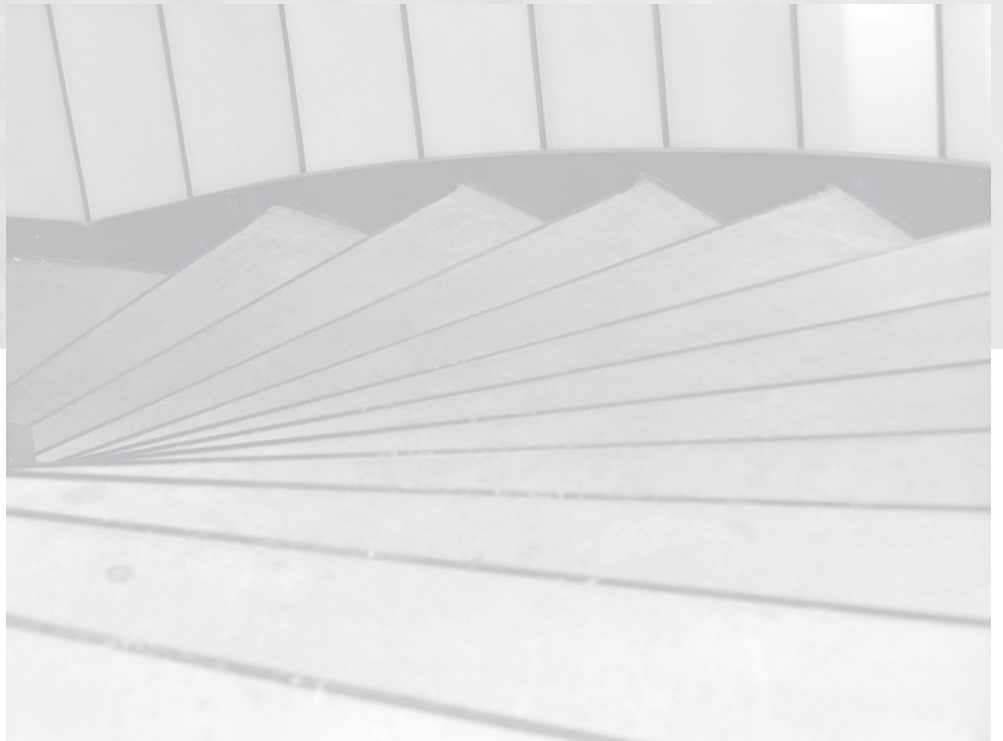




# Open Book:

*Building a Legacy for the Book*





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## Preface

*“A lot of other kinds of arts organizations – whether dance, theater, music – because they perform in halls, they have a sense of place that literature doesn’t have. Performers have theaters. Visual artists have galleries. Literature has nothing. Before anybody had any idea we’d become Open Book, there was this desire for permanence, and this desire for place.”*

Open Book is a cultural and artistic center dedicated to the book. It is the first such center in the nation to serve as a gathering place that celebrates the book community and offers programs to inspire participation in reading, writing, and book arts.

Open Book opened its doors in the spring of 2000 in three renovated 100-year-old buildings at the eastern edge of downtown Minneapolis. Outside, the neighborhood surges with redevelopment of the historic mills and warehouses that stretch along the Mississippi River. Inside, light suffuses open, tranquil spaces. Open Book’s strong aesthetic includes works by local visual artists and intriguing elements such as fragments of original wallpaper and a set of stairs embedded in a wall, now leading nowhere. It is imaginative space. Visitors are warmed by the colors of original brick and floorboards, by coffee and organic foods from the café, and over and over again by the pleasures of the book.

Open Book was born of the dreams and daring of three nonprofit organizations that joined together to create something much larger than themselves. This is their story. It is the story of the building that became the physical manifestation of their dedication. And it is the story of a community committed to literature, for

whom this building stands open like a half-written novel, upon whose blank pages writers everywhere are invited to continue with the story.

### How this report came to be

This is the Open Book story as told from the perspective of those most closely involved. Founders of Open Book wanted the chance to commit to the page their extraordinary shared journey and to take the time to examine where it has led. That chance came when the Wallace Foundation offered support to The Loft Literary Center, one of the Open Book founders, for such an endeavor. The Loft then partnered with the board of Open Book, which hired an independent organizational consultant to shepherd the process and author the report.

Over a period of months, the author spoke with more than two dozen people who shared stories spanning the years from 1996 to 2004. These included representatives of the founding organizations, others who were instrumental in the creation of Open Book, funders, and community members (see Appendix for a list of those interviewed). Their stories and quotes form the backbone of this text. As a narrative inquiry, this endeavor sought to discern the meaning of the stories, from the idiosyncracies inherent in the case to the universal themes of community building. The

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the first such  
center in the  
nation.*

resulting themes and conclusions were discussed at two salons, where Open Book participants further clarified their views and reached a deeper understanding of what elements of their story were central to its telling. The result, in a sense, is a collective organizational autobiography.

### Lessons of collaboration

Telling this story also is an opportunity to consider Open Book as a collaboration. Nonprofits and businesses live in an interconnected world and increasingly look for partners who can help achieve results that they could not achieve on their own. When organizations enter into such partnerships, they do so with the understanding that they will grapple with questions of autonomy, purpose, and leadership. They will live through conflicts and frustrations, and learn to be flexible, forgiving, and inventive.

In many ways, Open Book's beginning illustrates these and other classic elements of collaboration theory. In other ways, it departs from the well-traveled road. In the unfolding of this story the reader will come upon several wayside rests where tensions are uncovered, critical decisions articulated, and experiences examined for what they may teach about collaboration.

We will endeavor to answer these core questions:

1. What was even more important than planning during the planning phase?
2. How did leaders use the tight time frame as an advantage?
3. What was the link between designing the shared space and defining the collaborative relationships?

4. How did the dispersed leadership structure work in this case?
5. How did Open Book partners approach the question of fairness in dealing with the very different needs and concerns of the founding organizations?
6. What is instructive about the legal, financial and governance models that provide the framework for Open Book?
7. How did the three founding organizations, so different from one another, balance their needs for autonomy and integration?
8. What made the case for establishing Open Book so compelling to community members, and is it fulfilling its promise to the community?

To explore these questions, we begin by jumping back in time to look at the three founding organizations, what was on their minds in 1996, and what made it possible for each of them to become part of the joint endeavor that would grow into Open Book.

## Chapter 1: Laying the foundation

### The Partners

*“I thought we could create a physical building that was an outward manifestation of the grace and power of literature.”*

Open Book’s three founding partners are The Loft Literary Center, Milkweed Editions and Minnesota Center for Book Arts. Located at different points along the continuum of the literary arts, they engage with authors and artists to create good writing and beautiful books. Their programs and purposes are distinctive, but they have important things in common. Each works to uplift the written word as art and to promote the expression of individual creativity. They also are passionately committed to literature as a social good, a tool for the free exchange of ideas so fundamental to democracy. In an era of declining readership and reduced funding for the arts, they each searched for ways to make literature and book arts more visible in the community and to reinforce the book’s position as indispensable in people’s lives.



*The Loft Literary Center*, founded in 1974 in a loft above a Minneapolis bookstore, is now the nation’s largest and most comprehensive independent literary arts center. For nearly 30 years, the Loft’s mission has been “to foster a writing community, the artistic development of individual writers, and an audience for literature.” The Loft offers more than 350 creative writing classes each year for people of all ages and experience levels; readings, spoken word performances, and author events; book discussions and

writing groups; mentoring programs for emerging authors; conferences, festivals, and publications for writers and readers; family literacy activities; and grants, fellowships, and professional development opportunities for accomplished authors. After beginning in a bookstore, the Loft had several homes, including an old house near the University of Minnesota, a former church, and a 100-year-old former elementary school.

Executive Director Linda Myers came to the Loft in 1994, at a time when the burgeoning literary center was 20 years old and in serious need of a facility strategy. Administrative Director Nancy Gaschott thought at the time, “The Loft had an opportunity to be a great community center, a community-building place on many levels.” With a membership of 1,500 and an additional 50,000 people served annually, the restrictions imposed by the school building were unworkable. “People sat on third grader chairs, and we lived month to month with the fear that we could be ejected at any time.” When Linda arrived, she began to ask questions not only about the Loft’s future, but about the future of literature more broadly. She began to imagine partnering with others to create something lasting. “If communion is the outward manifestation of an inward grace,” Linda reflects, “I thought we could create a physical building that was an outward manifestation of the grace and power of literature.” The seeds of Open Book were beginning to germinate.



*Milkweed Editions* is currently the nation's largest independent nonprofit literary press, and has had a readership of almost two million people since it was founded in 1979. Its mission is unique among independent literary presses: "to make a humane impact on society through transformative literature." Milkweed Editions publishes 12-20 books each year in the categories of fiction, nonfiction, juvenile fiction, and poetry. Milkweed is one of few nonprofit literary presses to publish children's books. A second area of specialty is Milkweed's "The World as Home" program, which publishes nonfiction that explores the relationship between people and the natural world.

