

Free
LIBRARY OF
PHILADELPHIA



2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007

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On June 27, 2007, with his children—Christopher, Alyssa, and Eric—in tow, Louis Baker made the one millionth visit to the Central Library on the Parkway during the 2007 fiscal year. The Bakers visited the Central Library’s Art and Children’s Departments so that the kids could “check out some new books to keep them reading during the summer.”

SERVICE STATISTICS	FY 2006	FY 2007
Library Visits	6,103,354	6,422,857
Reference Questions Handled	2,925,812	3,067,723
Registered Borrowers	517,839	490,883
Materials Loaned System-Wide	6,188,637	6,328,706
Interlibrary Loan Requests Processed	25,219	30,786

COLLECTIONS STATISTICS	FY 2006	FY 2007
Cataloged Books—Adult	2,453,386	2,326,108
Cataloged Books—Juvenile	1,185,560	1,128,534
Audio Materials	1,336,503	1,114,588
Government Documents	1,129,719	1,117,308
Microforms	1,980,526	1,995,667
Videocassettes	152,484	142,271
DVDs	32,031	98,160
Journal, Magazine, and Newspaper Titles	3,586	3,077

Boards & Executive Staff

Free Library of Philadelphia

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July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007

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Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation

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Leadership Letter-“What’s in a number?”

6,422,857 visits; 6,328,706 items loaned; 103,689,397 website hits—2007 was a banner year for the Free Library of Philadelphia, with usage figures up on virtually every front. More and more, Philadelphians are utilizing the full breadth and depth of the many resources the Free Library offers. This year attendance at children’s programs increased by 11%; attendance at adult programs increased by 23%; and attendance at the Free Library’s system-wide, after-school program increased by a remarkable 25%. While these numbers are certainly impressive, we never forget that behind all of these figures are the personal stories of countless individuals who depend on the Free Library to help them to engage with information and ideas, to enrich their lives, and to achieve their personal goals.

As Philadelphia’s largest free institution, the variety of high-quality programs and services we provide each year is an astonishing feat that would not be possible without the dedication and support of many stakeholders, including Free Library users, donors, volunteers, active Friends Groups, wonderful staff members, and especially the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is with great thanks to all of these parties that we celebrate and share with you our many successes this year.



Linda E. Johnson
Chief Executive Officer
Free Library of
Philadelphia Foundation

W. Wilson Goode, Sr.
Chair, Board of Trustees
Free Library
of Philadelphia

William R. Sasso
Chair, Board of Directors
Free Library of
Philadelphia Foundation

Elliot L. Shelkrot
President and Director
Free Library
of Philadelphia

Programs & Services

In pursuing its mission to promote learning and community enrichment, the Free Library is committed to offering all segments of Philadelphia’s diverse population programs and services that complement and stimulate use of the Library’s many resources. Over the past year, these offerings have continued to grow in numerous ways, reaching new and expanded audiences.

PROGRAM STATISTICS	FY 2006	FY 2007
Number of Adult Programs	8,712	8,633
Attendance at Adult Programs	139,164	170,852
Number of Children’s Programs	11,185	12,878
Attendance at Children’s Programs	233,464	259,310
LEAP Attendance	227,227	284,360

Nearly 2,500 parents and caregivers attended 131 *Books Aloud!* workshops at 12 Free Library locations on topics ranging from *Learning Science through Picture Books* to *Bringing Stories to Life through Creative Play*. The latter workshop series held in October of 2006 received a 2007 Best Practices in Early Learning Award from the Pennsylvania Library Association.

LEAP, the Free Library’s drop-in after-school program, continued to serve thousands of children and teens every weekday afternoon from September through June, with attendance increased by nearly 60,000 over the previous year. In addition to homework assistance, LEAP offers computer literacy training, library skills workshops, and multicultural enrichment activities for students in grades 1 through 12.

Teen Leadership Assistants of the LEAP After-School Program successfully planned and executed the 8th annual **Youth Empowerment Summit**, held at the Central Library on the Parkway in May. Created *by teens for teens*, the theme of this year’s summit was “Stand Up For Philly.” Hundreds of students from throughout Philadelphia attended this all-day, professional-style conference which emphasized the need to stop youth violence and featured an information fair, as well as workshops on topics including conflict resolution and the high school to college transition.



