



FRIENDS  
of  
THE SEATTLE  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

# THE BOOKMARK

Fall 2009

1000 Fourth Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98104-1109

TEL (206) 386-4098  
SHOP (206) 733-9015  
BOOK SALE (206) 523-4053  
E-MAIL [friends@spl.org](mailto:friends@spl.org)  
WEB [www.friendsofspl.org](http://www.friendsofspl.org)

## Candidates Respond to a Question about The Library's Budget

The Friends of The Seattle Public Library and The Seattle Public Library Foundation recently surveyed City Council and mayoral candidates about Library issues. All candidates were asked to answer a three-part question in 200 words or less. Their responses follow. Candidates' responses are also posted on our Web site, [www.friendsofspl.org](http://www.friendsofspl.org). If you are interested in getting updates about issues that impact the library, please e-mail us at [advocacy@friendsofspl.org](mailto:advocacy@friendsofspl.org) and read our blog at [www.friendsofspl.wordpress.com](http://www.friendsofspl.wordpress.com).

### General election: Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2009

Additional King County elections information available at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/elections.aspx>. We urge you to become informed and to vote!

**Question: Given a shortfall in city revenues and additional budget cuts necessary for 2010, how important is it to a) maintain hours at current levels, b) improve funding levels for collections, which includes public computers, and c) to restore the capital budget for building maintenance?**

### Mayoral Candidates

#### Mike McGinn

no response

#### Joe Mallahan

no response

### Council Position No. 2

#### Richard Conlin

Libraries are among the basic services of the City, along with public safety, parks, and utilities. That is why I have consistently supported adding hours and funds for library materials. I personally usually have a dozen books on request and half-a-dozen checked out at any given time. The continued increase in library use that has accompanied the opening of our new and renovated libraries testifies to

the high expectations that Seattle voters have of our city government and library system.

By the time we finish the 2009-2010 budget, we will have cut some \$100 million as a result of the recession. I expect that there will be some opportunities to expand services to a limited extent in the 2011-2012 biennium. In the last recession, I initiated a modest increase in our utility taxes (1.5%) to generate funds for critical programs, including street maintenance and restoration of the bookmobile. The increased usage of our libraries is a demand that we must respond to, and I will support maintaining hours and the collections budget in the 2010 process. Restoring the capital budget and expanding collections is likely to have to wait until 2011 or 2012, but must happen when we can.

#### David Ginsberg

no response

### Council Position No. 4

#### Sally Bagshaw

We just completed a weeklong furlough where every library in the city was closed for one week. Did people notice? Yes. Were the libraries missed? YES!

The closures served as a painful reminder that our libraries are an integral part of our lives and cannot be shelved at the bottom of our priority list. 80 percent of the city's residents have Library cards and we rely on the collections and connections the libraries provide.

In a down economy – with a \$72 million shortfall – libraries offer important resources that are critically needed. People of all income levels turn to our libraries to learn about social services, look for job opportunities, have computer access, and get expert assistance.

In 2008, over 11 million people visited our city's libraries, over 9 million items were circulated and over one million questions were answered. What these numbers show is that libraries are busier than ever.

We need to protect and promote this precious resource. I have been a regular Library user since I was 4 years old. My sons had the same advantage. Libraries must be accessible, open and well-stocked. I will work hard to support our libraries.

### **David Bloom**

I believe public libraries are one of the essential functions of city government, not to mention critical resources for an informed and civilized society.

Ironically, in a digital age we need libraries more than ever as the repository of original printed information and centers for conducting research. It is also instructive to see the heavy use of computers in libraries as users seek both print and online information.

It is short-sighted in our city to be cutting back on Library hours, while we invest hundreds of millions, and even billions, of dollars in large capital projects to serve the interests of downtown business, while at the same time neglecting the knowledge base that makes such business possible.

We need to refocus our priorities away from large downtown capital projects and get back to basics. These basics include: maintaining Library hours at current levels, improving funding for collections, and restoring the capital budget for building maintenance.

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### **Council Position No. 6**

#### **Nick Licata**

During the council's 2008 budget deliberations, I sponsored legislation increasing the collection budget by \$300,000 in 2009 and \$300,000 in 2010 over the mayor's proposal. If re-elected to the council, one of my highest priorities will be to maintain those funding levels in 2010. I will also work to maintain Library hours at current levels for 2010.

An important but lower priority for me is restoring building maintenance funds. Because of the good condition in which Library facilities find themselves now that the Libraries For All project is complete, I will work to restore those funds once city revenues allow.

Library patrons seek more access, not less, during times of economic hardship. They seek more materials, not fewer. People rely upon libraries most when times are tough because libraries are one of the few if not only places offering free learning, health information, job-hunting, and entertainment. The Library's new Job Resource Center, made possible by Friends of The Seattle Public Library funding, serves as an inspiring example of how the Library's collections can directly benefit patrons during challenging times.

I believe it is crucial that funding for Library hours and for

collections be maintained, not cut, during this economic downturn.

#### **Jessie Israel**

No response

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### **Council Position No. 8**

#### **Mike O'Brien**

The fact that Library hours are being cut and support for Library collections and building maintenance is being scaled back while at the same time we're talking about spending \$200 million to build a new jail is a stark example of the failure of our current political leaders to focus on the right priorities. The Seattle Public Library system is a critical resource for the citizens of Seattle. We depend on the Library for information and inspiration, and for many Seattle residents it's the primary access point for digital technology and the Internet. This makes adequate funding for the Library a question of fundamental economic fairness in Seattle.

The Library is a foundation of Seattle's cultural life and a catalyst for its economic vitality and it should be an essential priority for the city. As a member of the Seattle City Council, I will work to maintain the Library's hours. I also think we need to take a long-term view of the role that The Seattle Public Library plays in our city and improve funding for the Library's collections and invest in building maintenance. This is a much better use of taxpayer dollars than a new jail.

#### **Robert Rosencrantz**

We have a shortfall in city revenues because we're in a tough economy. And during a tough economy, people need libraries more than ever. Closing libraries or shortening their hours during a recession is like closing hospitals during an epidemic; it doesn't make sense.

My answer to your question is as follows: it is vital to maintain hours at current levels [or better yet, to restore hours to 2002 levels], improve funding levels for collections including public computers, and to restore the capital budget for building maintenance.

As someone wrote on the FSPL blog: "To be a civic amenity, our libraries have to be open and accessible. To meet our vision of a public good they need sustained capital and operations funding. To be excellent they need private investment and strong community support. We can settle for less in hard economic times. But each concession we make as a community compromises the power of our investment and weakens our expectations."

Effective government serves the people's interests by setting priorities and sticking to them. Libraries are a high priority. On the City Council I will treat them as such.