The press had occupied a variety of cramped spaces over the years, and by the mid-1990's found itself increasingly concerned about escalating rents. Founder Emilie Buchwald was still at the helm as publisher and editor in chief. Milkweed had only a few years remaining on a lease in the warehouse district of Minneapolis and expected a 52 percent increase in rent when the lease expired. A search for comparable spaces revealed that any similar office would be likely to cost at least 30% more. This triggered a series of explorations through which Milkweed hoped to figure out how to interact with the world in new ways—through teaching, developing new partnerships, connecting with colleges, being more visible. Emilie was convinced, "If you're a literary nonprofit and want to make a difference, you want to let people know why and how you are publishing, and then involve them." By 1996 she was having conversations with the Loft and Minnesota Center for Book Arts to explore

the idea of a facility shared with other literary groups. "I could see everything to be gained by making an alliance like this," recalls Emilie, "instead of being in our own private bailiwick."



*Minnesota Center for Book Arts*, or MCBA, was the relative youngster among the three organizations. It was formed in 1983 by a group of local book lovers who wanted to foster enthusiasm for the book as a contemporary art form. MCBA's artist cooperative offered 24-hour access to papermaking, bookbinding, and printmaking equipment. Courses and workshops for students of all ages, residencies in schools, and statewide exhibitions provided a showcase for local artists as well as highlighting the importance of book art for a wide range of audiences. In 1996 it was serving more than 20,000 people and had about 700 members.

Despite a strong evolution in its programs, MCBA had struggled with finances and staff leadership in the mid-1990s. When board chair Jay Cowles stepped in as interim executive director in 1996, MCBA began to seriously explore "rescue alternatives." Merger negotiations with another nonprofit were attempted, but fell through. MCBA anticipated a rent increase of at least 100% when its current warehouse district lease expired in 2003, but the prospects of moving were daunting. Besides having complicated space needs for its specialized equipment,



MCBA had not resolved what programs would create a strong financial base and what level of growth would ensure survival. Jay remembers of that time, “MCBA still had several years on our lease. And to some extent we were tired, dealing with binding our wounds, and making progress internally through all our near-death experiences.” MCBA needed to find a realistic solution that could infuse the organization with renewed energy and optimism. It was at about this time that the Loft’s Linda Myers invited Jay to lunch.

Linda credits the wisdom of a large gathering of constituents with the first real vision of what would become Open Book. As part of its 1994 strategic planning process, the Loft had brought together more than 100 people in a “future search” process. Stakeholders included writers, grantmakers, publishers, librarians, teachers, Loft staff and board members, National Endowment for the Arts representatives, and many others. When invited to imagine how the Loft might best fulfill its mission to serve literature, an overwhelming number of those gathered articulated a vision of a permanent home. They pictured not only classrooms, but common spaces, a café, elements that would draw people in. They imagined a day when literature would have a greater presence and stature in the community.

On the strength of this expressed interest, the Loft initiated a series of community conversations with other literary groups. People from all parts of the literary spectrum talked about what they might do

to establish a home for literature. Twenty-two organizations came and went over the months, but MCBA, Milkweed, and the Loft remained at the table. For them, there was a compelling convergence between the power of the dream and each organization’s aspirations and needs. They began to see how, by creating an alliance with one another, they could create “a unified case for literature,” as they describe it, “from inspiration and inception to publication and distribution—the book as idea, as well as the book as artifact.”

### Joining hands: the planning period

*“It was about discovering what didn’t work, and what hadn’t been done.”*

As yet, however, no one had defined what such an alliance would look like. In the fall of 1996, the Loft, MCBA, and Milkweed recognized that if serious progress was to be made, additional resources and time commitments would be necessary. They applied for and received planning funds totaling \$55,000 from four local foundations: Jerome, General Mills, McKnight, and Bush. “That was a remarkable expression of the great arts funding in this town,” says one partner, “that there’s money for serious exploration of major alternatives.”

The grants initiated a period of intense and focused activity between the summer of 1997 and late 1998, during which time working groups of board and staff moved from theoretical discussions to practical and concrete scenarios. They developed plans for finance, governance, fundraising, and staffing. They hired a team of consultants to research models of shared arts facilities, and learned that what they



envisioned did not exist anywhere else. They prepared a case statement. They conducted focus groups to discover what others would value in a gathering place for literature. Later on, they hired real estate developer Chuck Leer and architect Garth Rockcastle, who began to evaluate properties for lease or purchase. Nancy Gaschott, administrative director for the Loft, played a crucial leadership role by developing agendas and chairing meetings of the joint work group.

The planning period held many frustrations. One observer wondered at the time whether it was “too thorough—with so much attention to detail. Were they planning forever as a way to avoid hard decisions?” Another recalls that it was not a satisfying process: “It was about discovering what didn’t work and hadn’t been done. I’m not sure we called the questions hard enough or were able to develop really clear scenarios.”

Most critical of all, the planning period revealed the different assumptions in the minds of the participants. Some entered into planning as a signal of solid commitment. For others, it was a structured exploration of the *possibility* of commitment. So while some people were ready to stride ahead, others took hesitant side steps and looked over their shoulders for perhaps a different route. From time to

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time, this made the striders terribly frustrated.

## Organizational self-assessment

*“None of them could afford mistakes.”*

It would be hard to overstate the difficulties of this period. The three organizations were at quite different stages in their own development. Staff changes brought in new perspectives midstream. With no clear guiding image of the resulting model, partners remained vigilant about preserving their own identities. Like many collaborative partners, Open Book participants were unearthing tensions that could either derail their efforts or result in creative solutions.

One such tension of this time was that the organic nature of forming the new entity required the partners to make a convincing case to others while still defining it for themselves. The three organizations differed in their readiness to commit their organizations to the joint venture. “Even though you had three extremely motivated players, they [each] had unique worries,” recalls one observer. “None of them could afford mistakes.” The Loft felt sure of this direction, but the other two organizations had specific and immediate worries that required self-assessment and internal discussion. Would a joint venture substantially advance their mission? Would it make economic sense? What were the assumptions about and implications for growth?

These questions required careful study, and in two cases new players on the scene brought a healthy skepticism to the process. Milkweed hired Sid Farrar as its executive director in the fall of 1996, some months before planning funds were secured. New to the literary community at the time, Sid recalls sharing in the

excitement about the vision, but “I had the emergency. I had to either negotiate a new lease or find new space. For me it was economic – we weren’t looking for any kind of public space.” The idea of a gathering place for literature, while charming, was not essential to the publisher’s mission. As Sid puts it, “I loved the idea, but I had to be careful not to get so dazzled that I lost sight of our situation.” MCBA also changed its top leadership. For over a year it had operated with board chair Jay Cowles in the position of interim executive director and Linda Johnson serving as managing director. Linda was instrumental in stabilizing MCBA’s operations and in planning for the alliance. Then, in the fall of 1997, Peggy Korsmo-Kennon was hired as MCBA’s executive director, with the dual charge to assure MCBA’s future and to consider the wisdom of the alliance. She recalls Open Book being presented to her as a possibility, but something that was “down the road.” Understanding MCBA as a separate entity had to come first. “Up until that time, there wasn’t a strategic plan,” she recalls. There was no infrastructure about how we operated as an organization, or policies about determining programs. There was no document you could go to and say, ‘Oh, here are the goals of the organization, and Open Book is a perfect way to meet those goals.’” The board and Peggy conducted a risk assessment and created a strategic plan. They wanted MCBA

*Creative tension: The search for integration had to be balanced by the legitimate need of each organization to preserve its autonomy.*

to be an organization that took risks, “because that’s how growth happens, but to know they were good, calculated risks.” In the end, it was clear that Open Book represented a significant opportunity.

*Creative tension: Both visionaries and pragmatists were required, but their differing perspectives could cause misunderstandings and frustrations.*

All of this took time to determine, and detailed board deliberations were required. As more established enterprises, the Loft and Milkweed were not facing these developmental growing pains.

They recognized that they had to give MCBA time, but urgently wished the process would move faster.

Conflict among people with differing proclivities and skills was another tension of this time. The complexities of the proposed alliance required both visionaries and pragmatists. Their differing perspectives could cause misunderstandings and frustrations. Partners had to quell their own impatience and learn to respect each other’s points of view. Linda Myers emphasizes this: “You have to have the people who see the possibility, who then partner with the people who have the know how. The dreamers couldn’t begin to do the implementation, step by step by step.”

A third tension of this time was the need for each organization to sort out the effects of an alliance on its identity. How would they maintain their distinctiveness and not be swallowed up in a group identity? Would the joint entity do its own programming? If so, how could it enhance rather than compete with each organization’s programs? How would a capital fund drive affect individual fundraising efforts? How would being in more public space impact their mission and day-to-day operations? Would each continue with separate marketing efforts? The search for integration had to be balanced by the legitimate need of each organization to preserve its autonomy.