2007 marked the fifth year of the **Field Family Teen Author Series**. A cornerstone of the Free Library’s teen initiatives, this remarkable lecture series gives students the opportunity to see famous authors who they’ve read, and to obtain free signed books to add to their own personal libraries. This past year nearly 3,000 teens attended 20 events with featured authors including Tavis Smiley, Nikki Giovanni, and Julia Alvarez.

Michael Eric Dyson, the “hip-hop intellectual” and keynote speaker at the Free Library’s 2007 Youth Empowerment Summit, answers questions from a teens-only audience in the Central Library’s Montgomery Auditorium.

This year's *One Book, One Philadelphia* program got the whole city thinking and talking about the personal experience of immigration, with thousands attending more than a hundred events throughout the Free Library system. Centered on Carlos Eire's *Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy*, this eight-week citywide program was a spectacular success in fulfilling *One Book's* mission of building literacy and community through the shared experience of reading and discussing a single book. Thanks to contributions from its dedicated sponsors—including lead sponsor Independence Blue Cross—the Free Library was able to purchase 10,000 copies of the 2007 *One Book* selections, including companion books *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan and *Coming to America* by Betsy Maestro. One thousand three hundred (1,300) copies of these titles were placed in the Library system, while approximately 8,700 copies were distributed without cost to area high schools, community groups, and other organizations in need. This year 420 community partners helped promote the 2007 *One Book, One Philadelphia* program by planning events and distributing materials, marking a 40% increase in such participation over 2006. *One Book* chair Marie Field notes that this remarkable increase is testament to the resonance of *One Book's* mission, as well as its potential for growth in the years to come.



Featured author Carlos Eire talks with guests at the 2007 *One Book, One Philadelphia* kick-off event in January.

The Free Library's 2007 *Summer Reading Program, Get A Clue @ Your Library*, challenged children, teens, and—for the first time—adults to solve mysteries while encouraging them to maintain and improve their literacy skills. Nearly 60,000 Philadelphians—47,995 children, 9,559 teens, and 1,562 adults—participated in this year's program, marking a 14% increase over 2006. Every Library location held mystery-themed summer reading events—including arts and crafts workshops, science demonstrations, film screenings, and storytelling hours—with incentive prizes offered to participants who read Library books, used other Library materials, or read to a younger child.

Booklovers from all over the region converged in Philadelphia in April to attend the inaugural *Philadelphia Book Festival*. Hosted by the Free Library of Philadelphia and located in and around the Central Library on the Parkway, the Festival drew approximately 25,000 people who attended more



Corduroy shares a hug with a young friend at the 2007 *Philadelphia Book Festival's* Storybook Character Parade.



This performance by Harry and the Potters at the Philadelphia Book Festival featured guest vocals from Philadelphia native, 8-year-old Darius Wilkins, who performs in his own “wizard rock” band, the Hungarian Horntails.

than 100 events featuring 130 authors and performers in seven venues. Festival-goers also enjoyed a bustling literary Street Fair with more than 50 booths representing the best in area publishers, booksellers, and independent authors. Highlights of the two-day event included a kick-off Storybook Character Parade where children met some of their favorite children’s book characters; *Marley & Me* author John Grogan’s discussion of life after Marley; a set of wizard-themed rock from Harry and the Potters; a heartwarming onstage interview with Lee and Bob Woodruff; *No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* author Alexander McCall Smith’s appearance in a kilt from his native Scotland; Mary Higgins Clark’s spooky reading of her debut children’s book, *Ghost Ship*; and an outdoor, twilight set of songs and poems from Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Patti Smith.

In the Branches

Librarians have always known that great programs can attract new audiences. Children, teens, and adults who may not use their neighborhood libraries can be enticed by fun activities. Library books and materials are incorporated into most Free Library programs, so that participants can experience first hand the amazing resources available to them at their local branch, encouraging all first-time visitors to become lifelong Library users.

In 2007 each of the Free Library’s branch locations was able to offer additional community programming, thanks to a generous grant from Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation board member A. Morris Williams, Jr. and his wife, Ruth. Using granted funds, branch librarians planned and promoted programs that reflected the needs and interests of their neighborhoods, resulting in a wide variety of activities.

At the **Thomas F. Donatucci, Sr. Branch** in South Philadelphia, an evening pajama story time with the Lara & Joe Show set children’s books to music with participatory singing and dancing. Fifty-nine preschoolers, school-age children, parents and grandparents joined in the fun—many dressed in their pajamas!

