

# 14 Saint Paul Public Library

## Saint Paul, Minnesota

**The residents of Saint Paul, Minnesota love their library. As the city puts together its budget each year, library patrons by the score let the mayor's office and city council know that library service is important to them.**

The three million people of the Twin Cities metro area have great cause for their strong support of the institution. As the city has experienced tremendous demographic changes in the last two decades, the Saint Paul library system, with its central library, 12 neighborhood branches, bookmobile, and electronic presence, has learned to anticipate and respond to the community's needs, serving the populace in all its diversity.

Once a city of European heritage, with a small but long-standing African-American community, Saint Paul is now 30 percent non-white, with significant Hmong, other Southeast Asian, Chicano, and Somali populations. Saint Paul has the largest Hmong population of any city in the world. In recent years, the Saint Paul Public Library has emphasized serving the underserved, which includes the recent immigrants, but also a host of other individuals and communities. Along with its service to teens, seniors, small-business owners, and the deaf and hard-of-hearing, the library aims to be the doorway to reading and information for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The library's strong commitment to community and outreach stretches across a broad range of initiatives and services. School children are a special focus for several library programs. The system's five Homework Centers target teens in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods of Saint

Paul. With computer stations, on-site tutors, and welcoming furniture and surroundings, the Homework Centers have a three-year track record of academic improvement. The library's "Read With Me" program is a critical part of the citywide effort to improve literacy. All branches offer first, second and third graders a chance to be paired with a tutor for an hour of one-on-one help. In partnership with the Saint Paul Public Schools, the library also supports the "Saint Paul Reads" program, which encourages all schoolchildren to read at least 25 books each year.

The library's adult programming served more than 8,000 people last year through more than 100 programs. Mostly conducted by the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library professional staff, the programs include annual series such as the Chicano and Latino Writers Festival, the Twin Cities Jewish Book Festival, and the Fireside Literary Series. Examples of other programs abound, including an innovative project from 2001–2003 in which four professional writers worked in every branch to collect stories. From the stories, the writers wrote their own fictional pieces which were edited and published in book format.

A strong indicator of Saint Paul Library's success is its ability to raise public and private funding to improve existing facilities or build new facilities to serve its constituents. In the last ten years, all of the library's 14 facilities have been updated and made handicapped accessible, including a \$19 million renovation to the historic 1917 central library. Two of the poorest city neighborhoods will have new



branches by 2006. The Dayton's Bluff Branch Library, opened in 2004, is a model of community innovation. It is a public library branch tucked within the new library of the Metropolitan State University. The public library portion focuses on services to children and families, but the resources of both libraries are open to the public. The Rondo Community Outreach Library will be another national model of innovation. It is a public/private partnership, with the city constructing the library's largest branch on the first floor, while private developers construct three floors of community housing above.

In partnership with The Friends group, the Saint Paul Library has invested in a diverse array of community partnerships and has built funding support through public and private venues. The result is a system that delivers more books and materials (a 50 percent increase in the last five years), has more on-site visitors (a 31 percent increase), receives thousands more Web site hits, and has more Saint Paulites opening a book for fun, information, and learning.

#### Address

**Saint Paul Public Library**

**90 West Fourth Street**

**Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**Phone: 651-266-7000**

**Fax: 651-266-7060**

**Web site: <http://www.sppl.org>**

**Annual budget: \$17.6 million**

**Full-time staff: 113**

**Part-time staff: 110**

**Director: Kathleen Flynn**

#### Community partners

**The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library; Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium; businesses and corporations; schools and colleges; labor organizations; arts and cultural groups; foundations; and others. A sample: Minnesota Children's Museum; Metropolitan State University; the Saint Paul Trades and Labor Assembly; Wells Fargo; COMPAS Artwork; Saint Paul Jaycees; Ramsey County Department of Health; Hubbard Broadcasting; Pioneer Press; and Minnesota Historical Society.**