## Looking for a home

*"You got hit by the sunlight!"*

The planning phase was characterized by both internal self-assessment and, simultaneously, joint work to create plans for the as-yet-undefined future. If indeed the three groups could agree to live together, they would need a home. While the organizations worked on self-assessment, developer Chuck Leer and architect Garth Rockcastle set out to find and evaluate possible locations.

The first property Chuck considered was 1011 Washington, the location that would ultimately become Open Book. He was convinced it was just what the partners were looking for. Chuck beams, recalling his first exposure to the building: "As I'm walking through the building, it was dark. There was only light coming through a few cracks. One of the fun things about the building the first few times going through it was the third floor was completely dark—except for a door in the back of the building, facing the Metrodome in downtown, that you could open up. And on a sunny day like today the rush of light into the building was just overpowering. You got hit by the sunlight!"

Chuck's enthusiasm was not matched by the hesitant partners, however. They hadn't made what they considered firm commitments to

one another. They were still debating whether to rent, buy, or build. They were unclear what their space needs would be, in particular what kind of joint or public space to design. This may be it, they said, but keep looking. Chuck assessed 36 properties over the next several months. As summer arrived, 1011 Washington was still in the running and had generated some excitement among the partners. But no decision had been made.

## Watershed meeting

*"We can do this."*

The Loft finally called the question in July of 1998. The setting was Hosmer Library, a small public library in South Minneapolis. In preparation, the Loft's Nancy Gaschott had created financial projections based on the advice of many others in the community. They included an estimate of the amount of money the group might be able to raise, what the development costs were likely to be, and how the cost of operations might change for the organizations. Even though the projections were preliminary, presenting concrete scenarios helped participants move past the theoretical stage with some confidence. It was the Loft's board chair, Chris Mahai, who helped the group turn the corner from protracted discussion to decision. Chris recalls asking each person present to put his or her cards on the table:



"I kept hearing worry, worry, worry. People kept saying, 'Can we do this?' So after they'd all finished I said, 'I'm going to use those same four words, but in a different order: *We can do this.*'"

This was the watershed moment. Founding partners remember it clearly. One marks the Hosmer meeting as the time "when we actually formed the partnership that had been loosely formed for the study."

Another recalls, "It was a turning point. That's when our board said, OK, we're doing it. I didn't know where we were going to live, or how. But at this point I knew I had to find solutions; we were not going to back out." A third person present that day remembers Chris' confidence as catalytic: "I thought, if Chris Mahai says we can do this, I'm on board. Out of that came the three organizations who, as I like to say, stood on the end of those steps up there that don't go anywhere, and leapt off."

### Critical decisions during this phase

Making a firm decision at the Hosmer Library meeting catalyzed the group. They began to prepare what they needed to do to buy the building. With the remaining planning money, they hired a local firm to do a feasibility study for the capital campaign. By late fall they made an offer on the building. The partners' ability to move forward rapidly in the following months was based on several critical decisions made during the planning phase.

### Strategic leadership choices

The founding organizational partners were strategic in their choice of leaders

who would wear the public face of Open Book. Jay Cowles and Chris Mahai were chosen to co-chair the capital campaign, and Jay later became the first chair of the Open Book board. Chris and Jay brought to the project business acumen, broad community connections, a commitment to the vision, and an infectious can-do attitude. Both had a history of support for the literary arts. They were potent and visible civic leaders who had the ability to convey the vision of Open Book, and to give those around them confidence that it would become a reality. Many observers identify their leadership as a crucial factor in

Open Book's ability to navigate the nuances and stresses of functioning as a formal collaboration.

### Commitment of human resources

After the Hosmer meeting, serious consideration had to be given to determining who could carry out the enormous amount of work ahead. The partners recognized the need for a core group of staff and consultants, and used funds raised by Open Book to cover those costs. Collaborations often fail to provide adequate staff and resources for planning and development. For Open Book, having dedicated staff was essential to its success.

Although Open Book did not need an executive director, it did need a full time "transition director" who would coordinate all aspects of the renovation, from planning board agendas and managing cash flow to representing Open Book with the architect, the general contractor, and the city. Nancy Gaschott reduced her hours as administrative director for the Loft and stepped into the eye of the storm to take on that full time



job. Brian Malloy, the Loft's development director, managed the institutional giving portion of the capital campaign. Independent consultant Drew Stewart was hired to design and oversee the capital campaign and also to assist each organization in developing realistic financial projections. Consultants and volunteers provided other services, such as legal advice, events planning, and marketing help. Open Book planners were attuned to the range of technical expertise they needed and diligent in seeking it out.

### *Ownership*

Open Book partners had to decide whether to buy, build, or rent. They formed a working committee of board members from each organization to examine the practical, financial, legal, and structural implications of the decision. After studying many options, the committee proposed the formation of a new 501(c)3. Its specific and limited purpose was to own and operate facilities for the furtherance of literary and book arts. The planners hoped that ownership by a nonprofit would permit the building to be exempt from property taxes, a major operating expense, for that portion of the building devoted to nonprofit tenants. The

three founding organizations would be tenants, and the asset of the building would reside in that fourth entity.

This decision was fundamental to Open Book's ultimate success, according to developer Chuck Leer. "People have sort of forgotten this, but there was a strong current that it was foolhardy for a nonprofit to buy real estate. It was much more prudent to simply rent. Then you didn't have as much exposure or liability; you could cut your losses. It goes back to risk aversion." The founding partners were willing to accept the risk of ownership in exchange for long-term control over affordable space specifically designed for book and literary arts programming.

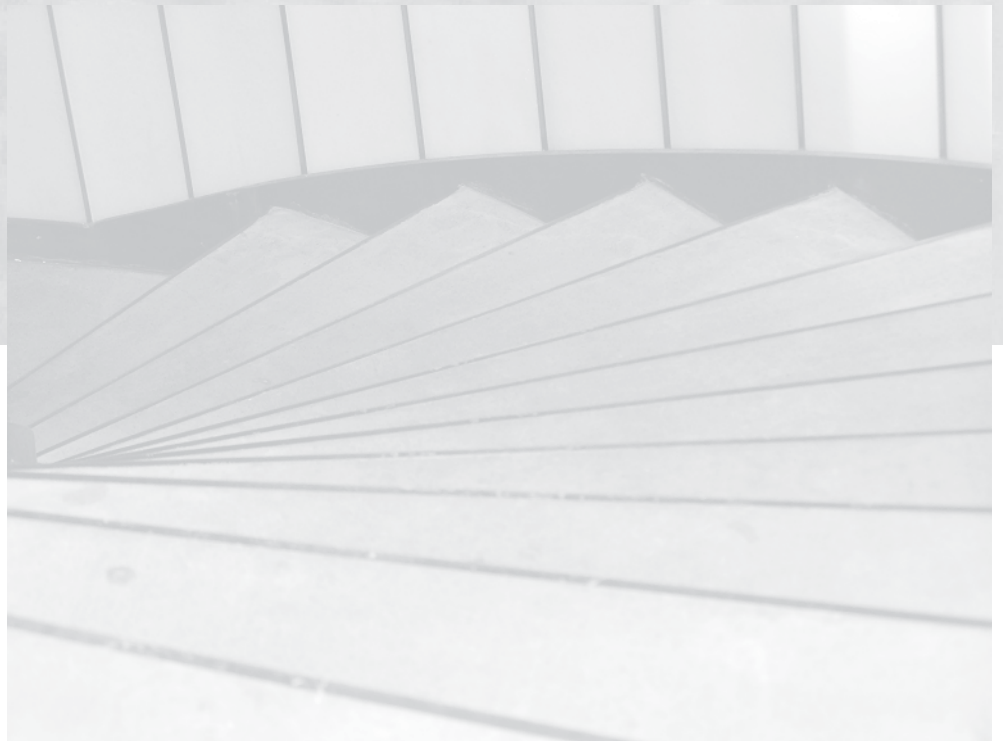
### *Core values*

As partners worked together, they were doing more than setting agendas, solving problems, and accomplishing tasks. They also were establishing ways of working that reflected their values. Five core values, while tacit rather than explicit, provided consistent guidance in the development of Open Book:

- ***Absolute commitment to success.*** The partners operated from the core value that the establishment of Open Book was so important to the community that it simply could not fail. When faced with barriers or setbacks, they did not compromise the project to solve them.
- ***Equity.*** Partner organizations had unique needs, and each was critical to the success of the whole. Open Book provided different kinds and levels of resources to each partner to resolve potential barriers to participation.