African stories told by Sistah Mafalda—who studied storytelling in Senegal—drew a crowd at the **Greater Olney Branch** in North Philadelphia. Complete with percussion and dance, the event culminated with children joining in on drums and dancing along.

In West Philadelphia at the **Paschalville Branch**, the Insectarium introduced children and teens to the science of insects. Word is that a buzz of excitement was generated when participants were given the chance to eat cheese-fried mealworms!

The **Logan Branch** in Northwest Philadelphia presented a weekly Family Fun Series over the course of a month this past summer. The four programs attracted a total of 206 children and 62 adults! Featured activities included an appearance by Bubbles the Clown, Mlangeni and His Magical Theatre, the Amazing P & Q Magic Show, and an instructional juggling workshop with Ren Parker.



At the Holmesburg Branch, more than 80 children and adults attended two sessions of an interactive science program exploring states of matter.

LEAP After-School Leader Allison Faunce leads students in painting the mural she designed for the Falls of Schuylkill Branch. Over the course of two months, students ranging in age from seven to 17 worked on this panoramic mural, which now enlivens an activity room which hosts everything from baby lap-sit programs and class visits to adult book clubs.



Technology

In 2007 the Free Library continued its efforts to narrow the digital divide in Philadelphia by providing public-access computers and technology training, while also making great strides in connecting users with new technologies, as well as expanded electronic resources and web offerings.

The Free Library now boasts over 150 electronic resources, including more than 70 databases cardholders can access from home, on a wide range of topics—everything from business plan development to declassified government documents to automotive repair. Whether you're a student, job seeker, entrepreneur, or just looking for some edifying entertainment—the Free Library has what you're looking for. If you're new to the Free Library's website, eFreeLibrary is a great place to start. It is a hub connecting users to electronic books and audiobooks, streaming audio and video, downloadable media, and dynamic reference resources—click on eFreeLibrary at freelibrary.org.

**The Free Library
of Philadelphia has
a new address on
the web! Be sure to
bookmark
freelibrary.org**



Free Library Associate Director Joe McPeak demonstrates the login process for utilizing the Free Library's new, wireless internet service, as a group of students from the World Communications Charter School look on. "I see the Library as leading the way to bridge the digital divide in Philadelphia," Dr. McPeak says. "We are the largest provider of free internet access in the region, and many who use the Library's computers would not have access to these technologies otherwise. In a world where so much information is disseminated online, and in a city where more than half of all households are without internet access, it is critically important that we continue to offer increased numbers of internet-connected, public-access computers."

In 2007 the Free Library went wireless! That's right, free wireless internet access is now available in all Free Library locations. All you need is a Library card, PIN, and your wireless-enabled device.

Meet the Librarian

Who Keeps Us Wired, Online, and Prepared for the Future

Kathleen Hannigan will tell you that she's the sort of person who needs to be busy, which is fortunate for the Free Library, because as Information Technology (IT) Manager for the entire Library system—supporting 1,700 PCs, 60 servers, and the Library's online catalog, while overseeing numerous other projects—there's not a lot of down time.

"It's a frantic pace," she says, "and much of what we do in IT is behind-the-scenes. If all goes well, nobody knows."

This past year alone, the Free Library's IT Department changed internet service providers and upgraded the Library's internet connection, completed the installation of free wireless internet access in every branch, and introduced a new, dynamic catalog interface—all of this in addition to routine maintenance accomplished virtually seamlessly, with a minimum of disruption to Library users and staff.

Hannigan has experienced frenetic activity on the front lines of library service as well—for several years she worked as a children's librarian at the Free Library's Holmesburg Branch, before serving as head of the Tacony Branch in Northeast Philadelphia.

"Working in IT is certainly different from my years spent working in the branches," she says. "Sometimes I miss running story hours for children and interacting directly with patrons—but even being one step removed, the end goal is still the same. We're helping to connect Library users with the information and services they need."

Free Library IT Manager Kathleen Hannigan stands before a row of public-access computers in high demand at the Central Library on the Parkway. Central's 80 public-access computers were used more than 160,000 times in fiscal year 2007, an almost 20% increase over 2006.



