

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Growing Up on
Crocus Hill
—Page 22

Summer, 1995

Volume 30, Number 2

A Powerhouse of Vision, Vigor
Friends of the Library's 50 Years—Page 4



A little girl, seemingly overwhelmed by the riches a library offers, kneels beside her stack of books at an event organized by The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. Beside her a future reader watches carefully. Photo from The Friends' files. For a history of The Friends' fifty years of service to the community, see the article beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of *Ramsey County History* provides an unusual look at a non-profit organization—The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library—that for more than fifty years has quietly served the cultural, intellectual, and public-spirited side of St. Paul and Ramsey County. As writer Virginia L. Martin tells us, The Friends began as what they themselves called a “tea and crumpets” society, but today is an initiator of change in the world of the local library. For example, in 1994 The Friends put more than a quarter of million dollars into various programs and activities designed to improve, expand, and upgrade the public library services that are available to all members of the community. Congratulations to The Friends.

John M. Lindley, chairman

Vision, Vigor, Earthbound Practicality

Friends of the Library—A Powerhouse After Fifty

Virginia L. Martin

If the name “The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library” conjures up images of a “tea and crumpets” society doing “little extras” for the Library, try these images:

- A nine-year-old boy wins a book in a drawing after reading ten books in The Friends-sponsored summer reading program. He tells the Lexington Library staff, “This is the first book I ever owned!”

- A Hispanic woman sits on a couch in the Children’s Room of the Central Library reading a book to her grandchild in Spanish. A librarian comes in and the grandmother looks up and says, “This is so good!” encompassing the room, the librarian, and the book from the World Language Collection, a Friends-assisted program.

- Friends members circulate petitions, write, phone, and knock on doors of elected city officials. They testify before the City Council, and persuade others to speak out on behalf of the Library for the

1995 budget. They make an offer the City Council finds too reasonable to refuse: If the city will put up part of the money to upgrade the Library’s technology in 1995, the Friends will find the balance. The Council agrees and the Library, alone among city agencies, gets an increase in its annual budget.

Once the image of a subdued society would have been an accurate one. But in

the fifty years since its founding, The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library has become a powerhouse. Led by men and women with vision, vigor, and an earthbound practicality, The Friends has helped guide the Library into an inclusive, multicultural, community outreach role, aided by the technology required in this Information Age. It is today an independent organization with a staff of three, including its executive director, a board that represents the community in all its diversity, a membership of nearly 1,000, and funds and fundraising capabilities that provide the wherewithall to bring The Friends’ visions to reality.

Probably even its visionary founders did not imagine such a role for The Friends. Perrie Jones, the Library’s chief librarian from 1937 to 1956, launched the Friends on September 25, 1945, only one month after the end of World War II. Most public institutions had been neglected during the war years, while the United States threw its energies and resources into the war. Although the Saint Paul Public Library had managed to hold its own and make some progress, it, too, needed attention.* The Friends organization was launched in a postwar world that was bringing enormous changes. Even as people celebrated the return of peace, the end of the war dragged in its wake the twin specters that would define the postwar world for years to come: nuclear war, whose destructive possibilities had been demonstrated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the deepening Cold War between the two great superpowers, the

**In an interview on the effect of the war on the Library, in 1943, Jones noted that since Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941), four new branch libraries had opened and four others had moved into better quarters. Reading by school children was up by 20,000 books in 1942 and, in the first nine months of 1943, by more than 30,000.*



Eighth graders from Smith School helping to move the Rice Street Branch Library into new quarters, 1944. Left to right: Ward Jenson, George Wurzinger, Norman Green, James Gaylord, Robert Bunion, and William Daubenspeck. World War II had intensified Library use and a year later The Friends was founded. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

Years

United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Veterans were returning home and entering college in unprecedented numbers aided by the G.I. bill of rights. The technology that had helped win the war was exploding into the peacetime world, most notably, the emergence of computers. Television was no more than a blip on the screen of the future—and some thought it would never be more than that. Perrie Jones thought otherwise. The library needed a *friend* to “trumpet our cause, our needs, and our programs,” she said, and added that returning veterans and their families would be seduced away from libraries by television. Libraries were a linchpin in building and maintaining democracies in the postwar world, Jones believed. In January, 1948, Jones took part in a WLOL radio broadcast on “Libraries and Peace.” She concluded her brief address by saying “Free libraries . . . are a powerful factor in ridding us of that tyranny [of ignorance].”

Joining Jones at that first Friends meeting were Theodore C. Blegen, historian, dean of the University of Minnesota graduate school, and director of the Minnesota Historical Society; Anna E.R. Furness and Laura Furness, granddaughters of the first governor of Minnesota Territory, Alexander Ramsey, and several other civic leaders. Trustees in 1945 included, in addition to Blegen and Anna Furness, Harold Wood, owner of an investment securities firm and Friends president; Annie Ginsberg; Mrs. Wallace H. Cole; Judge Kenneth G. Brill; Mrs. Harry B. Zimmerman; A.F. Lockhart; and Floyd W. Schrankler.

1945 to 1955

Two months after its initial meeting, 600 people showed up at a Friends’ open house at the Library on November 27,



Calumet Indian Dancers in Rice Park, May, 1955. This was the exuberant Spring Fair, a collaborative venture of the Library and the St. Paul Gallery and School of Art and funded by The Friends and the St. Paul Jaycees Wives. Photo by Harry R. Halverson, Jr., from the St. Paul Public Library's files.

1945, to hear Dr. Blegen talk about its importance in the community. So great was the enthusiasm that tours of the building extended until almost midnight. The outlook of this first Friends group seems remarkably similar to that of The Friends organization today.* It was a global view and one that resulted in the Library reaching into the “nooks and crannies” of the city neighborhoods to provide books for everyone. Its outlook was respectful of the cultural diversity in the city, and held that literature included more than books and reading—encompassing dance, music, film, visual arts, and theater.

**In 1923 a group that called itself the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library was formed because there was “no money for new books, neither is there any surplus for the necessary expansion of various departments to keep pace with the natural growth of the library’s activities,” according to a 1923 brochure called “What the Public Library Is and Does,” by E. P. Davis, treasurer. The group appealed to “public-spirited citizens” to become members of the Friends by contributing \$1 and endeavoring to obtain new books for the shelves. Their slogan: \$1 and a book. When “you have bought and read a new book . . . send it to the library.”*

In a *St. Paul Dispatch* article, Harold Wood was quoted as saying that The Friends was founded to widen the use of the Library by spreading information about its services, and to extend or create services not covered by the city budget through accepting gifts of money, memorial requests, and membership dues. The Friends’ mission was laid out in 1945 and its broad principles fifty years later remain the same: to stimulate interest in and use of the Public Library; to raise funds in a manner which does not diminish the need for strong public funding; and to act as an advocate for the Library.

The annual association fee was \$1; sustaining membership, \$5; and life membership, \$100. The money would be used to create scholarships for Library staff members, furnish speakers on special subjects, and buy works of art and equipment, such as a film projector. How The Friends and the Library proposed to carry out its principles to encompass the globe and the neighborhoods became evident in the activities it sponsored, supported, and funded for the next decade or so. One popular program The Friends sponsored was the Great Books program, founded in 1947 with the help of Mor-

timer Adler, the co-founder of the Great Books Foundation, and continued for years. In October, 1955, for example, 100 people signed up for Great Books.

One of the immediate projects of The Friends was to raise the salary of the chief librarian to a respectable level. St. Paul has never had an elected library board, a group of elected citizens who could lobby for the Library and its needs. Under the council system of government as it existed at the time, one of the council members was in charge of libraries. The head librarian made \$4,500 a year, low even by 1940s standards. Harold Wood and Friends member William W. Skinner put pressure on the commissioner of education, and in 1947, Jones's salary rose to \$6,000.

Although the term multiculturalism had not yet been coined, several of The Friends' activities touched on cultural diversity. In 1946 Anna and Laura Furness gave the library a set of six first editions, published about 1851, of Henry Schoolcraft's *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Conditions and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*. The books had been given originally to their grandfather, Alexander Ramsey, Minnesota territorial governor and state governor, by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In 1947, The Friends held a lecture on "The Lure of Indian Art" and in that same year, sponsored the Calumet Indian Dancers at the Minnesota State Fair, providing books, pictures, and other background material for the event.