- 
- ***Relationships as the organizing principle.*** Partners did not sacrifice relationships to get something accomplished more quickly. They approached one another authentically, listened to one another, and exhibited patience.
  - ***Comprehensive planning.*** Partners were resolute about taking whatever time was necessary to plan thoroughly, examine options, ask for advice, and create scenarios that helped make choices concrete.
  - ***Aesthetics.*** The partners' appreciation for the beauty of literature extended to other art forms. They were intentional in the use of ritual, symbolism, and physical artifacts to enrich their lives and space.



## Chapter 2: Designing and building the home

### Choosing the right property

*“Is this guy crazy?”*

The three contiguous 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings were painted a battleship gray. Across the street from a liquor store and next to similarly boarded up structures, the 55,000 square feet of space might have been considered uninspiring. But many of the partners believed that such a raw space provided an opening: it needed imagination, the very thing on which the literary community thrives. It also was humble. One partner recalls, “One of the big worries in the book community was that we were going to get too fancy. This is a low-budget arts crowd. We knew (whatever building we chose) shouldn’t be new and shiny.” 1011 Washington was not.

The site was midway between downtown and the West Bank campus of the University of Minnesota, on a stretch of under-developed land that followed the Mississippi riverfront through the old flour milling district that had been the birthplace of Minneapolis. Several of those involved in the planning knew that a resurgence of development was coming to this part of the downtown area, with its historic mill structures. The value of the property would only go up. But at the moment, little was there but windblown parking lots.

*Creative tension:  
Partners had to  
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needed.*

Committing to the property required a significant leap of faith.

Partners had to approve a site without a clear sense of its potential to provide what they wanted and needed. They visited the property on many occasions, as did architect Garth Rockcastle, who tried to help them envision what this space could become. One of the partners remembers “standing in this horrible, gutted building that we had decided to buy. Garth was looking around full of his vision, speaking in glowing terms about this wonderful space. I looked around and saw a pit and thought, is this guy crazy? God, I hope he’s good.”

### Buying the building

*“This would serve us all,  
and survive us all.”*

The owner of 1011 Washington was Scott Tankenoff, managing partner of Hillcrest Development. Scott had worked with many nonprofits in the past, and believes that they “have a higher sense of purpose than business clients. They have a lot of people believing in them. Without that, they’d grind to a halt.” When Chuck Leer asked Scott to show the three partners the property, Scott was immediately struck with the importance of what they were trying to do. However, they were still in the early stages of decision making. About this time, Scott received another offer on the buildings. He remembers Chuck saying over the phone, “This is going to be (the right location), in my opinion, but it will take time. I can’t ask you to hold the property off the market – but I am asking.”



Scott decided to wait. He recalls that he held the property for Open Book “for as long as it took for us to get our finances together, which was much longer than anyone ever should have done.”

At that time, the group had nothing—no money, no construction loan, and no identified prospects. The board put together a financial case and took it to



some banks. The reception was cool. Then came their visit to Riverside, a smaller neighborhood bank. Paul Lillenthal and Dave Cleveland “have an instinct for good nonprofit work,” saw the potential in the building, and had faith in the leaders and the mission. In a dramatic moment of

Open Book’s history, it was Dave who issued the challenge: Provide some personal pledges. Go find the first dozen major donors. Then come back for a loan.

“This galvanized us,” recounts one member of the fundraising team. It forced us to deal with it on a very constricted time frame and...catapulted us into the campaign.” Within a month, they had raised over a million dollars. On November 18, 1998, they bought the building at a very favorable price. Both Hillcrest Development and the Tankenoff family later became financial supporters of Open Book. Scott derives great satisfaction from having made this deal. As he explains, “This [real estate development] is also about giving back to the community. Especially for the literary community, and especially in light of school budget problems, this would serve us all, and survive us all. “

## The capital campaign

*“There’s no such thing as ‘a capital campaign.’ It’s really fifty or a hundred little campaigns.”*

Open Book had used the last of the planning grant money to have a local firm conduct a feasibility study for its fundraising effort. But the board was not convinced that the resulting prediction of \$4.5-\$5 million reflected what they could do. All three organizations had long-standing relationships with funders and loyal, if not large, groups of individual donors. They also knew that they simply had to raise more—their costs would be higher, and contingencies unpredictable. They decided to set the goal at \$5.5 million. One observer recalls, “That was a gutsy move. They could have dropped the plant reserve fund, but they didn’t. They set it at five and a half and never looked back. So that was a critical moment. They did not compromise the project as a proposed answer.”

Open Book embarked on its campaign at a fortuitous time. The Twin Cities has a strong tradition of community support for a variety of artistic disciplines. In 1999, the economy was still strong. There was a lull in the arts fundraising market. “We had a relatively undistracted audience,” one partner recalls. The Walker had not launched its campaign. The Guthrie made its decision to locate on the riverfront during the middle of the Open Book campaign, “which only lent more credibility to our vision for the neighborhood.” All of these factors created a community context in which “the stars really were aligned for this project.”

Drew Stewart was responsible for structuring the capital campaign. There was no fundraising mechanism at the time—no staff, office, database, or

volunteer core. Open Book rented office space and hired an administrator. Teams of volunteers were created and systems devised to track their responsibilities and progress. Early on, 100% of board members made contributions. (By the end of the campaign, 96 current and former board members had contributed \$1,156,118.) Campaign committee members called on John and Sage Cowles, prominent civic leaders and supporters of the arts. They provided the critical leadership gift that got the campaign rolling.

By the following summer, the individual campaign was having strong enough success to launch the foundation and corporate campaign. Drew reflects on the complexity of the effort. "There is no such thing as 'a campaign.' It's really fifty or a hundred little campaigns, for the top fifty or one hundred gifts. Each foundation would be its own campaign and it would take a year or two in itself, beginning to end. It was very carefully orchestrated. That's the nature of campaigns."

Part of the orchestration was figuring out how to convey to prospective supporters the uniqueness of Open Book. Individuals and foundation representatives were invited to tour the raw space. MCBA board member Tom Hoch helped prepare for one such tour: "When we first acquired the building, I was over there on a Saturday stringing up icicle lights. It

looked pretty awful; it was really dirty," he laughs to recall. "I was on my little ladder stringing up icicle lights to make it look interesting, so we could bring people through." Gail See, also on the



MCBA board, participated in many of those early visits. She thinks of those tours as appealing to prospective donors' sense of adventure, something like a spelunking expedition might. They managed to clean up one corner of the second floor and bring in chairs. But it was cold, dark, and wet. Drew wryly credits Gail's ever-present thermos of hot coffee with "a few hundred thousand in gifts."

## Design and construction

*"Unwrapping the building revealed a narrative in architecture."*

The first conception of the building design in the partners' minds was fairly straightforward: each organization would occupy one of the three connected buildings, with its own three floors. Doors could be opened between the buildings to enable easy interchange and possible shared activities or infrastructure.

Architect Garth Rockcastle recognized that this concept stemmed from the desire to preserve each organization's autonomy. But he knew how different each organization's spatial needs were and saw other interesting possibilities in the buildings. One day he met with the partners and recommended turning that idea on its side, literally: the original buildings would be dramatically opened up to each other, and each organization would occupy a single floor. He had



brought along a small model to help them visualize such a design.

Garth recalls, “I could feel a palpable difference in the room. They could see the benefits of function, symbolism, and dynamism.” Milkweed would have the third floor, because it had the least need for public space. MCBA needed to be on the ground floor and in the basement due to the weight of its presses. The Loft would occupy the second floor and, in exchange for giving up some first floor visibility, would have a spacious living room outside its offices. Public spaces would exist on all three levels. A coffee shop and lobby on the first floor would welcome visitors. A performance hall and classrooms on the second floor, and a book club room on the third, would be available for joint events and rental to other groups. A dynamic flow through the building was assured. The partners agreed.

Then came the detailed analysis of how each organization’s space should be designed. The Loft and Milkweed had uncomplicated needs for office and classroom space, but MCBA’s needs were very complex, specific, and unusual. Their presses weigh a ton apiece. They needed structural support for trays of heavy type and a beater room with floor drains and sinks. Each organization’s needs for public and private space, and its vision for how the two would intersect, were different.

The three also were moving at different paces and feeling different pressures. Milkweed had to vacate its leased space as soon as possible. The Loft was functioning with reduced staff because of Nancy Gaschott’s full time commitment to Open

Book. MCBA was in the throes of re-inventing itself while trying to foresee what spaces would be required for new programmatic thrusts.

Partners often were caught between extreme time pressures and the need to respect each other’s different decision-making needs. MCBA’s decision-making pace was a source of frequent frustration. Its organizational needs required a prolonged, detailed decision-making process that was poorly understood by the others. “We just wanted it decided so we could move on,” one partner recalls. “But none of us understood how complex this was. In hindsight, [Peggy Korsmo-Kennon] did absolutely the right thing. She had to advocate for her organization.”