TECHNOLOGY STATISTICS	FY 2006	FY 2007
Library Website Hits	79,387,219	103,689,397
Virtual Visits from Non-Library Computers	2,594,527	3,285,380
Public-Access Computers	700	700
Public-Access Computer Uses	843,777	1,000,949

Friends & Volunteers

The Free Library has always recognized the value of its volunteers and is grateful for the impressive number of hours they contribute every year in support of the Library's mission. This past year 2,130 volunteers donated 94,865 hours of their time, performing a wide range of tasks—everything from planting gardens at branch libraries to fully managing the Central Library's Books to Go program.

Free Library Creates Resource Center for City's Volunteer Managers

While it is encouraging when so many people from all walks of life generously devote their time to a worthy cause, using volunteers effectively takes organization and training. The Free Library ensures that its volunteers are properly trained and managed through a model program that has been well-honed during the 13 years since the Volunteer Services office was established.

This year—supported by a grant from the Volunteer Impact Fund, an initiative led by the UPS Foundation and administered by the National Human Services Assembly—the Free Library began sharing its expertise through the creation of a Volunteer Managers Resource Center. In an effort to promote efficiency and uniformity among city agencies and nonprofit organizations working with volunteers, the Free Library is creating training and informational resources geared toward assisting volunteer managers across the city to more effectively utilize their volunteers. This includes a citywide database for tracking and referring volunteers, a best practices manual including a volunteer handbook, and training program templates designed to build skills in people who manage volunteers. Although this project is ongoing, the Free Library has already reached out to more than two dozen organizations and referred more than 150 volunteers.

VOLUNTEER STATISTICS	FY 2006	FY 2007
Volunteers	2,105	2,130
Volunteer Hours	101,040	94,865

Friends of the Free Library of Philadelphia

With more than 10,000 members, the Friends of the Free Library of Philadelphia are committed to supporting the mission of the Free Library. Through affiliate neighborhood groups, they promote cooperation and communication between Philadelphia's communities and the Free Library, while advocating for Library services for all.

This past year marked a turning point for the Friends of the Free Library, who introduced *Volunteers are Vital*—a best practices training program designed to improve participation levels, activities, and skills of Library volunteers and advocates. Three seminars were held at the Central Library on the Parkway, which were attended by more than a hundred Friends group members.

With its goal of establishing an active Friends group at every Free Library location, the Friends of the Free Library outreach team met with success and enthusiasm in launching new groups and assisting existing groups in transition. Seven new Friends groups—Blanch A. Nixon/Cobbs Creek, Ramonita de Rodriguez, Torresdale, Kensington, Haverford, Charles L. Durham, and Frankford—were inaugurated this year, and open house events were held at branches throughout the Free Library system.



More than 50 children participated in a mask-making activity at the Fishtown Community Branch Friends Group's open house.

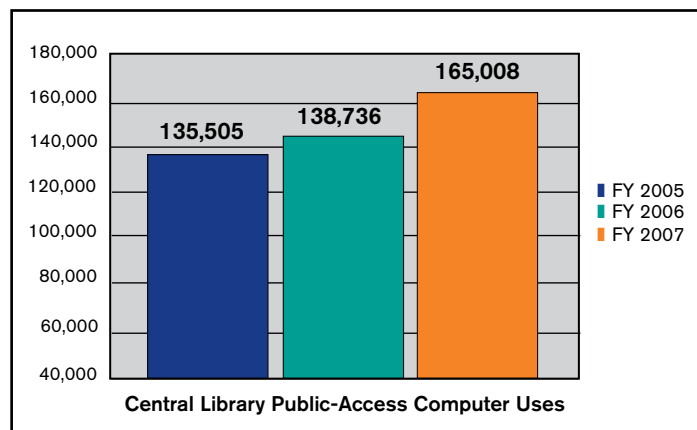
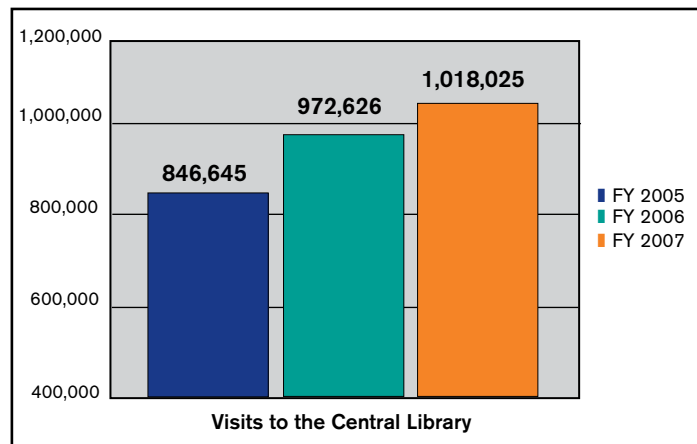
Campaign for a New Central Library

