

Agenda Item 1.0
Requested Action: Approval

Library Advisory Committee
November 21, 2006
Sumner Community Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd.

MINUTES

Members in attendance: Roger Hale (Chair), Alfred Babington-Johnson, Carol Berde, Betsy Hodges, Jay Kiedrowski, Laura King, and Mark Murphy.

Absent: Carol Flynn, Peter Heegaard, Dan Miller, Arthur Rolnick, Jim Ufer, and Hussein Samatar.

Others in attendance: Minneapolis City Council Member Sandra Colvin Roy (Council alternate), Library Board of Trustees Member Sheldon Mains.

Staff in attendance: Library Director Kit Hadley, Friends Director Colin Hamilton, Friends Staff Adam Olson.

Convened

The meeting was convened at 5:10 pm by R. Hale.

Proceedings

- 1.1 **Acceptance of November 9 minutes.** Minutes were accepted unanimously without discussion.
- 2.0 **Comparison report with regional and national peers.** (C. Hamilton)
- 2.1 **Summary.** A 23-page report was included in committee packets in advance of the meeting. Hardcopies of the presentation slides were provided at the meeting.
- 2.2 **Major issues**
 - a. **Purpose.** The report purpose was defined as highlighting issues that may help explain MPL's on-going operating challenges. Hamilton reported that there are limitations to the data that should qualify some conclusions.
 - b. **Sample.** The comparison sample includes the major library system in the 31 largest metro areas (i.e., Minneapolis Public Library for the Twin Cities), as well as St. Paul, Hennepin County, Queens, Oakland, Milwaukee, and Madison. The metro area for the Twin Cities includes a 10 county area, including one county in Wisconsin. The sample was then divided into three groups: Minnesota peers, city library systems, county library systems. A fourth group, closest peers, was created at the end.
 - c. **Library usage.** MPL has an above average number of registered borrowers, average circulation, below average visits - all fairly typical for large, collection-driven urban systems. Its hours, by a variety of measures, are among the very worst in the sample.

- d. **Operating income.** MPL's per capita funding is competitive, although both C. Berde and L. King questioned how this was presented. Given the extreme range of per capita funding, per capita funding among closest peers, and funding per square footage figures, this may not be a very meaningful finding.
- e. **Square footage.** The number of community libraries – either 11 or 14 – is within a typical range. At 14 it is slightly ahead of the national average and Hennepin, but behind St. Paul. At 11, it is right on the national average, but behind Hennepin and St. Paul. However, MPL has twice the total library square footage of the comparison sample group. This square footage is massed in the Central Library, not the branches. The Central Library appears large for Minneapolis, but right-sized when measured against the metropolitan area population. The committee discussed how this imbalance is further exacerbated by the fact that Minneapolis comprises a smaller portion of its metro area than most major cities. J. Kiedrowski asked about the role of the University of Minnesota library and Saint Paul Central Public Library as metro resources along side Central MPL. K. Hadley stated the University of Minnesota library has a different role and the Saint Paul Central Library is comparatively small for the metro area.
- f. **Operating Expenditures.** Because of differences in data, no conclusions can be drawn about staffing. MPL is under-spending on collections relative to its peers. On further review, the conclusions drawn in the report about “other” expenditures do not hold up over a multiyear analysis. As a consequence of MPL's large physical size and fixed costs relative to total operating hours, the generic cost of an hour of service at MPL is the highest in the sample group. R. Hale asked which expenditures are fixed and which are variable. A response may be prepared by staff for future meetings.
- g. **Collections and staff.** The MPL collection is among the largest per capita in the sample group. As with the size of the Central Library, the collection is right-sized when compared against the metro area population. It is also the most unique collection in the metro area, suggesting it serves a function beyond the city boundaries. The committee discussed the assumed but hard to substantiate costs of a more unique collection. R. Hale asked about comparing the number of unique titles held by other libraries. Staff is only aware of statistics for libraries within Minnesota. Staff will look into the availability of out of state figures. On a per capita basis, staffing seems high; when measured against either square footage or the collection, staffing seems low.
- h. **Closest peers.** When MPL is compared against its eight closest peers, many findings are normalized. Per capita funding goes from high to low; square footage becomes typical; the collection size goes from large to slightly below average. The number of community libraries is below average.
- i. **Summary.** The major conclusion is that the size of the Central Library is exceptional for Minneapolis but right-sized for the Twin Cities. As a consequence: 1) MPL can support large, unique collections and extensive programming; 2) while MPL has strong per capita funding, funding per square foot is very low; and 3) the cost of a generic hour of service is quite high.

3.0 From understanding the problem to assessing solutions. R. Hale led the Committee in discussion about shifting focus of committee work away from orientation to a

more critical review of potential funding solutions. The next three committee meetings will be dedicated to addressing city level solutions, county level solutions, state level solutions, private funding solutions, and internal efficiencies, as preliminarily directed by H. Samatar at the previous meeting.

- a. R. Hale asked to what extent is metro reliance on MPL an issue. K. Hadley replied that several suburban library directors have stated that their systems' collection development strategy relies on MPL's more extensive collection. MPL is the second largest source of interlibrary loans statewide. Due to the nature of MPL's collection, it remains a net-receiver of interlibrary loans because of the demand of popular titles found in large numbers in suburban libraries. In light of this, S. Colvin Roy stated MPL and Hennepin County's missions are more complementary than MPL and the Saint Paul Public Library.
- b. C. Berde asked about the possibility of a special library district. J. Kiedrowski drew a comparison to city parks capital funding from the Metro Parks and Open Space Commission. R. Hale asked that additional detail be given on metro funding prospects. S. Colvin Roy added that Minneapolis parks receive only a small portion of capital funding from the county.

3.2 **Further discussion** on understanding the problem and assessing solutions will continue at the next LAC meeting.

Adjournment

Chairperson Hale adjourned the committee at 6:30pm.

Next Meeting

The LAC's next meeting is on Tuesday, December 12, 2006 at 5:00pm, held at Washburn Library, 5244 Lyndale Avenue South.