The building itself also began to make demands on the partners. Architects Garth Rockcastle and Kate Bergquist were excited about the parallels between the physical building and the future occupants’ interest in stories. “Unwrapping the building revealed a narrative in architecture,” Garth explains, “traces of earlier occupations and uses that could become embodied in the new building.” As intriguing fragments were uncovered, they became potential design elements: a safe, a dumbwaiter, painted lettering on what had been an exterior brick wall, a staircase, sliding steel doors. Garth advocated using as many of these elements as possible.

This resulted in a new creative tension: his image of the building’s potential, along with its emergent historical narrative, continually required the partners to decide questions of cost, practical use, and aesthetics. The architects’ vision made the

*Creative tension: The architect’s vision, and the emergent historical narrative of the building, continually required partners to decide questions of cost, practical use, and aesthetics.*

partners stretch, generally with wonderful results. However, they had to retain authority over what would work for them practically and aesthetically. Negotiating these decisions often was time-consuming and emotional.

Strikingly, the time frame between building purchase and moving in was only 16 months. Partners recall both the stimulation provided by the urgency and the exhaustion. They refer to their stance as “expedition

behavior.” Many things had to be done at once, conditions could change instantly, and new problems emerged on a daily basis. As one person put it, “You can’t do it without people who go beyond all reason to make something happen.”

*Creative tension: Participants were caught between extreme time pressures and the need to respect each other’s different decision making needs.*

### Naming the building

*“We had a process that allowed everyone to get in on it.”*

The process of naming the building was emblematic of Open Book’s commitment to community. When leaders established the legal structure, they had settled on the cumbersome name of Minnesota Book and Literary Arts Building. They later hired a firm to help them come up with a more fitting name. Nametag International interviewed hundreds of constituents from the three organizations and the community. One person recalls, “It was the way in which, in addition to giving money, we had a process that allowed everyone to get in on it, to feel consulted, to think about what you wanted it to stand for.”

The name itself was ideal because it evoked not only the mission of opening up literature and book creation, but also an open center where people could wander through and feel it was their own. A “namebreaking” ceremony in May 1999 announced the Open Book to the public.



### Infusing the building with visual art

*“The artists were so proud, and overjoyed that their work would be seen by thousands of people for years to come.”*

Major design elements brought to life the metaphoric richness of the new name. Bricked up windows and skylights were opened, bringing natural light into public spaces. Ceiling-high glass doors fashioned to look like book covers were installed at the entrance to MCBA.

Salvaged windows were built into walls and overlook interior spaces. These design elements create a sense of spaciousness and connectedness among the organizations. The book metaphor also was evoked in the design of a central staircase by sculptor and MCBA instructor

Karen Wirth; the steel spiral structure connects luminescent acrylic “pages” on which words are inscribed. Doors





salvaged from the old buildings were crafted into a distinctive wall and doorways to writers' studios.

Open Book also sought to infuse visual artistry in the practical, and

often small, details of the building. A regional competition through the Jerome Foundation selected a variety of artists to create both functional and expressive pieces. They were given a tour of the space under construction and invited to take advantage of scrap lumber, windows, foundation stones, tin ceiling tiles, and other materials found on site. Resulting projects include a children's reading bench, stone tables inscribed with words and quotes, delicate paintings on the doors to the writers' studios, photographs, and a history of the alphabet carved into the floors throughout the building. These and many other visual elements are much more than decorative flourishes; they carry out the mission of the building by honoring original artistic expression.

### Moving in

*"It was extraordinarily thrilling to be there, and to see the transformation."*

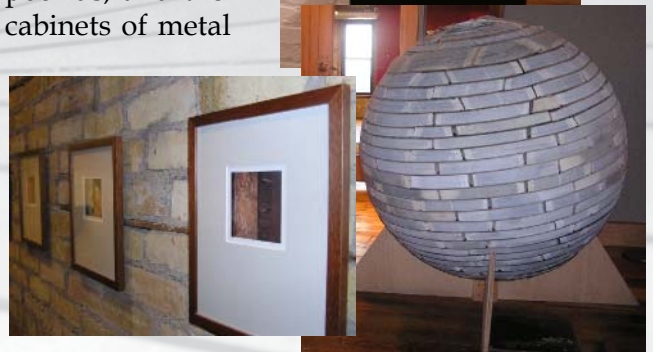
By the end of 1999 it was clear that the moving date needed to be extended into late March. Windows were delayed. The elevator would not be ready on time. Negotiations continued over parking. Additional time was needed to fabricate the stairway. MCBA needed help to get out of its existing lease commitment. Then, in the eleventh hour, with stress levels

high and people tired, the group faced a significant test.

Sid Farrar had already gotten one temporary extension of Milkweed's lease, but the landlord was not willing to grant a second. Milkweed could only afford the expense of moving once. With its lease expiring in a matter of weeks, Sid feared he would have to give up the collaborative effort and move elsewhere. Rather than allow this to happen, Open Book provided campaign funds to Milkweed to move into temporary space. Sid recalls, "We were in this horrible space for nearly a year. It had no windows, and we were crammed in. The heating system was very bad. We found out that one of our upstairs neighbors was a gold plating business. At regular intervals they would start grinding, and it sounded like a bowling ball rolling across the floor." Trying as that period was, it preserved Milkweed's participation in the collaboration.

When Milkweed was finally able to move into Open Book on February 26, 2000, the elevator was not yet installed. A crane was used to move

furniture in through an upstairs window. MCBA's move was equally dramatic when it moved in late March: the total weight of the presses alone exceeded 10,000 pounds, and their cabinets of metal



type totaled more than 175,000 pounds. The Loft also moved in late March. Within a few days, the organizations were relatively settled.

## The Open Book model for successful collaboration

### *Critical decisions from this phase*

#### *Campaign promises*

A striking feature of the capital campaign was that Open Book created a set of campaign promises. Chris Mahai explains: "The first promise was 'once and done,' meaning we would raise the necessary capital to complete the project and fund a reserve for the ongoing maintenance of the facility." In other words, they pledged to donors that Open Book would not return in later years for additional capital or operating funds. The second campaign promise was to stimulate visibility for the literary arts. Third, Open Book pledged that its economic model would strengthen the founding tenants. Finally, it pledged to be an organization that would be a leader and anchor in the renaissance of the Mississippi River/Washington Avenue corridor. The decision to create campaign promises framed the request for support in terms of Open



Book's commitment to donors and its broader vision for the community.

#### *Ongoing community connections*

The community discussions that had marked the origins of Open Book continued throughout its development. Partners spoke with people who lived and worked in the

neighborhood surrounding 1011 Washington. They held discussions and open houses with representatives of libraries, creative writing programs, book clubs, schools, arts organizations, and their own organizations' constituencies. Emilie Buchwald spoke with writers, publishers, and literary groups, conveying



over and over the message that the building would be open to their independent use as members of the literary community.

Throughout the design and construction phase, volunteers hosted coffee gatherings or wine and cheese parties to walk people through. Open Book partners asked each group what would make the building more welcoming and appealing for the various constituencies.

With all that the partners had to do, it is noteworthy that they decided to make ongoing community connections a priority for their time. These contacts surfaced good ideas, "convinced people that this was going to happen," and demonstrated a genuine commitment to making a home for literature that would be open to all.

#### *Symbolism and ritual*

Open Book leaders created celebratory moments to mark successes and to reinforce the importance of each person's contribution. Celebrations in May 2000 marked the opening ceremonies for the building. The first of these was a party for construction workers and their families. A fundraising gala the next day drew 500 people. A week later, a free opening attracted 4,000 people on a warm Sunday afternoon.

A more intimate celebration occurred in August. Hank See was so moved by his

wife's devotion to Open Book that some months earlier he had inquired about the possibility of dedicating some portion of the building to her. Working in secret from campaign director Drew Stewart's living room, Hank invited friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues to make special gifts to the campaign in order to name the central staircase in her honor. At a surprise party, the dedication was unveiled and Gail was presented with a handmade book bearing the names of 143 donors who had contributed \$220,000 to honor her. This ritual was important because it honored one person's commitment and simultaneously acknowledged the power of what people could accomplish together.

Another handmade book was an important symbol at a very public gathering the following year. Open Book had launched a "Get in the Book" campaign months earlier to complete the campaign and solidify grassroots support from people who could not make major gifts. Its slogan was, "We need hundreds of caring people to bring us home." One year after opening, an anniversary party was held to extend thanks to all campaign donors, regardless of the size of their contributions. Each donor received a handmade book containing over one thousand names, listed alphabetically. This egalitarian gesture reinforced the importance of every person and every gift, and promoted the idea that all community members shared a stake in Open Book.

### *Mutual accountability*

The creation of Open Book was as demanding as it was exciting. Partners experienced many times of high stress. Their response was to structure work

processes for mutual accountability. One partner describes how he and many others were doing things every day that were completely unfamiliar to them, "but we were all doing them in the spirit of finding solutions and listening to each other." Another recalls, "If someone got weak in the knees, there was someone else who could do it." Collaborative work groups were formed at both the staff and board levels. These groups brought different sensibilities to the project, and interceded for one another when necessary.

