2017 Advocacy POSITION PAPER

Produced and developed by the Advocacy Committee of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, John Marshall and Melvin Carter, Co-chairs.

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THE FRIENDS OF THE SAINT PAUL PUBLIC LIBRARY | SAINT PAUL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Libraries serve a vital role in our community.

Even as the economy slowly improves, patrons continue to turn to the library for free access to essential information on a wide range of topics, skills training, and computing services.

Every day, the Saint Paul Public Library provides no-fee public access to computers and the Internet in some of our most distressed neighborhoods. **This access is critical at a time when applications for jobs and government services must be filled out online.**

The library, however, provides more than just Internet access. It offers services that help patrons conduct job searches, create resumes, access training for technology and technical skills, and innovate through the use of 3-D printers and maker spaces. **The library also provides online learning platforms and databases for small businesses and entrepreneurs to create business plans and develop growth strategies.**

It also exposes children to books and programs to help them gain and enhance their reading skills. Many children living in poverty have very limited access to books at home. These **children depend on the library's Storytimes (offered in nine languages) afterschool programs, and Summer Spark—the active summer learning program—to help them prepare for and succeed in school.**

As the library meets community needs, it also provides a place for the community to meet. Many of its locations offer the only neighborhood space for groups to convene or for organizations to hold free public events. **For teens, the library can be a lifeline—a safe and welcoming place to learn and grow.**

With strong public support, we can help ensure that residents of all ages have access to the Internet and information services, the resources they need to develop literacy skills and achieve academically, **a place to create and explore, and the services and tools to search for, find, and create jobs.**

Having just raised $7.4 million for a $14 million capital campaign for library renovations, The Friends seeks public support for the following library priorities:

1. **$365,000 for collections: books, e-learning platforms, and an integrated website and catalog**

2. **$500,000 for much-needed improvements to Rondo Library**

3. **$34,000 to continue digitization of the Saint Paul Collection**

4. **$70,000 (to be matched by an equal amount by the Saint Paul Public Schools) for a project manager for ConnectED, a local and Presidential Initiative to get all school students electronic public library cards**

Total of all advocacy initiatives: $969,000

$365,000 for collections: books, e-learning platforms, and an integrated website

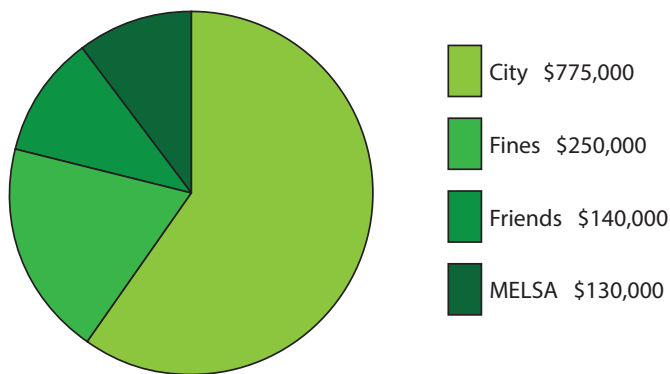## Double Bind: Lower Revenue from Fines. Higher Book Prices.

Not only did hard book circulation remain strong and steady this year, but e-book circulation went up substantially. Because an e-book cannot, by technological design, be overdue (it simply is deleted from your e-reader), the fines and fees continue to trend downward. That revenue stream is what the library uses to pay for technology replacement. We won't know until the end of the year how much this will be impacted.

E-Books are never overdue. They just disappear… POOF! …and generate no fines for technology replacement

SPPL's new website will feature a fully integrated catalog, website, and content management system to improve access to the library's array of resources and programs. The new platform, BiblioCommons, will streamline the library's management of digital assets. It will also **provide a single, seamless access point, instead of the many different interfaces and logins users currently must navigate to borrow an e-book or other resource.**

The Saint Paul Public Library does a very good job—especially compared to our local peers—in **providing resources to diverse communities,** but the high cost of electronic books and learning platforms doesn't let the budget go very far.
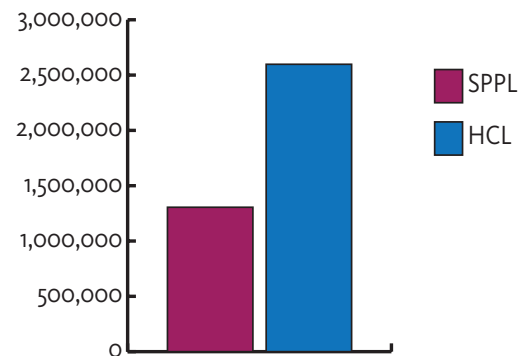

- City $775,000
- Fines $250,000
- Friends $140,000
- MELSA $130,000

Of the $1,305,249 in collections expenditures this year, the City of Saint Paul contributed $775,000; special fees and fines generated about $250,000 for the budget, The Friends provided $140,000 in support; and MELSA paid $130,000.
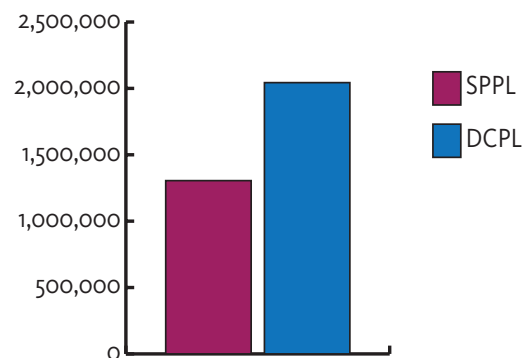
Libraries that provide more books than they borrow from the regional library system (net lenders) are paid more, and those that borrow more from other systems are paid less. Because of our collection deficit, **Saint Paul Public Library is considered a net borrower. This can lead to a dangerous spiral of lost funding.**

The price of online access is not going down, it is not optional, and it is not going away. The library is committed to providing excellent online access and navigation, and SPPL is changing its web platform to provide a much more customer-friendly search experience.

