

Library Response to Community Suggestions

Several members of the Library Administration have read, reviewed and provided responses to the suggestions made by the Hamline Midway community to help alleviate the budget shortfall that led to the proposed closure of the neighborhood branch. We appreciate the time and thought that went into compiling the list and have tried to answer in the same spirit. If there are issues which require further explanation, we would be happy to look into them further.

1. Voluntary Donation Bins (estimated revenue = \$595,512.00)

Like Como Zoo, the City of Saint Paul should provide large and visible places for individuals to donate to the library at every branch in the library system. There should also be smaller, temporary donation bins for use at each library branch before and after adult and children's events. Presenters and/or the head librarian should refer to the temporary bins before and after the free programs.

Library customers visited the library 2.7 million times last year, which means that a donation of just ten cents per visit or \$1 for ten would generate enough money to staff the Hamline Midway library (\$270,000). If the 108,504 people who attended a library program last year also donated an average of \$3 each, SPPL would generate an additional \$325,512.00 in revenue. SPPL currently has no systemic method of requesting voluntary donations in this manner.

Residents of Saint Paul support their Library with property taxes. They also have the opportunity to join or donate to the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library if they want to provide additional financial support to the Library. Perhaps the Library should make that process more obvious and easy. One problem with donation bins is that they are a tempting target for theft and the Library has attempted to minimize the amount of money in library branches to defuse this possible temptation.

(From Ann McKinnon, Saint Paul Friends of the Public Library)

The Friends is not in the business of replacing public funding. For instance, they would not attempt to pay for the staffing of branches to replace the proposed cuts in hours which will likely happen when the Library's 2009 budget is cut this year. However, in response to the dramatic cuts in the materials budget, The Friends is launching a citywide fundraising campaign for the Library's collection. The results of the "Stock the Stacks" campaign will go directly to the purchase of materials at the Saint Paul Public Library.

2. Use Four Work-Study Students and a Half-Time Librarian II to Staff the Hamline Midway Library (approximate savings = \$200,000.00 - \$250,000.00)

Partner with local colleges and universities to employ four work-study students who are seeking degrees in early education or library sciences to staff the Hamline Midway Library. Reduce the current Librarian II position to half-time. This plan does not eliminate any current union employees, because there were 4 FTEs added in the 2009 Adopted Budget, which were not filled, in addition to one existing position that has been left vacant. The approximate savings from utilizing work-study students would be between \$200,000.00 and \$250,000.00.

A library agency requires trained staff that has competencies in handling materials and customer requests. It's not practical for a part-time librarian to manage the turn over in work study students in addition to operating a library.

The Library is investigating the use of work-study students to help with various learning centers and this option has proved very beneficial in some other communities. However, students could not be counted upon to provide the staffing for the branch. Training for circulation and reference assistance takes a great deal of time—more

than could be offered by a half-time Librarian who is also, herself, providing customer service. In addition, students have many other demands on their time and their studies are understandably their first priority. Their availability would be determined by the academic calendar which would disrupt normal library schedules. All of these concerns aside, labor contracts would preclude replacing staff with non-union workers.

3. Temporarily Reduce Materials Budget by 50% (savings = \$600,000.00)

The current materials budget is \$1.2 million. The proposed budget is \$806,000, an approximate 33% reduction. If the materials budget were reduced by 50%, the savings would amount to \$600,000.00. This temporary reduction should focus on adult books and entertainment DVDs. When the next governor reinstates LGA, the materials budget will return to current levels.

We will reduce the Library's materials budget significantly in 2010. The exact amount is still under discussion but it will exceed 33%.

4. Eliminate the Cap on Late Fees (estimated revenues = \$50,000.00)

Eliminating the cap on the amount of a fine that can accrue against an individual would result in an estimated \$50,000.00. This was an alternative considered by the library director, but was not incorporated into the final budget proposal.

The Library is about access and not about putting making it more difficult for people to use our resources. The former Library Director eliminated this option after conferring with her colleagues in other library systems, examining our collection options and because it is not a permanent solution to the problem. Fine collection varies from year to year.

In addition, the Library already budgets income from fines and fees for collections and to replace computers across the system. The general fund includes only a fraction of what it costs to replace computers. As we add more technology, the maintenance and replacement costs also rise.

5. Reduce Postage (estimated savings = \$20,000.00)

Decreasing mailed materials for a savings on postage would result in an estimated cost savings of \$20,000. This was a savings considered by the library director, but was not included in the final recommended plan for budget reductions.

This was not recommended as a budget reduction because it was implemented in 2009.

6. Room Rental Fee (estimated revenue = \$30,000.00 - \$50,000.00)

Similar to Parks and Rec, SPPL could charge a minimal fee to reserve meeting rooms. 3,472 non-library meeting room events took place in 2008. If every library that does not charge a fee, (or does not charge a fee to non-profit groups) instituted a \$10 meeting-room fee, SPPL would generate approximately \$30,000 in additional revenue. A \$15 meeting-room fee would result in \$50,000 in additional revenue. A limited number of libraries already charge a fee to rent rooms, so this would simply expand an existing policy to the entire library system.

The Library is examining its room rental policies and may raise fees in 2010. However this, like other fees, is not a revenue source that is dependable and permanent.

7. Increase Late Fees for Adult Materials by 25% (estimated revenue = \$82,660.00)

The current budget states that the City of Saint Paul generates \$275,642.00 from fines on adult materials and \$55,000.00 from lost and damaged materials. Increasing these fees by 25% would result in an additional \$82,660.00.

All fines and fees will be under review. Use of payment by credit card has increased the amount of revenue realized from fines and fees. In late 2009 the Library will increase the cost of printing from .05 to .10.

8. Fee for Interlibrary Loan Requests (estimated revenue = \$15,426.00)

There were 20,569 requests from library customers for books from other libraries. Charging seventy-five cents for this service would result in an additional \$15,426.00.

Interlibrary loan operates as a cooperative service among libraries and SPPL cannot unilaterally charge a fee for regional service. Minitex, which serves as a statewide clearinghouse for ILL, receives money from the legislature to provide this service. We do charge for loans outside of Minitex and we are examining the possibility of raising those fees.

9. Late Fees for Children's Materials (estimated revenue = \$206,250.00)

Currently the City of Saint Paul is one of the only library systems in the Twin Cities metropolitan area that fails to impose a late fee for children's materials. Both the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County charge five cents per day for overdue children's materials. Ramsey County charges ten cents a day. Dakota County charges five cents a day, with a \$2 maximum for children's books, but imposes a \$1 per day overdue fee for children's entertainment videos. St. Paul could add a daily fee for overdue children's materials equal to the current daily fee for overdue adult materials. Although no statistics were available related to the number of overdue children's materials, assuming the number equaled 75% of the overdue adult materials, the total would be approximately \$206,250.00.

SPPL has a long held belief that fines on children's materials serve as a barrier to use, especially among new immigrants. Many children come to the Library without a parent and fines could make it impossible for them to use the resources available to them. This issue has been raised a number of times over the years and the result has always been a decision to maintain our no-fine policy. Promoting reading and library use by children is one of our most cherished values.

10. \$1 Rental Fee for "New" Entertainment Videos (estimated revenue = \$20,000.00)

Dakota County charges \$1.00 per day for new entertainment videos. Specific statistics related to circulation of "new" entertainment videos were not available. Assuming, however, that patrons rent 100 new entertainment videos for 200 days each, this proposal would generate \$20,000.00.

The Library is actively pursuing this option.