Since its opening in 1927, the Central Library on the Parkway has served the Philadelphia region as a catalyst for change in the lives of countless individuals and diverse communities. Hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life enter the Central Library's doors each year, and leave with their lives enriched by the Library's extraordinary resources and services.

Today, more than eight decades after its doors first opened, the Central Library needs additional space to meet the needs of its many users—space for improved access to materials, innovative programming, and room to house growing collections and new technologies.

Aiming to break ground in 2008, the Campaign for a New Central Library is nearly halfway to its goal of raising \$175 million. In April 2007, the campaign celebrated a milestone with the announcement of a \$15 million challenge gift from an anonymous donor.

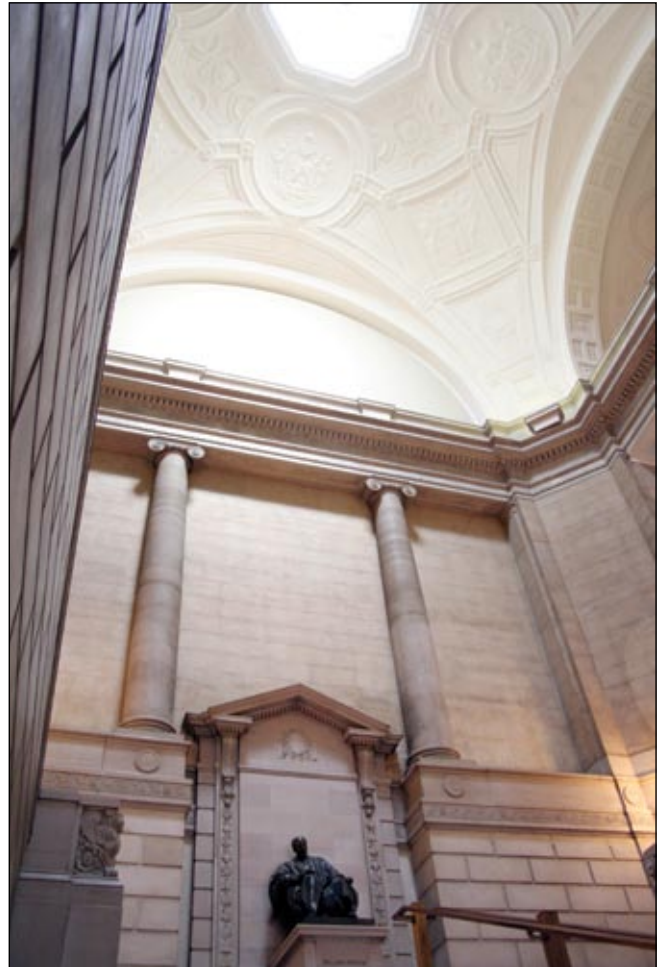
Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation board chair William R. Sasso shared remarks on behalf of the anonymous donor, who said, "We recognize the many ways in which the Free Library positively impacts the Philadelphia community. Our desire is to help expand the Central Library and revitalize the heart of the Library system—making it worthy of Philadelphia's position as a world-class city. The renewed Central Library will be a center where all segments of the community can come together to access information and exchange ideas in a dynamic environment. In its ongoing pursuit of this vision, we can think of no institution in Philadelphia more deserving of our support than the Free Library."



Designed by world-renowned architectural firm Moshe Safdie and Associates, plans for the New Central Library call for a seamless 180,000-square-foot addition to the existent Beaux Arts building. This new, unified complex will provide Philadelphia with a major landmark and an anchor on the revitalized Benjamin Franklin Parkway.



Covered since the 1940s, in 2007 the original skylight above the stairway in the Central Library's main entrance hall was restored. This restoration was part of the much-needed replacement of the existing Central Library's roof. The new roof is designed to connect to the Central Library's planned 180,000-square-foot expansion without requiring additional work.