Perrie Jones hired the first African-American librarian—and probably one of the first Black professionals in the Twin Cities—with the help of The Friends, according to Rodney Loehr, professor emeritus of history at the University of Minnesota. Loehr's wife, Nancy, was the Library's assistant librarian. As part of the careful groundwork laid by Jones and Nancy Loehr before they hired Bea Shuck Reed (later Bailey), they began a Friends' group at the St. Anthony Park Library where Reed went to work in the 1930s. Bailey later became supervisor of the Business and Science Section of the Library, where according to Library records, she worked until 1982.

The outlook remained global as well as multicultural. In 1947, The Friends sent files of magazines to devastated libraries in England, the gift of J. Humphrey Wilkinson. It sponsored an exhibit on atomic energy in 1947, and a talk on "Palestine and the Prospects of Peace." in 1950 by Dr. Charles Turck, president of Macalester College.

In February, 1951, as television grew more pervasive, The Friends held discussions on television, reading, and teenagers. Even in its fledgling years, public



Perrie Jones, chief librarian who launched The Friends. Photo from the St. Paul Public Library files.

television came under siege, and in 1951, The Friends went on record opposing commercial use of KTCA-TV's Channel 2. The first outside book return box was installed at the Central Library in 1951 with Friends' funding; over the years it has funded several book returns. The Friends gave \$2,000 to the Library on its seventieth birthday in 1952 to buy films for a film-lending program, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, and in 1953, The Friends took a stand against an obscene literature bill in the state legislature.

Year after year, since 1948, The Friends has been a special friend to children, in everything from making the young people's rooms more accessible and pleasant to funding children's books in Southeast Asian languages. In 1949, Friends member Mrs. Arthur S. Savage had the Children's Room remodeled as a gift to the children in memory of her parents, Thomas and Emilie Belden Coch-

ran. In 1950, the William W. Skinner family, over the years staunch Library supporters and Friends members, commissioned and had hung in the Skinner Room for Young People a wooden sculpture of owls, in memory of William W. Skinner, Jr., killed in World War II.

Since its founding, and up to 1952, The Friends had stimulated \$5,000 in gifts earmarked for books and records, purchased in memory of 232 individuals, donated an additional \$5,000 for other organizations and individuals, obtained \$50,000 in gifts for remodeling three library rooms; made gifts of 25,000 volumes; and, carrying out the idea that literature is not confined to books, obtained a valuable collection of instruments and orchestral music.

"Public libraries have a tremendously important obligation to the public in the way of recreation, which does not mean light fiction by any means," Perrie Jones wrote to a colleague in 1950. What she meant by fun may have manifested itself in The Friends co-sponsorship of the "Carnival of Books" program in the mid-1950s on KUOM, the radio station of the University of Minnesota. Even more exuberantly, in 1955, it held the first Spring Book Fair, a collaborative venture with the Public Library, the St. Paul Gallery and School of Art. It was funded by The Friends and Jaycee Wives. Held in the Municipal Auditorium and in a green-and-white tent in Rice Park, the fair featured six days of workshops, arts and crafts exhibits, demonstrations, book exhibits, film showings, and lectures. Some 2,400 schoolchildren were transported to the fair. About 5,000 people, almost equally divided between children and adults, attended the fair altogether. While exulting in the unexpectedly warm and enthusiastic response of the public, the weary staff immediately began planning the next fair, but put at the top of the list a recommendation that "once in five years" is probably enough for such an event.

When Perrie Jones retired in 1955, she was given a lifetime membership in The Friends. St. Paul attorney Pierce Butler acted as master of ceremonies, and Dr. Blegen gave the main speech at a testimonial dinner attended by 300 guests.

J. Archer Eggen was named library di-



Laura and Anna Furness at tea at the Ramsey House sometime during the 1950s. The granddaughters of Alexander Ramsey, first governor of Minnesota Territory, were among the founders of The Friends and established the Laura and Anna E. R. Furness Fund that after their deaths provided income for The Friends. Dr. John F. Briggs, below, and his wife, Myrtle, both avid readers, left their entire estates to The Friends. Minnesota Historical Society photos.

rector in December, 1955. Friends chairman James Oppenheimer welcomed Eggen to St. Paul, and The Friends entered its "tea and crumpets" period. Members tended to be older people who loved the Library deeply. They did volunteer work from time to time, and arranged celebrations whenever it was warranted—the remodeling completed in a branch library, for example, or a significant anniversary.

One challenge The Friends undertook was to try to get the Central Library expanded. Plans to remodel the building have floated for years, without success. In 1956, discussions were held on enclosing some part of the Kellogg Boulevard Court for more efficient library service. The Friends supported, in 1957, a one-story addition to the building on the Kellogg side that would have included drive-up book pickup and return windows. The plan was dropped for aesthetic reasons in the next year, but the issue would come up again.

The Friends announced a citywide summer reading program in 1960, "Team Up with Books," for children in grades



four through eight. Youngsters who read fifteen or more books would be given a choice of a ticket to a pop concert or a baseball game.

The Friends had taken on the role of advocate as early as 1945 or 1946 when Wood and Skinner lobbied to get Perrie Jones' salary increased, and it took on that role once again in 1961 when The Friends board sent a letter to Education

Commissioner Mortinson protesting inadequate library staff salaries.

In 1965, the former Centre Theater building, on University Avenue, which the Library had purchased with "generous assistance from federal funds," was renovated as the new Dale-Selby (Lexington Branch) library, the first instance in the city of a library in a shopping area or "strip mall." A year later The Friends funded the creation of decorative wood sculpture and metal door panels. In the 1960s and 1970s, The Friends received several substantial bequests, including income from the combined Laura and Anna E.R. Furness Fund after the deaths in 1959 of Laura and in 1964, of Anna. In 1980, the fund's book value was more than \$2 million.

Perrie Jones died in 1968 and left a bequest to be administered by the Minnesota Foundation and used for the professional development of the staff. Over the years, this money has been used for educational and training purposes and to send Library staff to conferences and meetings to broaden their horizons, activities that would have been virtually nonexistent without the fund.

In 1972, The Friends received a bequest that eventually shook them to their rather staid roots. "You cannot overestimate" the effect on The Friends and on the Library of the Briggs trust, said Mary Ida Thomson, former board member and president of The Friends. Dr. John F. Briggs, a St. Paul internist and heart specialist, and his wife, Myrtle T. Briggs, were avid readers and users of the library. When Mrs. Briggs became an invalid, Dr. Briggs made frequent trips to the Library to select books for her. Perrie Jones often helped him make the selections. As the friendship between Jones and John and Myrtle Briggs grew, so did the couple's interest in the Library. When they died, the childless Briggses left their entire estates, amounting to more than \$1.6 million, for the benefit of The Friends. It is the foundation upon which the present-day Friends and its works rests.

Briggs, "a wise and kind man," was a boyhood friend of Warren Burger, former chief justice of the United States. They grew up together in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood of St. Paul and re-



Owl sculpture, commissioned by the family of William W. Skinner, below, for the Skinner Room for Young People at the downtown Library. The gift was in memory of William W. Skinner, Jr., who was killed in World War II. Both photos are from *The Friends* files.

mained lifelong friends. Briggs asked Burger to administer the trust, which he did until his death in June, 1995.

For several years, The Friends organization continued on in much the same pattern after the Briggs bequest, the income from the trust just being added to the Library's materials budgets to buy books. There was no advocacy. There was no fundraising. The membership numbered about thirty.

"People were listed as members of The Friends and on the board but they hadn't been getting together," said librarian Annette Salo. Along with other responsibilities, Eggen gave newly hired librarian Salo the task of promoting more Friends activity. There was a slight flurry of activity in the mid-1970s. Salo helped arrange several annual meetings, attended by twenty-five to thirty long-standing members. The Friends also sponsored, in 1976, a businessperson's breakfast given by the staff of the Science and Industries room. W. Kirker Bixby, chairman of The Friends in 1976, completed a publication on rare books the next year. Two years later, The Friends hosted a "Children of Man" photography exhibit at the Library, and assisted with the Governor's Pre-White



House Conference on the Library and Information Services.

By 1978, the Library faced a crisis. The Library's materials budget from the city had been stuck at \$200,000 for eight years and now was to be reduced to \$125,000, at a time when the Minneapolis Public Library's materials budget had risen to \$1 million. Hours and staff had been cut, and Eggen, angry at the City Council, refused to negotiate. Library staff morale was at an all-time low.