This structure of mutual accountability in part stemmed from the high value Open Book partners placed on relationships. Peggy Korsmo-Kennon's analogy is that it was like a whitewater rafting trip that they were on together.

"Someone would almost fall out, and we would grab them, you know, and there were all these rapids that we had to get through in order to get to the open waters." "That's where trust has to come in," says Gail See. "You are counting on everyone. In the core group,

it never occurred to me that people would not do what they said they would do, that someone was going to let us down."

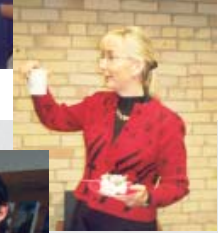
### *Public accountability*

One of the most high stress decisions of the capital campaign occurred midstream. The original campaign goal had been based on detailed cost projections and included a substantial contingency line item. But as Drew Stewart points out, "Renovations are infinitely more risky to estimate than new buildings, in terms of precision. As it turns out, there were all kinds of difficulties with the 100-year-old building that I don't think anyone could truly have known until they started the work."



Open Book board members and planners recognized the continual need to align emerging costs with fundraising goals. They met every Friday morning, discussing project management and fundraising on alternate weeks. In the summer of 1999, they found themselves facing substantially higher costs. New structural issues had been discovered once the building had been cleaned out. Cost projections rose as each organization projected its needs in greater detail. A hot construction market was driving up costs. After careful discussion with its fundraising volunteers, Open Book raised its campaign goal to \$6.75 million.

The board's determination to achieve Open Book's goals without sacrificing key elements convinced them that this was the right decision. Still, they worried that it would be seen as an expression of incompetence. As a matter of public accountability, campaign leaders communicated the changed goal immediately. They mailed letters to all existing donors. They changed the campaign literature, reported the change frankly in the campaign newsletter, and spoke personally with major prospective donors to explain their rationale. These audiences seemed to take the change in stride. Applying the ethic of public accountability in times of bad news as well as good news seemed to reinforce confidence in the project's integrity.





## Chapter 3: The dream fulfilled, the dream unfolding

### Developments in the building

Almost immediately, Open Book became a destination for people and groups of all ages and remains an active spot. School groups are bussed to the building for workshops and classes. Authors from around the country arrive to take a look. International groups who have heard the Open Book story come to see the building and talk with the founding organizations. Dozens of groups, primarily nonprofits, rent space for meetings, seminars, workshops, readings and receptions. In just the first three years, more than 200 groups used the book club room. Many visitors are attracted to Open Book for a cup of coffee in the Coffee Gallery or an exhibit at the art gallery. With all these activities, and the increased programming of each organization, Open Book averages 10,000-11,000 visitors every month. Many of these visitors had no prior association with the three founding organizations.

### *Managing the activity*

Open Book's blossoming activity required on-site building management. In late 1999, the board hired the firm GSR to handle routine maintenance, plowing and janitorial service, as well as security and accounting services. Building Manager Brian Bergee was hired to coordinate use of the building and keep things running smoothly. Brian maintains the master calendar of events; manages rental for the performance hall, classrooms, and meeting room; and helps to coordinate events. He also oversees the contracts managed by GSR, and works closely with the Open Book board to address building issues.

### *Financial status.*

The capital campaign's success at meeting a broad set of goals launched a period of financial stability for the founding organizations and for Open Book. The campaign reached its goal in 2001, raising a total of \$7,285,000. Open Book paid off the construction loan early, and operates the building with no debt. The campaign was officially concluded in 2003 with the collection of all but .06% of pledges. The plant reserve fund raised as part of the capital campaign was invested conservatively and suffered no reductions in its balance during the severe economic downturn that began shortly after the building opened. Income from rentals approached \$40,000 in 2003. The building has had a balanced budget each year since opening. Open Book has created a modest cumulative operating surplus while keeping tenant rent increases to 2% or less per year.

### *Relationships with other tenants*

A key part of the economic model is having tenants that can pay market rates to support the building. In this, Open Book has faced its most serious challenge and disappointment with the closing of Ruminator Books. Partners had actively courted the independent bookstore to open a second location in Open Book, which would offer the kind of laid back, quirky store they were looking for. However, after a reasonable start, Ruminator Book's owner determined that the store could not thrive. The Open Book board was able to negotiate fair financial terms and an amicable parting. Still, partners

*Creative tension:  
finding tenants that  
both enhance the  
mission and  
provide a reliable  
income stream at  
market rates.*

mourn the loss of the bookstore because it had represented so integral a part of the literary continuum, and hope to have a bookstore at Open Book again in the future.

Both luck and creativity contributed to finding and negotiating with a new tenant for the bookstore's space. Rosalux Gallery, a nonprofit artist collective, now occupies parts of two floors, with exhibit space adjacent to the front entrance and to Coffee Gallery.

Both Rosalux and the Coffee Gallery contribute to Open Book's atmosphere as well as to its finances. Having a visual arts presence on the first floor helps to reinforce the bridge between literature and book arts, enhancing the building's mission. Artwork by one of the Rosalux artists appears on a Milkweed book cover. Rosalux also has collaborated with Loft readings and its artists' events bring large numbers of new visitors to Open Book.

Coffee Gallery is the social hub of the building, welcoming visitors and providing space for writers to sit and work over coffee and a meal. It benefits from hungry Open Book visitors and from the opportunity to cater many events in the building. Owner John Sherrell wanted to locate in an artistic environment, and he



enjoys the interactions with others in the building. Because his fate is intertwined with theirs, John appreciates being in a building managed by a board with a sense of purpose and an investment in seeing him thrive.

## Changes for the founding partners

*"We were able to grow into ourselves. It's like having a plant that's root-bound in its pot, and as soon as you replant it, it just blossoms."*

Life changed dramatically for the founding partners when they moved into their new home. Programs evolved, the number of participants and visitors surged, and budgets increased. Spirits lifted as each organization settled into space that was larger, more suitable to their needs, and beautiful.

### *The Loft*

#### *The transition*

Board chair Liz Petrangelo remembers her surprise that the move into Open Book garnered so much national attention. "It made a splash because it was the first project of its type in the nation," she recalls. "Literature just doesn't have real estate. It's a very private enterprise. Readers sit alone; writers sit alone and write. There's no standard to create a destination for literature." Suddenly The Loft had a public face. People would call or simply show up, wanting information or tours. There was some initial confusion about the distinction between the Loft and Open Book. Demand for Loft programs surged. The move to Open Book coincided with a new strategic plan, which placed high priority on creating new programs and collaborative opportunities. The Loft started rush hour, lunchtime, and

*Creative tension: meeting new and higher demand with the right balance of staff.*

weekend programs. With full time access to five classrooms, class enrollment increased 78 percent, to about 4,000 students. Staff struggled both with the disruption of the move itself and with the increased number of members, participants, and visitors.

#### *Staffing*

Like the other founding partners, the Loft has experienced some growing pains. Revenue did not immediately keep up with the increased number of participants. Within two years, the Loft had experienced 40% staff turnover. Linda Myers knows that this compares positively with other's experiences; she recalls one study that found that organizations experienced staff turnover as high as 70-90% following their capital campaigns.

#### *Finances*

Open Book organizations, while thriving, have not been sheltered from downturns in the economy. As a result, Loft management has been cautious about expanding staff to keep up with program demand. But many signs are positive. The Loft's overall budget has grown from \$1 million right before the move to \$1.8 million in 2004. Individual memberships have more than doubled, to 3,000, and individual donations have increased by 40%. Partly due to the Loft's leadership role in creating Open Book, it was selected by the Ford Foundation as one of 28 arts organizations in the nation to participate in a special initiative for which it received a \$1 million challenge grant to seed its first-ever operating endowment.

#### *Identity*

Loft representatives are amazed and gratified at how much difference the space makes to their organization and their sense of purpose. Open Book is "a statement to the world that the word is critical," says board chair Liz Petrangelo. The building continues to serve as "a beacon," with writers from the region and the world coming to find this space they have heard about. The excitement of the space does not disappoint these seekers, according to Liz: "A palpable creative spirit hangs in the air."

#### *Milkweed Editions*

##### *The transition*

Milkweed moved from cramped, noisy quarters into airy and serene space on the third floor of Open Book. Having warehouse space in the basement rather than off-site gives staff easy access to books in stock. Floor to near-ceiling shelves of books are available for browsing in their lobby.

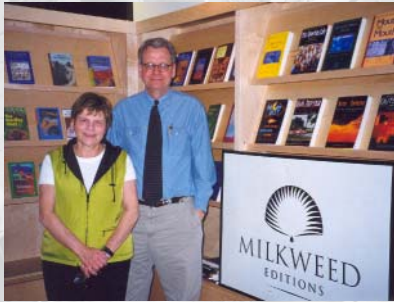
*Creative tension: vigilance in maintaining successes while also considering strategic options.*

The publishing industry changes rapidly and is intensely competitive. Milkweed therefore operates in what one described as "a constant strategic planning mode," even as it continues to strengthen the programs and publishing niches that have helped make Milkweed Editions the largest nonprofit literary press in the country.

