60 Years of Enduring Value

ANNUAL REPORT
FRIENDS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
2020-2021
Dear Friends,

Amid the pandemic, the Library illustrated why it is one of the most important public institutions in San Francisco by going above and beyond what we imagine a library to be. The Library proved its enduring value as an anchor of our City’s service infrastructure. Despite making up only 1.4% of the City’s budget, the Library brings a return on public investment beyond anything imaginable - from committing up to 50% of its workforce to COVID disaster relief, pivoting services to online platforms, hosting community learning hubs, and reopening branches to in-person services and placing books back into our hands.

In its 60th year, Friends proved the enduring value of its partnership with the SFPL. Friends pivoted with the Library. We purchased safety equipment and assisted Librarians in creating new services on multiple platforms virtually overnight. With our community of Library advocates and donors, we demonstrated once again that private support empowers the Library to act flexibly and quickly to meet critical, even emergency, needs. Friends also restructured its business operations, strengthening its long-term sustainability and capacity to fund Library programs and branch renovations. Our donors also went above and beyond in their generosity at all levels, from the Friends Circle to the Leadership Circle. Thanks to you all our mission is more secure than ever.

Friends continues to ground its efforts in strategic planning and listening to the needs of our community. In April 2021, we commissioned a community needs survey showing an overwhelming 95% of a representative sample of San Franciscans said they want a well-funded and excellent Library, and four out of five said they will use the Library as much and more than they did pre-pandemic. Survey results also focus our work on funding Library programs for the most vulnerable residents in our community.

We proudly present this annual report, narrating yet another powerful chapter in the story of Friends, the SFPL, and all of our supporters who make the difference.

Warmly,

Marie Ciepiela
Executive Director
After March 2020, more than 50% of Library staff members were assigned to disaster relief duties such as working in contact tracing, COVID testing sites, food delivery, residential hotels, and communications. Contending with chronic staffing shortages and the new safety protocols, the Library rebuilt the public’s access to critically needed free materials and services. **Below are some of the Library’s achievements since the beginning of the pandemic, March 2020 through June 2021.**

### SFPL KEPT MATERIALS AND eRESOURCES CIRCULATING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,646,200</td>
<td>Total circulation of books and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>Increase in eResource use, including eBooks, streaming, and learning applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>41,046</td>
<td>Additional library cards issued to patrons</td>
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### SFPL BROUGHT BACK BOOKS AND BRANCHES

- With doors closed, SFPL To Go service came to all districts at branches and through bookmobiles.
- The Main Library and branches reopened by Fall 2020.
- Pre-pandemic hours were restored at the Main Library; 7 day service will be restored at branches by early 2022.
- SFPL To Go and a temporary location will serve the Mission while the branch undergoes renovation.

### SFPL HELPED PATRONS NAVIGATE PERSONAL CHALLENGES

- When unemployment reached 12.5%, SFPL responded with **Work it: Jobs, Business and Finance**, and saw a 520% increase in online job search classes and phone help, a 119% increase in personal finance classes, and a 127% increase in small business assistance.
LIBRARY USE INCREASED WITH ONLINE PROGRAMS

While not all in-person programs could move online, the many that did saw notable increases in participation.

ADULT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

- **Computer and technology classes** increased 28% with 4,840 users.
- **ESL classes** grew 250% with 1,940 users.
- **Literary and cultural events** increased 78% with 29,500 users.
- The **One City One Book** lecture by Chanel Miller attracted 2,000 attendees from globally.

CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

- **Fog Readers** matched 160 students with volunteer tutors meeting weekly over Zoom.
- 9 branches hosted **Community Hubs** providing full-day, in-person support for 217 SFUSD students for the entire year.
- K-12 online STEM, literary and cultural events attracted 14,058 users.
- 169 **Sweet Storytimes** were recorded in multiple languages and viewed 119,000 times.
- SFPL gave away **44,000 bundles of ten books** to students through the Summer Together program.

SUMMER STRIDE 2021

- 11,500 youth and adults read 20 hours and earned their tote bags.
- 38 youth events including the BIPOC KidLit Series, Alphabet Rockers, and Live STEM Lab.
- The National Parks Service and the SF Human Rights Commission collaborated in programming advancing outdoor education and SF’s racial equity initiative.
- Bay Area illustrator Kaylani Juanita (Chronicle Books, Inc.) produced the playful, book-inspired artwork.