In 1978, Eggen retired and Gerald Steenberg was appointed the new director. Steenberg had begun working at the

library even before he completed his graduate degree from the University of Minnesota. He had been director of the Highland Park and Sun Ray branches, supervisor of the Library Extension Service, and chief of the Central Library. Kathleen Stack was named assistant director, and The Friends welcomed them with a reception in Landmark Center on November 14.

It was a serendipitous time, in Steenberg's words, for his appointment. The stage was set, the plot was rolling, and the principal characters all seemed to crowd onto the stage at once. Warren Burger, who never forgot his modest roots, asked The Saint Paul Foundation to energize The Friends. The organization had "an enormous amount of money, but it didn't have a way to spend it and didn't have a way to account for it," said Paul Verret, president of The Foundation.

Even before he was appointed Library director, Steenberg had been working with Nancy Harris, a program officer for The Saint Paul Foundation, about projects regarding The Friends and about the Perrie Jones Library Fund. Harris, a former librarian herself, understood libraries and library needs. Harris "was as important as any one person could be," said Steenberg. She was the "architect," a "firecracker," and the "shepherd" of The Friends through this exciting period, to use the metaphors of several different colleagues.

Truman Porter's only affiliation with the Library until then was as a "recreational reader," but as president of Midway Bank, he was concerned with public access issues. Porter, asked to join the board in 1978, by Verret, "was the right person" to be there at the time, says board member and later president Mary Ida Thomson, not only because of his technical knowledge, but because of his persistence. "Truman would just keep marching on," oblivious to setbacks or discouragement, said Thomson. Paul Verret, Nancy Harris, and Truman Porter, who became president in 1978, worked beautifully together, said Thomson. "It was a good combination."

Thomson, an officer of First Bank of St. Paul, was asked to join The Friends board in 1979. Her role, presumably, was

to have been a "token community representative," but instead, she was quickly swept into the accelerating activity, gained her bearings, and helped lead the group. Everything was happening at once, said Steenberg. Here was a Library staff that "felt that this Library system was ripe for an evaluation, to give focus and direction" to the Library, and eager to collaborate. Here was a Friends organization, with board members of vision, energy, exuberance, and the knowledge and ability to get things done. And here was "a lot of money," in Verret's words, that provided the means for getting things done. "We set The Friends on fire," said Verret.

The first move toward more visibility for The Friends was to ask The Saint Paul Foundation to manage the organization, which it did from 1979 until 1993, when The Friends set up its own organization. The Saint Paul Foundation expanded and reorganized the group, bringing in new members and producing a whole new slate of officers. Truman Porter became president and Verret became treasurer, a post he held for thirteen years. Harris was executive secretary, employed by The Saint Paul Foundation and paid for her time by The Friends. Steenberg sat (as he still does) on the board. The Friends exercised complete control over its funding, programs, and membership, while The Saint Paul Foundation provided staff and accounting support, planned agendas, and executed the programs drafted by the board.

Only two people from the "old" board remained on the new: Bixby and Jeanne Fischer, who had joined in 1976 at Eggen's request. Fischer had been a book reviewer for the Saint Paul Book and Stationery stores when they still carried books, a "freelance" reviewer after that, and a political activist. She is still on the board, the only member who spans the two Friends eras.

A second move was to raise \$88,000 to finance a study to find answers to questions the Library staff was asking about Library access and direction: How could the Library better reach people? How can the Library provide broader access to new and existing constituencies? What should be the Library's direction in the

years ahead? They are questions The Friends and the Library never stopped asking themselves in the years that have followed.

Outside consultants were hired to develop a long-range plan that would take the Library system beyond the 1980s. Humphrey Doermann, president of the Bush Foundation, headed the Task Force made up of Truman Porter; Robert S. Davis, vice-president of the St. Paul Companies; Reatha Clark King, president of Metropolitan State University; Frank D. Marzitelli, then head of the Saint Paul-Ramsey Arts and Science Council and formerly the state Commissioner of Transportation; Erma E. McGuire, deputy superintendent of the St. Paul Public Schools; attorney Richard A. Moore, of Moore, Costello and Hart; state Senator Paul D. Stumpf; and Fred B. Williams, director of the Martin Luther King Center. The members met once a month, giving hundreds of hours of their time over the next two years.

The Library staff at every level and the consultants, The Friends, and the Task Force, all worked closely together

to come up with answers and recommendations for the Library—all with the help of the Library users. The study had many components, including an analysis of needs; a telephone survey to reach non-users; an analysis of borrowing records; interviews with business people and service organizations; a "community walk-around" by staff members; and an analysis of the Library itself. When it was concluded in June, 1981, the Library and The Friends had a 189-page report with a fistful of specific recommendations for programs, services, and equipment, detailed with costs, proposed timelines, and suggestions for their implementation.

One overarching recommendation of the Task Force was that to bring about any of the recommendations, large capital expenditures were needed. Serendipitously, again, The Friends had discovered that the St. Paul Public Library would be 100 years old in 1982. The Friends decided to use the birthday to launch an all-out fund drive with the theme, "The Next 100 Years," and a goal of raising \$1.8 million to fund several specific Task Force programs and projects.



Early Friends members and long-time Library patrons remembered at a Friends Open House in October, 1952. Mrs. Sara Gadbois, left, a library patron since 1888, examines a reel of film, harbinger of the new age, with Stella Ranweiler of the Library's circulation department. Photo from St. Paul Public Library files.

100th Anniversary Campaign

The Friends launched their drive with a "2 for 1" offer: The Saint Paul Foundation and the Knight Foundation would each provide a dollar-for-dollar matching grant for each gift. Garrison Keillor was asked to be honorary chair of the drive. Instead of acting in an honorary capacity, however, he turned up at most of the meetings, "always full of ideas," said Jeanne Fischer.

A birthday deserves a party, and The Friends decided to go all-out. That "nearly killed me," said Mark Reidell, public relations director for the Library from 1980 to 1994. He probably was not alone. Friends member George Lautsch rounded up 100 volunteers (many of them Library employees) to staff the various exhibits, blow up balloons, and serve free birthday cake.

"Garrison said we had to have a parade," said Fischer, so a "Once in a Hundred Years, Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library All-Volunteer Marching Band" assembled in Mears Park and marched to Rice Park and the Library. Keillor was its Grand Marshal. Somewhat more professional music was provided throughout the day and evening by the El Ballet Mexicano, Vic Tedesco and His Band, and the Minnesota Blue Grass, among others. Authors Sybil Smith, Carole Nelson Douglas, Judith Guest, Joe Soucheray, and Susan Allen Toth signed their books at B. Dalton booths, and the bookstore chain donated part of its sales that day at all its stores to the fund drive. There were exhibits, book booths, games, theatrical performances in the park and in the Municipal Auditorium. A picture display illuminated 100 years of the Library's history and projected its possibilities into the future. The party concluded in the evening with a tea dance for which the Butch Thompson Trio played in the Library's Social Sciences Room. About 8,000 to 10,000 people attended the day-long party.

As the fund drive campaign progressed, Verret and other Friends board members raised the ante until finally the goal was \$2 million. In March, 1983, the drive topped \$2.2 million with more than 3,000 contributions. Verret was "the cat-



Arts and Crafts Workshop at the 1955 Spring Fair. A young artist works on a portrait surrounded by several of the 5,000 people who attended the six-day event. Photo by Florence Sterba from St. Paul Public Library files.

alyst, probably the major force" in this extraordinarily major fundraising campaign, said Steenberg.

Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force had come up with recommendations ranging from new technology for monitoring the collection and updating reference searches to providing two unusual new libraries. Now, with the successful conclusion of "The Next 100 Years" fund drive, The Friends had the money to bring them about. The Friends' board of trustees sent all of the recommendations to Mayor George Latimer and the City Council with its complete support. After more hard work, the Library and the city implemented most of them.

Bar codes, familiar to any grocery shopper, began showing up on St. Paul Public Library books and other items in the mid-1980s. The bar codes, on both library cards and individual loan items, are part of an automated circulation system

that monitors the entire collection. The system, installed over a three-year period beginning in 1985, replaced the old card catalog and the manual loan system. Previously, the catalog could tell the user only whether that library owned a book, not whether it was in the system. The automated "card catalog" not only provides the location, but shows if the book is in or not. It identifies delinquent borrowers at the circulation desk and prints overdue notices automatically. It also allows the Library staff to identify books and materials in high demand, evaluating its collection on a current, ongoing basis and more accurately targeting areas that need additional or updated materials.

