction project. To celebrate, and to fully utilize this historic moment to focus public attention on the essential nature of library services, the FMPL joined with the MPL Department of Partnerships and Communications to coordinate the launch. In this partnership, the FMPL:

- ◆ Convened a volunteer marketing and sponsorship committee to engage local expertise;
- ◆ Developed a partnership with a local advertising agency which provided pro bono services to create an original, eye-catching launch campaign;
- ◆ Created media partnerships with the local CBS affiliate, Minnesota Public Radio, *The Rake* (a monthly magazine), Metro Transit, and the *Star Tribune* to support widespread distribution of our campaign through contributed ad space/air time;
- ◆ Recruited corporate sponsors to underwrite all grand opening expenses;
- ◆ Hosted a pre-opening gala attended by 1,500 people; and
- ◆ Coordinated more than 350 opening day volunteers.

In total, sponsorship and ticket sales raised more than \$850,000. Promotions made MPL both more visible and more dynamic when visible. More than 22,000 people attended the public grand opening, and a year later Central Library continues to attract 3,500 daily visitors.



(Above) These two 8.5" by 3.5" cards were developed to promote the grand opening of the new central library. Following the "Be a Part of the Story" theme, the front of the cards say, "Be a part of the story at our grand opening." The back includes logos of various sponsors and "A librarian by day, Batgirl used her library to track down criminals. Your new Minneapolis Central Library could make you a superhero, too. Start your own adventure at our grand opening May 20th."

“Most importantly, through each of these endeavors we have built our capacity to raise funds, mobilize advocates, and engage the public on behalf of MPL.”

## Public Advocacy

2006 was an unusually complicated year because it included both the celebratory Central Library grand opening and a very challenging budgeting process with roots in state cuts to local municipalities in 2004. Even as we were preparing for the grand opening, we were laying the groundwork for an advocacy campaign, and as soon as the grand opening was complete, we shifted most of our organizational resources into public education and organizing.

At the beginning of 2006, we issued our first position paper, calling for improved funding, which immediately put us at odds with the Mayor and most City Council members. Over the summer we organized public hearings at 11 of our 15 libraries. We significantly expanded our print and electronic communications. We produced and distributed iconic “Keep Libraries Open” buttons, which started appearing all over town - including on the lapels of a few City Council members. By fall, as the city budgeting process was heating up, we started making repeated calls for action. Based on feedback from city officials, several thousand constituents contacted their representatives.

In the short-term, our efforts had mixed results. The City Council allocated an additional \$1.2 million to MPL in one-time funds, but this did not prevent the temporary closure of three community libraries. However, by raising library funding as a major public issue, we helped galvanized new talks between the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County about the potential consolidation of our library systems - an issue which has been considered on and off for at least 40 years.

The FMPL staffed and provided research for a blue ribbon advisory committee which ultimately recommended

consolidation. Just months into 2007, the Minneapolis Mayor and City Council, the Hennepin County Board, the Minneapolis Public Library Board, and the Hennepin County Library Board have all signed off on a set of guiding principles that would lead to a single, united library system for the entire county. This partnership would result in the re-opening of our three temporarily closed libraries and connect MPL to the larger and more rapidly growing county tax base, which would ultimately result in the restoration of hours, services, and collections.

## And That's Not All

In addition to fundraising and advocacy, the FMPL also launched (or greatly expanded) sponsor-supported author, lecture, and film series to celebrate the opening year of the Minneapolis Central Library. In 2006, the FMPL sponsored 67 events (most of them after the grand opening in May), attended by more than 9,000 people. Featured authors included Nancy Pearl, Dava Sobel, and David Rakoff.

The FMPL, which have coordinated volunteer services for MPL since 1984, also organized more than 350 on-going volunteers who contributed more than 20,000 service hours. With the new Central Library grand opening, we launched a new volunteer docent program and a volunteer Welcome Desk service.

Most importantly, through each of these endeavors we have built our capacity to raise funds, mobilize advocates, and engage the public on behalf of MPL. 2007 is off to an excellent start, and we believe our best years are still ahead.



(Above) This 11” by 6” postcard promotes The People’s University, a series of free programs sponsored by the Friends of the Minneapolis Public Library and Marquette Financial Companies. The programs are promoted as “college without papers, exams, or fees” and cover a wide range of topics.

(Below) This card invited MPL staff, Trustees, retirees, and families to a pre-grand opening party of the new central library with music, kid-friendly drinks and desserts, an up-scale dessert bar for adults, and tours of the new central library. Continuing with the “MPL and You” theme and including Batgirl, the postcard is eye-catching, fun, and features actual MPL staff. Casanova “has RSVPed and will most certainly bring a date.” Jerry “will stay late to make sure the place is cleaned up.” Ethel “will make sure the event budget isn’t overspent on bonbons.” Will “will issue a tell-all blog entry the following day.” Batgirl “librarian by day and crime fighter by night. Remains unconfirmed.” Finally, Willie “will act as bouncer, in case librarians become unruly.