I got the offer from Cal State East Bay for the speech language pathology program today! I want to thank you for every week you arranged the conversation group for us to speak English and make friends. Especially this year, new immigrants like me don’t have many friends here and stay home. The conversation group comforted me and made me feel I’m not lonely. I could go to the interview with the university because I practiced my English in the ESL group every week.”

ESL conversation group participant
Friends pivoted strategically with the Library in all efforts to rebuild services. Thanks to Friends’ members and donors, we provided the financial support, flexibility and rapid response SFPL needed. Furthermore, we emerged from this challenging year in a stronger position than ever to power our mission for the SFPL.

“This past 18 months has been incredibly challenging for our tiny tiger team of dedicated library programming staff. Our goal was to support our artistic community of writers, poets, musicians, crafters, and illustrators, and the professionals who lead our lifelong learning workshops, moving into an online programming space. We couldn’t have done it without the flexibility of Friends’ support to identify, pilot, and try new ways of doing things. The continued success of programming in the virtual world has astounded us all.” — Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships, SFPL

**FRIENDS HELPED KEEP THE LIBRARY SAFE**

When the Library could once again circulate materials, *Friends quickly purchased $143,000 in sneeze guards, PPE, and air purifiers* to keep Library staff and patrons safe during SFPL To Go curbside pickup, bookmobile outreach, and reopening of in-person services at the Main and all branches.

Friends provided the 100 sneeze guards patrons see throughout the branches.

**FRIENDS HELPED THE SFPL CONVERT PROGRAMING**

When the libraries had to close their doors, *Friends assisted SFPL staff to convert as many programs as possible to online formats.*

- Paid more than 100 artists, authors, teachers and trainers in all program areas.
- Made sure patrons could still connect through literary and cultural programs such as *One City One Book, VIVA Latinx Month, More than a Month Black History Month, HerStory, Asian American Heritage Month,* and June PRIDE.
- Funded two years of virtual *Summer Stride*, keeping this signature program available for those students who lost educational time at school.

Visit the SFPL’s YouTube Library to view all the programs produced for the public with Friends financial assistance.

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FRIENDS & THE SFPL

60 Years of Enduring Partnership

San Francisco Public Library
FRIENDS

60 YEARS AND GOING STRONG

Friends celebrates its 60th year in 2021 in excellent health and no signs of slowing down. In fact, we emerge in 2021 in an even stronger position to advocate for the renewal of the Library Preservation Fund, to fund Library programs and infrastructure needs, and to provide our book program to the community.

THE BOOK PROGRAM

Closing the iconic bookstore at Fort Mason Center was bittersweet, but one of several decisions to scale the program for long-term sustainability.

- The Bookstore at the Main Library is now open
- The Step Sales are back every Wednesday
- Book donations are open by appointment with drop-off protocols
- Smaller community book sales are coming while we assess the future

ADVOCACY

Renewing the Library Preservation Fund for 15 more years is vital. Since Friends advocated for designated public library funding 30 years ago, the SFPL budget has grown 174%, stabilizing and transforming the Library with robust book collections, educational programs, and technology—and maintaining a neighborhood branch system where almost every resident is a short distance from a library. The LPF will expire in 2023 unless the community votes to extend it for another 15 years.

NEW MEMBERSHIP CARDS AND BENEFITS

Donors at all levels – Friends Circle, Innovation Circle, and Leadership Circle – will receive our newly designed membership cards and our gifts of appreciation

- 10% discounts on books
- Invitations to SFPL and Friends events
- At the Library delivered to your home and email.

FRIENDS CELEBRATES 60!

We continue to serialize our history in our Enewsletter. Since COVID has limited our ability to truly celebrate, we will extend our anniversary into next year. More to come!

FREEWILL

In keeping with our mission for access to vital resources, Friends now offers FreeWill, an online application to create wills and trusts for free. Since July 2020, 650 people initiated a will or trust, 300 completed them, and 35 named Friends of the SFPL as a beneficiary.
LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY
Voices from the Pandemic

As 2021 dawned, Friends wanted to know how San Franciscans were doing and how the Library, as a free and accessible institution, could help in the City’s pandemic recovery. In addition, we wanted to know if our existing strategic plan for Library support needed to adapt to address new needs.

In April, Friends commissioned FM3 (Fairbank, Malsin, Maulin, Metz & Associates), an opinion and research strategy company, to interview 600 San Francisco residents over the phone and online. These findings inform our work, most significantly in advocating for public funding and fundraising for new and critical needs.