Collection spending compared:

Compared to second highest collection expenditure per location (2014, Hennepin County Library) collection expenditures in MELSA

Compared to second highest percentage of operating budget (2014, Dakota County Library) collection expenditures in MELSA

Rondo is the busiest library in the system, by a wide margin.

1,650 COMMUNITY EVENTS LAST YEAR!

$500,000 for improvements to Rondo Library

Rondo: A well-used community resource needs updates

Designed and created 10 years ago—just before a major shift in how we build and use libraries—Rondo Library has some structural issues. It also has a history of amazing success.

It has the most visitors among all branches— including George Latimer Central Library (GLCL). Twenty percent more than Highland Park, the next busiest library, **Rondo boasts an astonishing 17% of total SPPL visits.**

Built in the **Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood,** with **citywide access** via the light rail Green Line, Rondo has an expansive group of users and, being in the transit heart of Saint Paul, has become everyone's library. In addition to SPPL events and classes, **the library hosted 1,650 community events in 2015, more than twice the number of the next highest library.**

It is now Rondo's tenth anniversary. This could be an opportune occasion for a one-time investment that would help an incredibly active and important community resource, in real, functional ways, overcome some of the growing pains its exuberant usage has engendered.
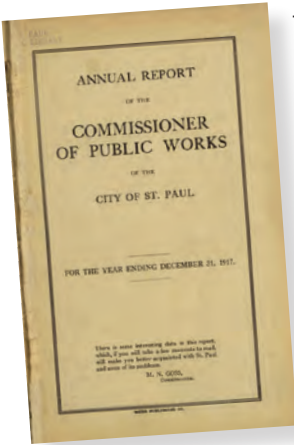
For instance:

- Though Rondo is the second largest library, its layout and arrangement of shelves and designated spaces does not work as well as it should. **There is no dedicated space for teens,** who need their own area to explore, interact, relax or read. **Critical spaces for business/workforce programs and the Homework Help Center are out of sight behind shelves, not easily seen from the main part of the library.**

- Rondo has the most public computers of all our libraries (90) and the space is **packed and humming at full capacity every afternoon.** Internet computers are situated close together in a high-traffic area and close to the children's area, putting **too many in-demand services too close together.** When the computers at GLCL were separated into smaller "pods" of six or so, users stopped feeling their personal space impinged upon.

- The library is **overcrowded** with shelving and needs more space for people. Books can be better distributed throughout the system as part of our "floating" collection.

- There are **no quiet, private spaces for small meetings or study groups, nor is there is enough space for English language classes.**
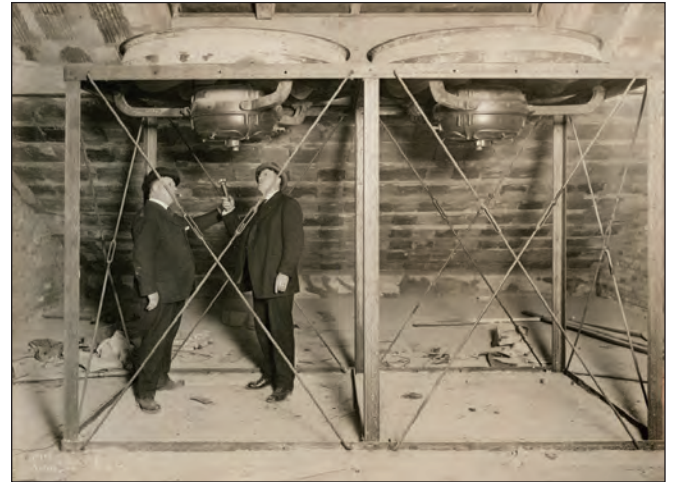
Talk about a Neighborhood STAR... Rondo is a SUPERSTAR!

It has an active Homework Help Center, well used computers, and an outstanding children's area, but not the highest circulation. **The community needs this gathering space and they use it heavily. We can make it better, and better able to serve more people.**

$34,000 to continue digitization of the Saint Paul Collection

The library has made a good start, but there is much more to be done. With only a few options for digitizing fragile and unique collections, SPPL seeks to continue some of the work in-house using staff expertise. The advocates request funding for a half-time staff person for one year.

Digitization allows the library to:

- Offer resources on Minnesota history and geography to researchers, educators, students, and the public

- Make these limited-access collections accessible to many more people at any given time

- Keep rare, historical, and legacy materials preserved for posterity

Attic of Central Library of the Saint Paul Public Library, St. Paul, Minnesota, December 1915. *Description: Two men inspect the installation of attic exhaust fans.*

$70,000 to manage the ConnectED Initiative

(a one-time cost, matched by the Saint Paul Public Schools)

Mayor Coleman, along with Superintendent Valeria Silva, announced at his 2016 budget address their goal of ensuring that every child in Saint Paul receives a public library card by the end of 2017.

The planning and implementation of the **ConnectED Library Challenge Initiative** has revealed itself to be more technologically complicated than anticipated. A manager for this project, which is part of a Presidential initiative, will help ensure all Saint Paul students will eventually have electronic library cards.

The ConnectED Library Challenge strengthens the partnership between the Saint Paul Public Schools and the Saint Paul Public Library.

In addition to improving library card access, the library also continues its commitment to:

- **Support student learning** through programming that develops language, reading, and critical thinking

- **Provide digital resources,** such as eBooks and online collections of traditional media

- **Provide broadband connectivity** and wireless access within library facilities