The new system provides a single checkout and return point in the Central Library that saves both staff time and money. It frees librarians in five Central Library departments to help patrons instead of having to stamp books. In turn, the theft detection equipment from these departments was installed in branch libraries, which were experiencing book

thefts amounting to \$100,000 a year. The Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA) absorbed most of the automation startup costs, The Friends provided approximately \$286,000, and 3M Company donated security equipment. More than 200 volunteers and Central and branch library staff contributed 1,334 hours applying bar codes and labels, completing the task in 1987. The new arrangement, on the Library's ground floor, also provides access for the handicapped.

Increasingly "computers are the key to reference information," extending the range of the search for information to national databases and reducing the time required from hours to minutes. The funds raised from the 100th anniversary campaign paid for the hardware, software, and staff training for the upgraded computer reference service, installed in 1987. The microfiche catalogs were replaced with online catalogs for faster access.

"Putting books where the people are" has been one of the goals of The Friends, who funded two "firsts" from the Task Force recommendations, putting small libraries in a community center and a busy downtown skyway. One is located in the West Seventh Street Community Center, which opened in 1982. Because it provides easy access in a center where there are other agencies, this library, initially staffed mostly by volunteers, especially benefits the youngest and the oldest in the community.

The second library, the first of its kind in the Midwest, and the longtime dream of Nancy Harris, was the Skyway Branch in the busy Town Square Center. Wrapped like a package and tied with a huge pink bow, for weeks tantalizing downtown shoppers and business people with its promise of a present to the people of St. Paul, it opened June 23, 1986, with a celebration emceed by Garrison Keillor and attended by Mayor Latimer and other officials. The structure itself is a prefabricated 12 feet x 24 feet Plexiglas® kiosk that holds 11,000 books on six carousels. The library features popular paperbacks and hardcover best sellers, but it also has a small reference library, plus a microfiche catalog for the entire system and an after-hours book drop. Customers can re-

quest any book from the library system and get it the next day. The Friends raised \$250,000 for the portable structure and for operating costs for the first two years.

It was an immediate success. Nearly 3,000 of the 7,000 books in stock were checked out in its first six days. Its circulation averages 10,000 items per month, the equivalent of a branch library. About ten to twenty people visit the kiosk on a typical lunch hour. "We experienced a lot of people coming in with library cards that expired years ago," said Mary Ann Miller, supervisor of Town Square. "You have people coming in saying they haven't used a library in years because 'It wasn't where I needed it.'" An average of 400 individuals register for library cards each month, Miller said.

Books are the heart of the Library, The Friends emphasize. In 1981-82, using money from the Perrie Jones Library Fund, the Library made a study of the collection and its collection development methods. Once a one-person operation, explained Elaine Wagner, now superintendent of collections, ordering Library materials became a shared responsibility, with book selectors in various specialized areas and recommendations from a committee for juvenile works. Branches began to select their own books.

Another spinoff of the anniversary fundraiser was to set up two funds—a Book Endowment Fund, with a goal of \$500,000, and a General Endowment Fund. Interest from the Book Endowment Fund is used only to buy books or other media that otherwise "might not be available to the Library user," such as the purchase of non-English books. Donors know that their "gift gives forever because it's not just for this year, but every year," said Edie Meissner, executive secretary of the Friends from 1988 to 1992.

In 1917, the architect of the Central Library, Charles Soule, anticipated that the building would have a functional life of twenty-five years. The Friends had tried without success in the 1950s to expand the space. Nearly fifty years after Soule had predicted that a growing collection and increased use "would begin to intrude upon the integrity of the interior design," the Friends in 1989 campaigned

once again to remodel and renovate the Library. As admired and beloved as the building is, wrote Larry Millett in a *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch* column in 1989, "it is a building that doesn't work very well and hasn't for a long time." The Friends presented a plan that would "retain the elegance and beauty of the original structure," expand the building into the Kellogg courtyard, and through various modifications, "take the building into the next century," with its increasing and diversified media collection and use. The plan would have cost \$12 to \$15 million. Millett wrote that "it appears such work could be done without destroying the building's integrity." Despite the effort of The Friends and others, the money was not available and once again the plan was dropped.

Although the plans to expand and remodel the Central Library have not been successful so far, neither are they dead. The Library administration has presented a plan to redesign the Library space, creating an "information commons" (a general reference area) near the entrance and making the stacks more accessible. The administration has asked the Friends to consider becoming a partner in the plan.

Friends' Presence

The 100th Birthday was a turning point. Friends members cemented relationships with each other and with the people of the community who served on committees and on the campaign. "By the time that celebration year of 1982 was over, The Friends had become a very viable organization," said Steenberg. Elected officials had begun to recognize the growing power of The Friends—especially important, said Steenberg, because the St. Paul Library has no library board. The Friends rose up to fill that void, becoming that "group of citizens who could go in and speak on behalf of the library to the mayor, the City Council, the budget director." Before that, said Steenberg, it was always the staff explaining to government officials what was needed and why, much less effective than having a group of citizens do it. By the end of the campaign, The Friends had a presence and a voice, said Mary Ida Thomson.

The Friends began to use its voice



A dream realized. The Skyway Branch, opened in 1986 in the busy Town Square Center, was the first of its kind in the Midwest and the longtime dream of Nancy Harris, The Friends' first executive secretary. Photo from The Friends files.

with increasing vigor after the 100th Birthday celebration as St. Paul—and the nation—moved into the more Spartan 1980s and 90s, in which government agencies with increasingly heavy loads were forced to vie for fewer and fewer dollars. It is easy to take an institution such as the Library for granted. The Friends needed to bring to the attention of public officials the central role a free public library plays in a democratic society. It needed to explain to the public and city officials that St. Paul residents are heavy library users, that of the sixty largest cities in the country, St. Paul's per capita circulation is second or third highest. It needed to remind officials that when hard times hit, people use the library more heavily. It is the one public institution whose services are completely free, and it provides recreational reading as well as a lot of information for business executives, students, jobseekers, researchers, community agency employees, and the just plain curious, not only in books, magazines, and paper documents, but now on tapes, CDs, and videos.

In the 1990s, the Library was losing resources and staff at the same time the city was dealing with a more diverse population, more homeless, more poor, more small businesspeople, said Carol Ryan, now Friends president. Although both

usage and costs have risen (paper costs shot up 55 per cent in one year and media such as CD-ROM, tapes, and video may have high initial costs), the budget at best stayed the same; all too often, it was cut.

The Friends also needed to explain that Friends funding is no substitute for public funding. "What good are the extras if you can't keep the doors open?" asked Peter D. Pearson, executive director of The Friends organization. The Friends provides books and media in special areas that the Library staff identifies as in great demand, such as English as a second language (ESL) books and tapes, the World Languages collection, board books for toddlers, and self-help books for small business owners—perhaps in Hmong.

The annual budget battles had been familiar ground to The Friends for years. The Library gets most of its money from the City of St. Paul, and some appropriations through state aid grants. The Library's need for an active "friend" was made starkly evident in the city's approved budget for 1982 that cut the hours in all the branches, reduced the staff by more than ten employees, cut the children's programming drastically, and increased the materials budget by only \$25,000, which did not allow for inflation.

In both 1988 and 1990, the City Council restored some of the cuts after vigorous campaigns on the part of The Friends. Thomson urged not only Friends but members of the Metropolitan Senior Federation and other groups to write to their Council members. In 1990, the City Council approved a budget that enabled the Library to hire new employees to cope with the increased workload and to restore library service hours at ten of its branch libraries.

But in the fall of 1991, the city proposed a cut in the 1992 budget so severe that it would have eliminated the Library's membership in the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA), which provides thousands of dollars for library materials, automation equipment, and the summer reading program, as well as interlibrary loans throughout the metro area. It would have closed libraries on Saturdays throughout the year and cut the equivalent of twenty-two full-time staff positions. The Friends were galvanized and quickly took the "unprecedented step" of drafting a petition to restore the cuts and circulating it to Friends members and others in the community. "A locked door is a subtle form of censorship," wrote Mary Ida Thomson in the petition and letter published in the local newspapers. Five thousand signed the petition, and the City Council restored about \$100,000 to the 1992 budget.

The group, however, decided a more muscular advocacy program was needed, and set about designing one in its usual thorough way. A first step was to form an advocacy committee for the first time in its history, in May, 1992. Then-President Richard Faricy asked Carol Ryan, vice-president at the time, to head it. The committee was made up of a cross-section of the community, of men and women representing every branch library, from every neighborhood, and from diverse ethnic, racial, age, gender, occupational, and income groups.