The full report of San Franciscan’s Attitude Toward Public Library Needs can be found at FriendsSFPL.org. Key findings of San Franciscan’s Attitude Toward Public Library Needs include:

**OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR A WELL-FUNDED PUBLIC LIBRARY**
- 95% believe that our libraries are an essential service.
- 88% say the SFPL has played a crucial role in the city’s pandemic recovery.
- 84% agree that the SFPL promotes equity of access and opportunity.

**A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN ECONOMIC SUFFERING DUE TO THE PANDEMIC**
While a majority of residents said they were experiencing isolation and loneliness, residents with household incomes under $100,000, those in the southern neighborhoods, and Latinx and African American residents reported significantly more challenges with job loss and access to technology.

**NOTABLE GAPS IN USE AND KNOWLEDGE OF LIBRARY RESOURCES**
by wealth, location, and ethnicity

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRIENDS AND THE LIBRARY TO ADDRESS EQUITY ISSUES**
- Targeted outreach to the most high-need, and isolated communities
- More educational support for children’s education
- Expanded access to SFPL’s free WIFI network outside and around branches.
- Continued expansion of jobs, careers, personal finance classes for adults
Friends’ Strategic Plan for the Library 2019–2023 held up well through the 18 months of the pandemic, lighting our path. Now we integrate the findings of our community needs survey as we pursue our goals for the next two years.

**RENEW THE LIBRARY PRESERVATION FUND** for an additional 15 years on the November 2022 ballot. The LPF supplies 97% of the Library’s budget and keeps the SFPL one of the most secure and well-funded public libraries in the United States.

**SUPPORT THE RENOVATION OF THE MISSION BRANCH LIBRARY**, by raising $1 million for furniture and equipment.

In 2015, the San Francisco’s Controller’s Office studied the impact of the Branch Library Improvement Project for 24 branches and found that for every $1 invested in BLIP, San Francisco realized a return on investment of $5.19 to $9.11.

**TARGET FUNDRAISING AND LIBRARY SUPPORT** in areas identified by the community:

- Outreach to identified high-need and isolated communities
- Educational Programs for K-12 students
- Access to Library WIFI and technology tools
- Adult education and work-force skill development

**CELEBRATE OUR 60TH ANNIVERSARY** by hosting an in-person Library Laureates gala in May 2022 (circumstances permitting).
Friend's financial position is strong. Thanks to the generosity and hard work of so many over the past two fiscal years, we operated with a surplus despite the jolting experience of a global pandemic and economic uncertainty. Our Strategic Plan for the Future of the Library 2019-2023 called for a reduction in our underlying cost structure and established benchmarks for all revenue streams – contributions, earned (from book sales), and investments. We are happy to report success in all areas, improving our financial position and enhancing our capacity to support the Library for the foreseeable future.

**GROWTH IN NET ASSETS**

From 2020 to 2021, total net assets increased by 38% to $9,776,538, due to a 7% growth in contributions, a 67% growth in investments, and a 33% reduction in operating expenses. Unrestricted net assets grew by 192%, creating a healthier balance of unrestricted, restricted, and permanently restricted funds available for Library support.
Library Support totaled $1,214,753, consisting of direct costs for Library programs, Friends-sponsored initiatives, and in-kind costs to Friends. Support includes $378,000 in direct library programs and $349,407 for a multi-year, collaborative documentary film project by Jim Yager Media Group and the San Francisco History Center at the Main Library. Moving San Francisco documents the history of public transportation and the San Francisco MUNI and will air on KQED. Total Library support was lower than planned due to COVID-19 closures. All audits are available at FriendSFPL.org/financials as they become certified.
Friends has welcomed new staff and Board members who join our veteran team.

Pictured from left to right
Front row: Sandra Wu, Marie Ciepiela, Nelli Abramova, Barbara Alvarez
Second row: David Silberman, Vicky Lam, Tajinder Virdee, Marysa Torres
Third row: Gray Tolhurst, Michele Kohler (with Beau), Lucy Neilsen, Jason Stephens, Andrew Leanord, Bob Daffeh, Michael-Vincent D’Anella-Mercanti
Not pictured: Adena Kershner, Steve Kubick, Claudia Willen

Top Row: Michael Warr, Diane Gibson, Matthew Kenaston (Treasurer), Walter Thompson
Second Row: Sarah Ives (Secretary), Daphne Li (Vice Chair), Sapan Satagopan, Sarah Jones (Chair)
Third Row: Vishal Saluja, Rebecca Charnas-Grant, Alissa Lee, Gina Baleria, Sapan Satagopan
Not Pictured: Kathleen Rydar
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