Financial Highlights

Free Library of Philadelphia Fiscal Year July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007

Operating Support and Revenue*

City General Fund	\$39,383,559
State Grant Funds	12,700,567

Total support and revenue	\$52,084,126
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Operating Expenses

Salaries and benefits	\$38,226,250
Library collections and materials	8,701,855
Facility leases, furnishings, and maintenance	2,183,204
Technology purchases and support	838,394
Training and other professional services	1,551,883
Office supplies, postage, and printing	389,249
Other expenses	193,291

\$52,084,126

* Revenues may include encumbrances and/or appropriations from prior fiscal years, using the modified accrual and cash basis of accounting permitted by municipal accounting standards.

Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation
Statement of Activities for the Year Ended June 30, 2007

Operating Support and Revenue:	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Totals
Grants and contributions	\$1,038,922	\$1,639,034	\$ -	\$2,677,956
Federal and state grants and city capital appropriations	52,619	5,821,300	-	5,873,919
Contributions - Central Library Campaign	-	4,207,764	-	4,207,764
Fees and library services	333,150	53,909	-	387,059
Fines and lost books	327,545	-	-	327,545
Sale of books and publications	34,041	-	-	34,041
Other income	162,028	9,800	-	171,828
Dividend and interest income	228,216	-	-	228,216
Long-term investment return designated for operations	324,091	775,640	-	1,099,731
Net assets released from restriction	10,828,407	(10,828,407)	-	-
Total operating support and revenue	13,329,019	1,679,040	-	15,008,059
 Operating Expenses:				
Program Services				
Public programs	7,359,629	-	-	7,359,629
Collection and preservation	329,718	-	-	329,718
Technology	630,427	-	-	630,427
Facilities renovation	17,604	-	-	17,604
Central Library capital renovation project	3,120,821	-	-	3,120,821
Total program services	11,458,199	-	-	11,458,199
 Supporting Services				
Administration	838,855	-	-	838,855
Fundraising	947,606	-	-	947,606
Total supporting services	1,786,461	-	-	1,786,461
Total Expenses	13,244,660	-	-	13,244,660
 Change in Net Assets from Operations	 84,359	 1,679,040	 -	 1,763,399
 Non-Operating Support and Gains:				
Grants and contributions to endowment	-	545,576	-	545,576
Long-term investment return in excess of return designated for operations	705,565	2,188,805	-	2,894,370
Total Non-operating support and gains	705,565	2,734,381	-	3,439,946
 Total Change in Net Assets	 789,924	 4,413,421	 -	 5,203,345
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	6,458,689	30,629,908	9,288,814	46,377,411
Net Assets at End of Year	\$7,248,613	\$35,043,329	\$9,288,814	\$51,580,756

Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation
Statement of Financial Position

	June 30	
	<u>2007</u>	<u>2006</u>
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$15,779,966	\$12,732,779
Grants and contributions receivable, net	10,234,807	13,015,268
Fines and other receivables	1,303,979	667,441
Prepaid expenses	36,334	66,864
Furniture and equipment, net	11,316	28,342
Investments		
Short-term investments	-	196,109
Long-term investments	25,020,851	21,121,795
Beneficial interest in life insurance	21,244	19,894
Executive retirement plan trust	188,329	159,234
TOTAL ASSETS	<u><u>\$52,596,826</u></u>	<u><u>\$48,007,726</u></u>
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 696,655	\$1,340,173
Accrued payroll and related liabilities	131,086	130,908
Obligation under deferred compensation agreement	188,329	159,234
Total Liabilities	<u><u>1,016,070</u></u>	<u><u>1,630,315</u></u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted		
Undesignated	5,800,056	5,063,916
Board designated for specific purposes	1,448,557	1,394,773
Total Unrestricted	<u><u>7,248,613</u></u>	<u><u>6,458,689</u></u>
Temporarily restricted	35,043,329	30,629,908
Permanently restricted	9,288,814	9,288,814
Total Net Assets	<u><u>51,580,756</u></u>	<u><u>46,377,411</u></u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u><u>\$52,596,826</u></u>	<u><u>\$48,007,726</u></u>

Background

Background

The Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation (the Foundation) functions primarily to secure federal state, city, and private grants and contributions, and to expend those funds on various library programs.