Another step, taken after much discussion, planning, and computing, was to hire a full-time executive director, rather than continue to pay a part-time executive secretary employed by The Saint Paul Foundation. Although the arrangement had worked well until then, the

Friends calculated that with its own director, it could become a more proactive organization. Peter Pearson, whose work as executive director of an educational organization was over, knew Paul Verret and Jean Hart, the Foundation's vice president, and decided to apply for the job since Meissner was not interested. He was hired in 1992.

When the 1994 city budget was proposed, the Advocacy Committee sprang into action. It developed a fact sheet and a position paper. Members testified at all of the City Council's open hearings, and urged others to contact council members and to testify on behalf of the Library. Then The Friends suggested a partnership. The Library needed \$120,000 for CD-ROM work stations and an upgraded computer network. If the city would put up \$80,000 in new money, The Friends would make up the \$40,000 difference. The Council accepted the offer. The Library was the only city agency to get an increase.

For the 1995 budget, Friends efforts resulted in the Library restoring forty-five hours of evening Library services to the branches (except Town Square). The Friends had asked for funding to reopen the branches one evening a week and the City Council was so convinced of the need that it approved funding to restore two evenings, keeping branches open Monday through Thursday until 9 p.m. Funds were also approved for automated checkout equipment to reduce repetitive motion injuries among the staff, as well as to save staff time.

At the same time, throughout 1993, The Friends had been reviewing its past and present and considering its future roles. Out of this came a board decision that if The Friends were to take on a more vigorous role, the group had to take a third step, to become independent of The Saint Paul Foundation for the first time in its history. Pearson had been executive director for about a year-and-a-half when he and the board determined, that The Friends could operate its own organization for the same costs as being a client of The Saint Paul Foundation—and increase advocacy as well. The Friends presented the plan to Paul Verret. Verret and The Saint Paul Foundation not only



Peter Pearson, executive director of The Friends. Photo from The Friends files.

agreed, but provided a grant, with the Knight Foundation, to pay for The Friends' one-time startup costs and helped guide The Friends into independent status in January, 1994. The small miracle-working staff, in addition to Peter Pearson, who does most of the fundraising, includes Karen Hering, who writes grants, and Sharon Sturdivant, office manager, who does all the secretarial-accounting-receptionist work.

"We knew we had our work cut out for ourselves that first year," said Pearson. Their goal was to provide enough outside funding to make up for the costs of running the organization, and to do it in three years. "The first year, we exceeded our goal," said Pearson. "We ran the whole organization, did a membership campaign, put out quarterly newsletters, did twenty different programs throughout the year," and put \$272,000 in outside funding and lobbying funding into the city budget.

The Friends are successful because they have "askability," said Marie Grimm, City Council member, based on the group's representation of the community. "They are a tremendously powerful, diverse group of people from all walks of life—young and old, high-powered executives and ordinary people." In addition,

said Grimm, "The Friends always come to the table with about 90 per cent of what needs to be done already done. All they ask for is this one little piece." Partnership is more than a buzzword to The Friends—as when the group persuaded the city to put up matching funds for new technology for the 1994 budget or for a much smaller matching fund that would bring back puppet shows for children in the same budget. "They make the most of every single dollar," added Grimm. "When the Council asks how their proposals benefit the rest of community . . . they always have the answer. Elitist? Far from it," said Grimm.

Children's Programs

Preparations were beginning for the 100th anniversary about the time Alice Neve returned to the Library in 1980 after an absence. Neve had been a children's librarian, and the Library needed a youth services coordinator, a job that The Friends was funding. Neve was named to the job.

No programs had suffered more than the children's when the money crises began in earnest in the late 1970s. Budget cuts meant not only curtailed branch library hours in the evenings and on Saturdays, but greatly reduced children's programs. Although the Friends had always supported children's programming, said Neve, this support intensified in the early 1980s as needs for services for children were changing and increasing. Many schools had reduced library services, some schools were even being built with no libraries at all. When The Friends asked the librarians in March of 1984, what was their biggest need, many responded, "A rededication to children's programs."

The Friends listened, and in May, 1984, gave the Library \$1,200 to restart the reading program that summer. Clearly there had been a hunger in the community. In 1985, 16,000 children of all ages were drawn to the Library for Friends-sponsored programs, June through December. In same months in 1986, nearly 20,000 children converged on the library, nearly a 70 percent increase in program attendance in one year, according to Neve's annual report. The

number of registrants in the program increased almost 60 percent, and the number of young readers who read ten or more books increased nearly 65 percent. In 1994, the summer reading program drew more than 10,000 children into reading activities during the summer months. Citywide performances and presentations by writers, storytellers, musicians, magicians, and others attracted 20,000.

The Friends' end-of-year fund drive in 1994 provided additional funding for the 1995 summer reading programs. That drive restored Saturday morning children's programming in the Central Library, another cooperative program made possible by the Civic Organization Partnership Program (COPP) funding approved by the City Council for the Friends, as well as the branches.

For several years, the Friends have funded Children's Book Week programs, often in cooperation with the Public Schools, MELSA, Dayton's, the *Star Tribune*, the Junior League, and other groups. One such program has been to bring to the Library and the public schools, for a weeklong visit, a children's author and illustrator, such as Nancy Carlson, in 1986, Jose Arugo, in 1989, Allen Say, author and illustrator of Japanese heritage, in 1991, and Arthur Dorros in 1994.

The world of families and children in St. Paul—as elsewhere—has been changing dramatically, creating unprecedented challenges for the Library as well as the broader society.

- More and more mothers with young children were in the workplace, and the upsurge of single mothers has not abated, resulting in more children in daycare centers, and an increasing number of "latchkey" children.

- The primary language of many new Minnesotans is not English, especially as many Southeast Asian immigrants have settled in St. Paul.

- The numbers of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native-Americans are also increasing. More children are living in poverty, especially children of color.

Summer reading programs and Children's Book Week events are wonderful, The Friends knew, but more were



Two young readers deeply engrossed in their books at the Hamline Branch Library. Photo from *The Friends* files.

needed. For the last ten years, The Friends have accelerated their programs for "at risk" children and for the very young, focusing a significant part of their resources on the most vulnerable—and malleable—of the population. Two of these programs are "Raising Readers" and "Launch a Young Reader."

"Raising Readers" started in 1985, focused on very young, pre-literate children. It was launched at the Merriam Park branch with a workshop for parents, "the major influence in a child's development as a reader," said Alice Neve. The Library's approach was to teach parents how to get children to *want* to read. "Children need to be bonded with books," confident and at home in the world of books, to be successful in school.

Launch a Young Reader, designed to "whet the reading appetites of very young children who otherwise might not be exposed to books," started as a pilot project in September, 1990, at the Lexington branch. The Lexington staff began regular story-hour programs for children enrolled at fifteen child-care centers in the Thomas-Dale and Summit-University areas of St. Paul. For one week in

1991, for example, librarians donned cowpoking duds and told stories, played games, taught simple crafts, and sang songs with a Wild West theme to entice these young ones, reported the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Although children are read to at some daycare centers, "because it was nice to do," not all daycare providers realized it is also vital to a child's development. "Kindergarten and first-grade teachers can tell when a child comes in the door which children have been read to," Neve said. "Creating a reading appetite in young children is one of the most valuable ways to prepare a child for success in school."

The Friends funded the \$55,000 project, which purchased story kits (storybooks, flannelboard, puppets, storytelling ideas, and other materials) that child-care providers could check out, funded workshops for providers, and bought books and other materials for the project. In addition, the grant provided child-care providers, teachers of young children, and parents materials on child development, managing a child-care business, planning activities for children, and curriculum development. A newsletter issued periodically gave ideas to child-care

providers for games and other reading-related activities, and included a "Kids' Corner."

In 1995, five years after the pilot program began, the Library expanded Launch a Young Reader to Arlington Hills Branch Library and four family centers, with some changes. The pilot project focused on child-care providers, but the new program emphasizes family reading activities and offers storytime training and materials to parents as well. In addition to Arlington Hills, Launch a Young Reader will be located at the West Seventh Community Center and the North End Family Center; two others without permanent locations so far are the West Side and the Highland and Macalester/Groveland neighborhoods. Friends funding provides workshops; purchase of children's materials that parents and child-care providers request; startup collections in the centers; and development and circulation of ten storytime kits.