#### *Visibility*

Although Milkweed's vision of a new home did not imply programmatic changes, the spacious common areas of the building have made certain things possible for the first time. Milkweed has hosted conferences, celebrations, and programs in the performance hall and

other spaces. Hilary Reeves, managing director, notes that being able to host



publication parties and other events has been especially important for a press with national distribution, because they are opportunities to develop more presence in its home community and to showcase authors. In the new building, Milkweed launched what has become an annual fundraiser, the Book Lovers Ball, which puts literature on stage for an evening of fine food and readings. In addition to helping boost Milkweed's donor base by more than 50%, these events have enabled Milkweed to add a performance aspect to its work.

### *Identity*

The Open Book location has also made a subtle contribution to the public's understanding of what Milkweed Editions is. Founder Emilie Buchwald retired in 2003. The new editor in chief, Chip Blake, says he was drawn to the job in part because of the statement that the building makes about the importance of literature here. Chip thinks that the intersection of the three founding organizations at Open Book has "fundamentally changed how people see our work." Through the presence of the other organizations, "visitors see publishing in the fuller context of literature and books. When people experience the relationship between publishers and people who love to express themselves artistically through writing, publishing is no longer theoretical."

## **MCBA**

### *The transition*

In many respects, MCBA was the most transformed by the move to Open Book. Board member Charlie Quimby emphasizes that the decision to be part of the collaboration was a commitment to something bigger and fundamentally different for the organization. MCBA would become a much more public space, and that had major implications for programs, staff, and artistic direction.

### *Visibility*

Its storefront windows and new Washington Avenue location caused its visibility to soar, and with it came a surge of visitors. "There was accidental as well as purposeful traffic," Charlie says, and it caused a redefinition of staff roles. For the first time, MCBA developed a customer service function. A retail shop was designed to serve the multiple functions of introducing people to programs of MCBA, registering people for classes, and serving as a reception and visitor services center. MCBA moved into space 50% larger than it had occupied. Within the first year, the



number of staff, audience members, participants and artists served also increased by 50%. Charlie remembers that this had "a galvanizing and catalytic effect—it accelerated the organization's maturity."

### *Staffing*

It was a struggle to keep up. Within the first three years, MCBA's audience more than doubled, to 65,000 people. Adult class enrollment more than doubled, to nearly 2,000. Youth and community programs tripled to include more than

35,800 teachers and students. When Peggy Korsmo-Kennon left in March 2003, the organization was still trying to determine what would be the new equilibrium of staffing and programming. Dorothy Goldie, MCBA's new executive director, thinks that the surge in growth masked actual market trends. MCBA was exploding during a time of economic downturn, and it made corresponding budgetary leaps to keep up. Staff grew from five full time equivalents to more than 20, and later was trimmed and reorganized to 12. MCBA carries a lot of overhead, since its programs require significant dedicated studio space with limited potential to generate revenue. This creates pressure for contributed income. MCBA hired a development director and has since seen steady growth in contributions. The annual budget increased from \$430,000 to more than \$900,000.

#### *Identity*

By moving into Open Book, MCBA became the most comprehensive independent book arts facility in the nation. Charlie Quimby's service on the MCBA board spans several years. He remembers many iterations of artistic focus: curatorial, graphic design, educational, contemporary, support for artists. These were all important, but were emphasized in serial fashion. He thinks MCBA historically has been driven more by concerns for survival than by artistic mission and that the future holds "the opportunity to draw all this together in one package."

*Creative tension:  
high volume of visitors  
and "accidental traffic"  
requiring new staffing  
design.*

#### Status of the collaboration

*"It's such a relief to be here.  
I'm on the board of my landlord, who is  
totally committed to my success.  
I'll never have to do a capital campaign.  
I'm in a beautiful space, in a  
neighborhood that's growing."*

Every collaborative endeavor has to sort out what degree of joint activity makes sense for its member organizations, on a continuum from complete autonomy to merger. In the early years, Open Book partners felt their way along that continuum. First they simply networked to explore mutual interests. Then they began to coordinate their work in more organized ways. The planning grant launched leadership and task group structures, and each organization made large-scale personal and organizational commitments of time.

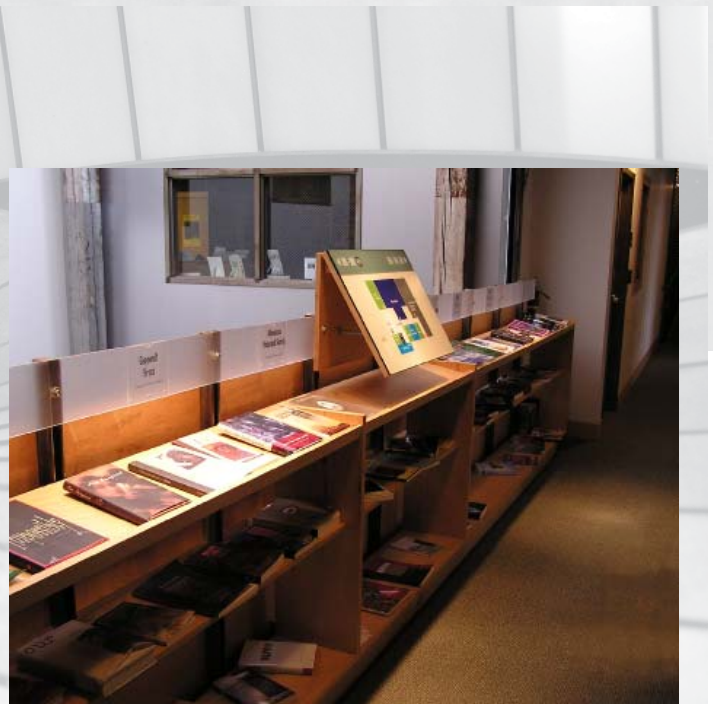
Then came the Hosmer Library meeting, at which the partners "all linked pinkies and away we went." This is the moment they entered into collaboration, by making an irrevocable commitment to accomplishing the joint objective. Visible leadership was put in place, with partner organizations sharing equally in the decision making. Staffing, roles, tasks, and communication channels that had been designed as interim structures became formalized. Everyone shifted into high gear to maximize problem solving and productivity. Partners understood that this degree of investment was to be short term. Though they were not merging their organizations, they were in a sense merging their lives for a period of time in order to achieve the longer term objective that would not require the same degree of intensity to maintain.

Open Book is now in a new time, a second phase of life. The collaborative entity is the

status quo, not the distant goal that demanded full throttle attention. The urgency of the task is absent, and with it the compulsory level of interaction, conflict, and dedication necessary to achieve it. Open Book partners are now free to define how “joint” this joint venture will be as they go forward. Today the degree of “jointness” among Open Book partners varies across tasks. A fairly tight integration characterizes Open Book’s governance and building management functions. Soon after moving in, the partners established a well-integrated system of space usage that functions smoothly. Decisions about finances and building needs are centralized at the board level. Each organization’s representatives communicate Open Book board decisions back to their respective groups.

Open Book organizations operate more independently on infrastructure. A phone system, internet service, and a website are shared. There are no shared staff. Open Book Board meetings are the main source of routine communication among the organizations. Relationships are ad hoc, informal, and congenial. The period after moving in was a time for each organization to focus on its internal issues, and even to “recover from the trauma” of the intense preparation. As day-to-day interaction dwindled, people “got used to working separately, side by side.”

Programming is relatively autonomous, although the organizations do align complementary programs and activities for mutual benefit. Early on, Open Book decided not to develop joint programming as a major thrust; it produces one or two large events annually. Partners have coordinated some of their children’s programs and educational programs. Some believe more programmatic collaboration could further their work. Others see few natural opportunities and think it unnecessary to push for more. As Chip Blake put it, “co-habitation didn’t make us more alike.” Partners’ primary collaborative programming occurs with non-Open Book organizations, extending their individual and collective reach into the community.



## Chapter 4: What Open Book Teaches about Collaboration

Open Book is unique in many ways, but it was not born of magic. A cadre of committed people put in months—even years—of hard work to create it. They navigated the rough waters of organizational change and of collaboration. The numerous creative tensions highlighted in this story illustrate how partners grappled with questions of purpose, growth, autonomy, leadership, and commitment—to each other, to the book, and to the community.

We now return to the eight core questions raised in the preface to this story. We hope the answers to these questions will be useful to others interested in how collaborations evolve and what makes them successful.