Agreement with the Board of Trustees of the Free Library of Philadelphia

The Foundation entered into an agreement dated June 19, 1984 with the Board of Trustees of the Free Library of Philadelphia, an independent board of the City of Philadelphia (City or City Library) responsible for securing and expending City appropriations. Under this agreement, the Board of Trustees of the Free Library of Philadelphia maintains care and custody of certain collections of the Foundation and makes all necessary operational decisions as to the management of the libraries and the collections of the Foundation. These statements reflect only the assets, liabilities, operating support and revenue, and associated expenses, net assets and changes in net assets of the Foundation and, accordingly, do not include any amounts applicable to the financial position or changes in net assets of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Basis of Accounting

The financial statements of the Foundation are prepared on an accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America and reflects all significant receivables, payables, and other liabilities.

Basis of Presentation

The Foundation is required to report information regarding its financial position and activities according to three classes of net assets: unrestricted net assets, temporarily restricted net assets, and permanently restricted net assets.

Unrestricted net assets - net assets that are not subject to donor-imposed stipulations. The Board of Directors may elect to designate such assets for specific purposes or to have them function as endowment. This designation may be removed at the Board's discretion.

Temporarily restricted net assets – net assets subject to donor-imposed stipulations that will be met either by actions of the Foundation or by the passage of time.

Permanently restricted net assets – net assets subject to donor-imposed stipulations that require that they be maintained permanently.

The statement of activities distinguishes changes in net assets from operations from other changes in net assets. Operating activity includes revenues and other support, including investment income generated from short-term investments, as well as long-term investment income designated for operations, and all expenses that are available to provide program services and support the administrative functions of the Foundation. Other changes in net assets include permanently restricted contributions and contributions designated for other purposes by the Board, as well as long-term investment income in excess of the Foundation's designated spending rate.

Revenue is reported as increases in unrestricted net assets unless use of the related assets is limited by donor-imposed restrictions. Expenses are reported as decreases in unrestricted net assets. Gains and losses on assets or liabilities are reported as increases or decreases in unrestricted net assets unless their use is restricted by explicit donor stipulation or by law. Expirations of temporary restrictions on net assets are reported as net assets released from restrictions.

Central Library Project

In fiscal year 2003, the Foundation began a major capital campaign for the purpose of expanding and renovating the Central Library. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to raise \$175,000,000 which includes \$10,000,000 to establish a programming endowment. This project will be funded by a public-private partnership for which Philadelphia's City Council authorized the issuance of \$30 million in bonds in December of 2004.

In fiscal year 2007, the Foundation achieved cumulative conditional and unconditional pledges, contributions and grants of approximately \$92 million toward the goal. Included in the grants and contributions receivable (net of discounts and allowances) at June 30, 2007 is \$8,286,775 related to the Project.

Visit any one of our 54 Free Library locations or visit us at www.freelibrary.org

CENTER CITY	NORTHEAST	NORTHWEST	SOUTH	WEST
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Branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia



Elliot Shelkrot—Celebrating 20 Years



In April 2007, Elliot Shelkrot, President and Director of the Free Library of Philadelphia, announced his decision to retire at the end of the calendar year. “I have been extremely fortunate to have had enthusiastic and committed board members, a creative staff, a determined Friends organization, and many generous supporters,” Shelkrot said, adding, “I certainly have mixed feelings in making this decision, but I believe that after 20 years this is a good time for me and for the Library to turn the oversight of this great institution over to new and fresh leadership. With the Central Library’s expansion project in the capable hands of Linda Johnson, our branch libraries thriving and evolving, and our web presence growing to more than 10 million hits per month—I believe that the Free Library is poised to make great strides in serving the people of Philadelphia and the region.”

Shelkrot took his first position as a librarian in 1966, working with teens at what is now the Free Library’s Cecil B. Moore Avenue Branch. Shelkrot rejoined the Free Library in 1987, after serving as a state librarian for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for seven years. In the past 20 years under Shelkrot’s leadership the Free Library of Philadelphia has seen extraordinary growth and improvements in many areas—from programs and services to technological resources to physical renovations. Shelkrot has also been an instrumental force in the conception and execution of the ongoing Campaign for a New Central Library.

“A good library doesn’t just have good books on the shelves, free internet access and an open door,” Shelkrot says, “a good library constantly seeks new ways to reach out into the community and engage new audiences in the library.”



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