"Leverage" and "partnership" are buzzwords in the business world, but probably few corporations use the concepts as effectively as The Friends. For the expansion of the Launch a Young Reader Project, The Friends rounded up a group of partners with similar and overlapping interests. Partners may contribute money, but they may also, as in this case, contribute facilities, staff, and other services. For Launch a Young Reader, the State of Minnesota and the Sheltering Arms Foundation provide the money, and the Saint Paul/Ramsey County Children's Initiative collaborates with the Arlington Hills Branch Library.

The Library branches offer three storytimes for children of different ages, at different hours (except during the summer). There are "toddler storytimes" for two-year-olds, preschool storytimes for children ages three to five, and now "bedtime storytimes" in the evenings. Children are invited to wear their pajamas and bring a stuffed "friend," as well as their parents, to the 7 P.M. storytime. The Early Childhood Family Education cosponsors this with the Friends.

For a few years, The Friends sought to reach an even younger audience—newborns. They delivered new baby book

packets to all new parents at Ramsey, United, and St. Joseph hospitals and at the Frogtown Family Resource Center. Although parents liked the packets with their Mother Goose story books and information about reading and the Library, the program did not seem to lead to increased Library use and it was dropped.

"Roots and Wings: A Family History Club," is a family oriented program that

that the family of each young person will get involved in discovering its history.

The program is a collaborative effort with the St. Paul Public Schools, the Minnesota History Center, the Minnesota Genealogical Society, and the Golden Agers from the Hallie Q. Brown Center. It is funded by a grant from the State of Minnesota, from the General Mills Foundation, and from The Friends.



Library patrons benefiting from The Friends' investment in the wave of the future. A Friends grant to the Library provided matching support to extend city funding for new technology at the Central Library and its branches. Photo from The Friends files.

started in the summer of 1995 at the Lexington Branch Library. About twenty-five students from Benjamin E. Mayes School, ages eleven to fourteen, are participating in the club with their parents to explore their own roots while learning about the diverse cultural backgrounds of others. The club met several times in the summer, learning about genealogical and related resources available from the History Center and the Genealogy Society Library. In the fall, the students will be enrolled at a Family History course at the school and will meet at the Lexington Branch to research their own family histories. Each young person in the club will complete a project that preserves a part of his or her family history in storytelling, a video production, a written history, a totem pole, or any number of other methods. While "Roots and Wings" is targeted to school-aged youth, the hope is

Through another collaborative pilot project, The Friends joined forces with the Library and Saturn School, a St. Paul public school located downtown, to explore the potential of computer linkages between schools and public libraries. The Central Library is the primary library resource for Saturn students, and their heavy use (and large number) of classroom computers made it a logical choice. Funded with a one-time grant of \$30,000 by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the project links the Central Library with Saturn School computers. The project will tailor Central Library services and materials to meet students' needs. For example, the project establishes a Central Library science project reference collection and expands the Children's Reference Center with two new computer workstations and a collection of information/nonfiction videos,



Four of the more than 20,000 children who attended the 1994 Summer Reading Program's performances. Photo from *The Friends* files.

among other features. This proposal was one of the first developed by The Friends since it became independent and strengthened its grantwriting capability, said Peter Pearson.

Book Festivals and Literacy

With the idea of making its organization more visible, The Friends held an ambitious statewide Festival of the Book in 1988, in collaboration with approximately 100 other organizations, in the Central Library, Rice Park, and Landmark Center. Part of the purpose of "A Book Affair," held September 10 to 18, was to help place books in a wider context, said Edie Meissner, former executive secretary of The Friends. Literature manifests itself in many activities, and "A Book Affair" set out to demonstrate that. Fairgoers could see the premier of a movie based on a book by Carol Bly, "fly a poem"—write a poem and put it in a balloon and let it go—stop at an exhibit on how blind persons read, visit with Lyle Lyle Crocodile, watch a streetcorner literacy play, play Scrabble, listen to strolling storytellers, or buy a used book, or a new one and have the author sign it. The Minnesota Book Awards began as one of the fair's events and endures to this day. Collaborating organizations ranged from local colleges, bookstores,

writing clinics and groups, local newspapers, theater companies, community groups, public radio. The event was so vast that the Friends hired a coordinator and a manager.

The next year, 1989, The Friends scaled the Book Affair down to a one-day event on September 30, but still brought together about 100 organizations and attracted 15,000 fairgoers, *three* times the 1988 number. No wonder, with attractions such as Pippi Longstocking, Jo March, Babar, and Tom Sawyer, courtesy of the Children's Theatre, and wild but lovable Maurice Sendak creatures from the Minnesota Opera. The daylong event featured dozens of reading and writing activities: a giant crossword puzzle with fifteen-inch letters created by children from twenty-one public and private schools, visits by such celebrities as Dave Moore, a demonstration on papermaking, a sale of used books, and music by the Sunshine Band.

Although the Book Affair has not been repeated, it achieved some lasting goals. It "heightened the visibility of the Library and The Friends," said Mary Ida Thomson, and increased giving to The Friends. The festival also helped The Friends "develop a wonderful rapport with the community of publishers, booksellers, of users, and the Library," said

Thomson. And all over the state, fragments of the festival go on: a visiting author in the Roseau schools, for example.

The Friends would not sponsor a Minnesota Festival of the Book in 1990, noted Mary Ann Grossmann in a *St. Paul Pioneer Press* column, but instead would prepare for a White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services that would explore what libraries will do in the 1990s about illiteracy, democracy, and productivity. Literacy is not a new field for The Friends. Ronald M. Hubbs, a lifelong lover of books, a retired insurance executive, a longtime member of The Friends board and of the F.R. Bigelow and Saint Paul Foundation boards, established the Minnesota Literacy Council within The Saint Paul Foundation, which subsequently built the Ronald M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning. The Literacy Council, the Library, and The Friends are natural allies. Lexington Branch supervisor Annette Salo is on the Hubbs Center Advisory Board.

In an atmosphere of meager government funding, it was no small feat for The Friends to receive in 1995 a grant for federal funding that links the Literacy Center and the Library. The grant will allow the Library and the Center staff to learn about each other's resources and capabilities and train the staffs to work better with adult literacy students in the selection of appropriate reading materials, for example. The money allows an expansion of online materials and electronic linkage between the two centers.

Bookmobile and Access

The Bookmobile links several of the Library's and the Friend's themes: putting books where the people are, responding to cultural diversity, providing children's services, and meeting changing community needs. The Friends had helped buy one bookmobile in 1950, according to "An Informal Time Line" put together by The Friends in 1985. By 1990, the one remaining, eleven-year-old Bookmobile, which belonged to the city, was in the garage more often than it was on its appointed rounds, and parts for it could no longer be obtained. The Friends raised \$80,000 to replace it in 1990. The book-

mobile is the "only link to the library system for many residents of public housing projects, senior high-rises, and those 'blind spots' of neighborhoods not within walking distance of a permanent branch," now-retired Bookmobile Librarian Mary Jo Datko said in a *St. Paul Pioneer Press* article. "Over 60 percent of our users are under fourteen," she said, adding that at a regular library, about 60 percent of the patrons are adults. Another 20 percent are over sixty-five. "Eighty-five-year old women tell us that if we didn't bring them books, they'd have nothing to read," Datko told Mary Ann Grossmann. "Some of the Southeast Asian children take home forty to fifty books a week and everybody in the family reads them."

The new Bookmobile has increased the number of stops from thirteen to twenty-five. At the McDonough homes, more than 150 youngsters are waiting when the Bookmobile pulls in every week. At the Martin Luther King center, four daycare classes eagerly await the Bookmobile's arrival. And just as eagerly, the people in the high-rises anticipate the Bookmobile visit. The annual circulation of the Bookmobile is about 75,000.

Moving Out

Back in about 1978, Nancy Harris instigated Book Bag lunches, relaxed, bring-your-own-lunch-and-talk-with-an-author get-togethers. Over the years, this popular program has attracted thousands of downtown workers and shoppers to the Central Library on a weekday noontime. Book Bag lunches have included such authors and illustrators as Tim Rumsey, author and doctor; Allan Gurganus, author of the book, *Widow of Oldest Living Confederate General Tells All*, and Minnesota prizewinning novelist Jonis Agee. In 1991, the series brought the rich oral story-telling traditions of the Ojibway people to the Library users, along with Peg Meier, *Star Tribune* reporter and author of *Coffee Made Her Insane*, Craig and Nadine Blacklock, photographers of Minnesota's North Shore and wilderness areas, and Lou Bellamy, founder, manager, and director of Penumbra Theater.

As St. Paul (and America) grays, The Friends have begun to respond with pro-

grams for older people. In 1991, The Friends sponsored a four-week national program for older adults in which the "creative vision of writers, poets, philosophers, historians and artists" was explored through a discussion of their work. The program was developed by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Council on Aging.

Other programs the Friends have sponsored over the years have numbered into the hundreds and would easily fill all of these pages. Instead, just a sampling is presented.

- In 1986, a total of 1,500 people attended Book Bag lunches to see and hear Jon Hassler, Rebecca Hill, Christina Baldwin, Justine Kerfoot, Judith Guest, and others.

- Cleveland Armory, *Saturday Review* columnist, author, and founder of Fund for the Animals, spoke at The Friends forty-fifth birthday party in 1990.

- An architectural series in 1991 included Larry Millett, architectural critic for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and author of the Minnesota Historical Society book, *Lost Twin Cities*, and Loren Ahles, architect of the new Minnesota History Center building.

- Christopher Cerf presented a "politically correct" evening in 1995.

- JFK-assassination witness Jean Hill,

co-author with Bill Sloan of *JFK: The Last Dissenting Witness*, presented a program at the Central Library attended by 400 people in 1994.

- In celebration of cultural diversity and the Asian-Pacific Awareness Month, The Friends co-sponsored with the Asian-Pacific Americans, several Book Bag programs, including music and instruments from China, India, and Vietnam; the "Experience of a Refugee," by a young woman who was then a freshman at Hamline University; and a lecture on the Hmong, Its History, Traditions and Culture.

- A national exhibit, "The Bonfire of Liberties, Censorship of the Humanities," produced by the Texas Humanities Commission, was shown in the downtown skyway lobby of First Bank St Paul in 1994, cosponsored by The Friends, First Bank, the Minnesota Center for the Book, and the Minnesota Humanities Commission.

While downtown events can still draw crowds, in recent years, as if by centrifugal force, programming is moving from the center out into the community. Once, most programs took place at the Central Library. In 1993, the Library switched to evening programs in the Library branches to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The programs span



The Bookmobile, "the only link to the library system for many residents of public housing projects, senior high-rises, and those 'blind spots' of neighborhoods not within walking distance of a permanent branch." Photo from The Friends files.



Saturday Friends program for youngsters. Steve Thomford of the Minnesota Zoomobile fascinates a group of children with his program on small animals, sponsored by The Friends. Photo by the author.

the city and their subjects span the world, and often reflect the neighborhood in which they are presented. The branch libraries, not the schools, are becoming the "center of community activity and identity," said Richard Faricy, Friends board member and past president.

In an ambitious nine-part series, "Gathering at the River," started in 1994, The Friends, with partial funding from the Minnesota Humanities Commission and several other foundations, celebrated the Twin Cities' ethnic musical heritage, "as a living legacy of knowledge and understanding," according to The Friends newsletter. Each program featured a performance of live music and a scholar from one of the nine cultural backgrounds to discuss the musical traditions and innovations. From the Swedish heritage, a multigenerational musical family performed at St. Anthony Park Branch. The Heart of the Earth Drum and Dance Group performed at the West Seventh Branch Library, African-American Sacred Music was played at the Hamline Branch Library, a Klezmer Revival was held at the Highland Park Library, and Music in the Irish Tradition was sung, played, and discussed at Merriam Park, to name just a few.

Hamline Branch Library lighted its fireplace on Thursday nights in February, 1995, inviting the public to come in from the cold and take part in a reading series featuring four award-winning Minnesota authors, poet Barton Sutter, novelists David Haynes and Alexis Pate, and mystery writer Ellen Hart. The Library and The Friends co-sponsored with The Loft and COMPAS several writing classes held at the Central Library or branch libraries, with costs underwritten in part by The Friends. Julie Landsman, Jim Latimer, Deborah Keenan, Kate Dayton, and Marian Dane Bauer were just a few of the instructors of these classes over the several years they were held. "Ellis Island: The Golden Door"—the entryway for millions of immigrants to this country between 1882 and 1954—was presented by writer Tom Bernadin and photographer Augustus Sherman at Hayden Heights Branch in June, 1995.

Poetry will be taken down from the shelf and placed back in everyday life where it belongs when a five-part series on women poets is presented at Hamline Branch Library in the fall of 1995. Local poets such as Mary Easter and Deborah Keenan will read and discuss the poetry of writers such as Adrienne Rich and Rita

Dove. The series was developed jointly with the Modern Poetry Association and the American Library Association, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Friends' proposal to bring the series to St. Paul was one of twenty selected nationwide.

Hand-in-hand with the community tilt is the multiculturalism and inclusiveness of the Library. If you walk into the Lexington Library, for example, you see signs in Hmong, as well as English. Lexington has an excellent collection of books in Hmong for children and adults, and a fine collection by African-American authors.

The Library has added more than 1,300 titles to its World Language Collection in recent years, in recognition of the growing number of St. Paul residents for whom English is a second language. In 1994, for example, The Friends raised \$16,500 for Library materials, primarily in Hmong, Cambodian, Lao, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese, as part of the collection. At the Highland Park Library, you can find books in Russian. At the Central Library, you can find books in Spanish as well as several of the Southeast Asian languages.

The titles are bought with the help and input of community members. With funding from the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Library is also translating the new titles into English for the online catalog; translating library card application information; continuing to translate signage; and reprinting an ESL brochure, translated into six languages.

Pick up some of the book lists for children and young people, such as "Experience the World," which describes books that retell folk and fairy tales, tells about worldwide celebrations, and describes the people of Native American, Puerto Rican, Hmong, Mexican and American cultures, as well as racial and religious differences. In July of 1995, the Playwright's Center brought to the Hillcrest Recreation Center, adjacent to the Highland Park Branch, a play about a young college student who receives a spinal cord injury that dramatically alters her life. It also produced a play about the Negro Baseball Leagues in the 1930s at the Hamline Branch Library.

Friends and Technology

Ever since The Friends funded the "big ticket" items from the 100th Anniversary Task Force recommendations, they have been advocates of the need, in this Information Age, to incorporate technology into day-to-day library usage.

Most of the new money the City Council approved for the 1994 budget provided CD-ROM workstations (CD-ROM discs can hold over 650 megabytes of information, the equivalent of 270,000 pages of text) and upgraded networking. The new system enables twenty to twenty-five users to simultaneously access multiple CD-ROM databases. The system is available at the Central Library and all of the branches except Town Square. Another part of that project enables users with a personal computer, modem, and communications software to search the Library catalog from home.

New technology now allows customers to renew Library materials over the phone using a touch-tone telephone. On or before the due date, customers can call from home or work and provide the bar code number to an automated voice. Also new is an electronic calling service that notifies users when material they have requested is available and when library material is more than seven days overdue. The new system not only increases turnover of Library material, but it also cuts costs considerably.

Another addition is InfoTrac, an online magazine index and one of the Library's most extensively used computer reference services. It, too, is available at all twelve libraries, plus the Central Library. InfoTrac indexes 400 magazines from 1992 through the present and can find out if the Library has the magazine. For 250 of these magazines, the user can call up the complete text on the screen and print it out. This at least doubles the magazines available in the branches, which subscribe to only about 125 magazines.

In addition, most branches offer at least one newspaper index, and the Central Library has several. Users can also look up *Consumer Reports* to check out product ratings, find an article in a *Star Tribune* index, locate a business phone



Exploring the stacks at the Central Library. Photo from The Friends files.

number and address, or check out a record in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Users can, in an online multimedia encyclopedia, look up Beethoven and not only learn about his music and his life but *listen* to his most famous work, the "*Fifth Symphony*."

The Friends made a two-year commitment in 1992 and 1993 to purchase books on cassette, a "pool" of books that rotate among the branches and the Central Library, where before only the Central Library and a few branches had cassettes. Two more projects are going on as of 1995 that will have repercussions for years to come. One is in the area of "high tech;" the other "high touch." Thanks to a grant to The Friends from The Saint Paul Foundation, the Library hired for 1995 a technology consultant to advise the Library as it incorporates new technology into its services.

About once a decade, the Library does an in-depth, comprehensive survey of its services, resources, programs, and community needs. It began one again in late 1993. The Community Task Force was convened by the St. Paul Planning Commission and co-chaired by Friends members Elizabeth Kiernat and Willetha (Toni) Carter. Focus groups made up of communities of color, high school students, small business owners, home computer users, school staffs, neighborhood councils, and Central Library users have been meeting to discuss the roles for the

Library. Out of these meetings, Carter and Kiernat wrote a Comprehensive Plan for Library Services in St. Paul.

In April, Mayor Norm Coleman invited 100 citizens, representative of the diverse community, to discuss and respond to the recommendations and plans at a meeting at the Ronald M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning on University Avenue. The draft plan proposed four basic strategies for library services: to support education; to serve a changing community; to strengthen small business; and to build a regional system.

Using interactive technology, the participants "voted" on what they believed to be the most important role the Library should play in the community. The results were immediately displayed on a screen and the participants discussed the various options. Forty-one percent believed the most important role for the Library is as a learning center, but they also ranked very high the roles of the Library as an educational support center and community information center.

The plan presented six strategies for supporting education, and participants added six more. The participants ranked the strategies this way:

- Link the public, the community, and school libraries (47 percent), and provide library service at remote sites (21 percent).
- Hire more people of color (31 percent) to better serve the changing community.
- Develop business information centers to offer resources and technical assistance in selected libraries, a strategy that the participants added to the list, and 43 percent ranked as top priority.

In an uncertain world, a few things are probable. Government funding is not going to get any easier. We are an increasingly diverse and multicultural society with all the potential for bruises and scrapes and exhilarating change and progress that implies. By the year 2000, for example, Southeast Asian-Americans are projected to be the largest minority in K-12 education in Ramsey County.

And The Friends will continue to find ways to meet the challenges presented by these probabilities. People will continue to be at the core of everything The

Friends do: gathering people together in support of the Library; gathering people together in the community in the ongoing process of learning and living in today's world. The Library, says Marie Grimm, is an institution "with open arms."

Every evening that the Central Library is open, a homeless little boy and his father come into the Central Library. The father drops the boy off in the Children's Room and goes upstairs to read in one of the adult departments. The little boy sits down at a computer where he spends the evening playing and learning.

Virginia L. Martin is a freelance writer and a former member of the Minnesota Historical Society's publications staff. Her history of Giesen's Costumers and its ninety-eight years in St. Paul appeared in the Winter, 1994, issue of Ramsey County History.

Executive Secretaries

The Friends' two executive secretaries have played key roles in its history.

Nancy Harris, 1978–1988

Executive secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Friends, 1978–1988, Harris developed Book Bag lunches, increased membership, staffed the 100th anniversary celebration; and stayed long enough to see one of her dreams be manifested, the Skyway Library. She joined the Peace Corps and went to Guatemala to teach beekeeping, and she still lives there.

Eddie Meissner, 1987–92

Eddie Meissner had been a librarian with the Saint Paul Public Library earlier, and brought that experience, as well as management experience with a major computer corporation, when she went to work for The Saint Paul Foundation and The Friends. She "played such a role in financially solidifying the group, so we went beyond the original trust," said Mary Ida Thomson

Presidents of the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library

Carol Ryan, 1995-

Richard Faricy, 1992–1995

Mary Ida Thomson, 1986–1992

Truman Porter, 1978–1986



The first six Trustees Emeritus, elected at The Friends' annual meeting in 1994. Left to right: Truman Porter, Mary Ida Thomson, Paul Verret, George Power, Jr., and Jeanne Fischer. Not pictured is Ronald M. Hubbs. Photo from The Friends files.

Trustees Emeritus

George C. Power, Jr.

He first served on The Friends' Board in 1957, left for a period, and returned in recent years. Powers has "provided guidance and encouragement in establishing The Friends' planned giving program," and he has actively sought out new and potential donors to The Friends.

Truman Porter

Truman Porter, a respected community leader, was asked to rebuild The Friends Board into a more active group in 1978, when he was vice-president of Midway National Bank. With help from others like Verret and Harris, he brought The Friends "to life." He served as president until 1986, organized a committed team of Trustees, initiated ambitious Friends' programming, and encouraged a closer tie to The Saint Paul Foundation.

Jeanne E. Fischer

Jeanne E. Fischer brought a wealth of knowledge and literary contacts in addition to "seemingly endless reserves of energy and enthusiasm" to Friends events.

Mary Ida Thomson

Mary Ida Thomson succeeded Truman Porter as president, serving from 1986 through 1991. She steered The Friends toward a more active advocacy role, and initiated the Minnesota Festival of the Book and A Book Affair in 1988 and 1990. Under her leadership, The Friends identified the need for a fulltime executive director.

Paul A. Verret

Paul Verret joined the board in 1978, and brought strong financial leadership and fundraising expertise as president of The Saint Paul Foundation. He served as treasurer for many years, and in 1992, helped The Friends to become an independent organization after being a client of the Foundation for thirteen years.

1995 Board of Trustees

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Friends Board minutes, 1984 to 1992, in

Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library Office, Norwest Center, Saint Paul.

The Next 100 Years: Saint Paul Public Library, series of brochures for the 100th Anniversary Campaign, 1982

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Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, *Saint Paul Public Library News & Events*, Summer 1990, Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall 1991; Winter, Spring, 1993, Fall 1993; Winter, Spring, Summer, 1994

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Author interviews with

Marie Grimm, St. Paul City Council member

Dino Guerin, St. Paul City Council member, 5/11/95 (telephone)

Richard Faricy, Friends board member, 6/11/95 (telephone)

Jeanne Fischer, Friends board member, 3/27/95, at her home

Katie McWatt, longtime Library user, 5/7/95 (telephone)

Edie Meissner, 3/29/95 (telephone)

Alice Neve, at Central Library, 4/21/95

Peter D. Pearson, at Friends office, 4/20/95

Mark Reidell, former public relations director, 5/24/95 (telephone)

Carol Ryan, Friends board president, 6/5/95 (telephone)

Annette Salo, supervisor, Lexington Library, 4/5/95 (telephone)

Gerald Steenberg, at Central Library, 3/31/95

Truman Porter, former Friends president, 3/28/95 (telephone)

Mary Ida Thomson, at Metronet, 4/13/95

Paul Verret, executive director, The Saint Paul Foundation, 5/18/95 (telephone)



In 1983 the Friends held a contest for a new logo and came up with two of them. The first-place winner was Dan Dumonceaux, Foley Minnesota, who was awarded \$100 for his design of three stylized heads and hands holding books. The runnerup was Doug Foster, for his children in windows design. In 1993, the Friends adopted a new three-part logo that includes

- A window, symbolizing both the large arched windows of the Central Library and the Library's role as a window to the world of information and ideas;

- People with hands joined, symbolizing that the Friends is about people, bringing together people who support the Library, and through programming, emphasizing the importance of a place for people;

- A book in a computer screen, representing the fact that books have been joined by computers as a key source of information and as a method of accessing information.

Allyson Williams, St. Paul graphic artist, designed and donated the new logo, with additional illustrative services by Kristen Miller.

Elaine Wagner, superintendent of collections, St. Paul Public Library, 6/6/95 (telephone)



Unpublished material in Friends files:

"Laura and Anna E.R. Furness Fund" (1968)

"An Informal Time Line for Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library," 10/29/85

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Interviews about Perrie Jones, all in Friends files:

Elizabeth Abbot, interviewed by Virginia B. Kunz, 12/14/90

A.H. Heckman, interviewed by Virginia B. Kunz, 9/12/90

Robert Hoag, interviewed by Edie A. Meissner, 5/17/89

Ronald Hubbs, interviewed by Virginia B. Kunz, 9/11/90

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"For past 15 years, Jeanne Fischer has been telling us what to read," *Highland Villager*, 12/3/86

"A library addition of integrity? Maybe," by Larry Millett, 2/5/89

"Folks are hitting the books in droves these days," *Star Tribune*, 1/6/90

"Books on wheels bring readers food for minds," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 7/18/90

Task Force reports from 1982 and 1986
Various published brochures advertising Book Festival and A Book Affair.



Mayor George Latimer and Garrison Keillor do their own inimitable thing during The Saint Paul Public Library's 100th anniversary celebration in 1982, an event which launched The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library on a new era of expansive growth. Keillor was chairman of the 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. For a history of The Friends, see the article beginning on page 4.

R.C.H.S.
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