### 1. What was even more important than planning during the planning phase?

*A well-funded planning phase enabled the organizations to test their strengths and develop effective means of working together.*

*“There were big, huge disagreements along the way, and compromises. But we didn’t operate in the typical ‘Minnesota nice’ kind of way. We had our outbursts right up front—nothing passive about them.”*

Perhaps the most important and least tangible value of the planning grant was that the organizations got to know each other: their distinctive organizational cultures, leadership qualities, complementarities and vulnerabilities. They discovered their points of tension

and established ways of working through them that served them for the rest of the process. They brought differences into the open and resolved them, avoiding undercurrents of dissatisfaction that could erode the project. As Linda Myers reflects, “It’s not that we didn’t have terrible problems. We had them up front. And because we were able to come back together, the problems motivated us. I think our success is due to our having these crisis moments that got managed very well, and then coming back to the table.”

Drew Stewart remembers this well. “Almost every time it came down to a critical decision,” he recalls, “people would check in with their feelings and emotions as much as all of the business and economic stuff that they should. That was really refreshing.” It also was quite deliberate. The leaders knew that long-term success as a collaboration was dependent upon the partners’ straightforward dealings with one another at every step along the way. Collaborations are made not of structures but of relationships.

The partners’ effective management of planning phase problems enabled many of their difficulties to be turned into advantages. For example, because the partners had designed a lengthy process they had enough time to work through complexities and enough resources to hire high quality people to help. Their inherent attention to detail prolonged decision-making but produced specific, realistic criteria on which to base those decisions. The lack of existing models left room for the partners’ own creativity. For at least one observer, even the organizations’ initial uncertainty about commitment was

an advantage. It indicated the essential honesty of the process—it was not a *fait accompli* dressed up to look like open inquiry.

*Open Book partners sought advice from many others to develop models and test their thinking.*

Open Book was unusual in the degree to which it sought advice from others in the community. Other organizations that had conducted recent capital campaigns responded with specifics about strategies and sources. The Jerome Foundation, which had spearheaded an effort to create a shared arts building a few years earlier, shared what it had learned about facilities planning. A management company spent hours with Nancy Gaschott, helping her to figure out operating budgets and put together accurate projections. When Open Book planners asked for help, they found a generous community of people who were willing to communicate information and insights that enabled Open Book to test its vision against reality.

## 2. How did leaders use the tight time frame as an advantage?

*The intensity and momentum created by the tight time frame were used not as an excuse to paper over differences but as a reason for frank discussion and quick resolution.*

*"We had no choice. We couldn't stay stuck. Nobody's nose could stay out of joint for too long."*

*"We weren't afraid to ask for help."*

The groups faced time pressures that forced them into a breathtaking pace of project development. This required extreme investments of time from many people to avoid overwhelming the capacity of the group. Several partners believe that the urgency created by real deadlines in some respects made the job easier. As one puts it, "Everyone gave up some of the acting out behavior that otherwise might have accompanied the project."

One of the implications of being on "expedition behavior" was an ethic of responsibility for the good of the whole. Something much larger was at stake than an individual or an organization, and the project brought out the best in each of the partners. Probably every person experienced occasional despairing moments, but "we didn't permit that of each other, or didn't permit that side of ourselves to show." Instead they looked to the "calm, kind, problem-solving approach" employed by the architects, construction company, and developer and redoubled their efforts to resolve problems satisfactorily.

## 3. What was the link between designing the shared space and defining the collaborative relationships?

*The tasks of choosing a building and designing its space were necessary tools for visualizing what the three organizations collectively could become.*

*"When people are drawn into a process of thinking spatially, it is clarifying and instructive. It allows them to imagine interactions and relationships in new ways."*



Until Open Book partners made a commitment to 1011 Washington, many had a hard time making the idea of the collaboration concrete in their minds. One partner describes the search for space as sometimes bringing out people's worst fears, because no one knew the kind of space they would be in. Jay Cowles remembers how the building resolved many of those uncertainties. "Once we bought it, it became clearer what the main attributes of this project were going to be and what the meaning was going to be, not only for the three organizations, but establishing literary arts and book arts, establishing the confluence in one building. It became concrete and defensible then." This is a process developer Chuck Leer has seen before. "I believe that part of our lives [is] defined by the kinds of spaces we spend time in," he says. As partners reviewed each potential space, they became more clear about what they needed and how they might work together. "Through the process of finding the right space, I think they found each other."

That process of clarification continued under Garth Rockcastle's guidance. As an architect, he says his role is to "help people think about space and utilization of space." People can begin to project how they might interact if the space were configured in certain ways. They begin to see theoretical possibilities become real. For Open Book partners, visualizing the physical space was a necessary building block for constructing the partnership itself.

#### 4. How did the dispersed leadership structure work in this case?

*Early leaders were persistent and inclusive, building momentum and then sharing leadership with others.*

Open Book partners spent more than two years in discussion and exploration before they ever got to the Hosmer meeting. During that time, the Loft played the most recognized and persistent leadership role. Loft board and staff were committed to

creating a home for literature, even if Milkweed and MCBA could not be a part of it. At the same time, they firmly believed

*"I give credit to a whole lot of people..."*

in a vision that, by definition, depended on developing genuine partnerships. Ownership, investment, risk, and leadership all had to be shared. Linda Myers reflects on her absolute "faith that there is so much more when you're all together." This ideology also had a practical implication. The effort could fall apart if others perceived the Loft as pushing too hard. It was crucial to Open Book's success that the Loft was able to carry out the early leadership functions, and then to share them as others stepped forward.

*A dispersed leadership structure enabled talent to emerge on all levels.*

*"Leadership is really good listening. It's having a totally positive outlook that problems can be solved. It's just not letting in the shadows. It's working in the sunshine."*

Open Book's model was one of dispersed leadership that depended upon a broad network of people. Jay Cowles and Chris Mahai modeled a "very frank and task oriented" style of leadership. Gail See, a founding Open Book board member, recalls the open communication pattern established by Jay and Chris. "As issues came up, we addressed them. The important thing is really to get it out on

the table and talk about it, because it's not going to go away. You deal with it and then move on."

All three executive directors, in addition to working on collaboration matters, provided the internal leadership necessary for their organizations to cope with disruption, take on extra work, and manage the transition. Board members were also key. Tom Hoch provided crucial help working through zoning and parking problems. Jon Scoll, Chris Mahai, and William Myers were instrumental in designing the legal and governance model. Gail See, who had been a great proponent of literary arts and book arts for 20 years and had served on all three boards, became what one person described as a "spiritual leader." She was "just adored" and gave the project a warm and gracious tone that touched all who met her.

All these forms of leadership were crucial when there was so much work to be done so quickly. Each of the leaders also exhibited the lack of hubris that characterized the whole endeavor; they give tremendous credit to others. "Everyone had to show up as a leader. We all just dove in and did what needed to be done." Problems were simply there to be solved. People were in place with the authority to solve them. Quickly. Elegantly. And on to the next.

## 5. How did Open Book partners approach the question of fairness in dealing with the very different needs and concerns of the founding organizations?

*Open Book's model of fairness was not to treat each of the partner organizations the same, but to help each solve whatever unique problems were creating roadblocks.*

Differences among the three partner organizations marked the whole course of the collaboration. They had different internal dilemmas to solve and varying views on what role the collaboration could play in their development. Each partner organization moved at its own pace, sorting out financial and other worries internally, and not necessarily seeing eye to eye. Under these circumstances, it was "remarkable, the extent to which the three organizations' boards were willing to place the futures of their individual organizations in the hands of a collaboration still being developed." They took risks and proceeded with unanswered questions. This was made possible by Open Book's model of fairness and commitment to bringing everyone along together.

*"No one was keeping score."*

Interpersonally that fairness was manifested by patience and mutual support. Equally important was a series of concrete commitments that resolved financial roadblocks unique to the organizations. The collaboration made tens of thousands of dollars in financial commitments: assuring MCBA of financial help if it was needed to get out of its lease,



providing funds for Milkweed’s temporary move, and helping each organization with moving and settling in expenses. The dollar amounts to each organization were not equal; rather, they demonstrated the belief that each organization was an equal part of the vision and the end result. “It simply had to work for everyone. We surrendered to the ideal of doing what it takes for the common good.”

## 6. What is instructive about the legal, financial, and governance models that provide the framework for Open Book?

*Open Book’s legal and governance structures preserve necessary autonomy for the founding organizations, while providing for their common welfare.*

*“At first we thought we would kind of own this like a condominium. Then (the working group) came back with this, and it was so different from what I was expecting. But I thought, well, this will work fine. And in fact, it is one of the key elements to our success.”*

The legal framework for the collaboration had to address several complex issues. First, it had to affirm the joint endeavor while also meeting each individual organization’s needs for autonomy. Second, it had to make all three founding organizations equal partners in the outcome of the capital campaign so they could focus their efforts on maximizing the fundraising effort and not worry about “keeping score” as to how much money each organization brought in. Third, it had to ensure that the founders would have some control over their future in the building, since they were doing all the work to create a long-term home for themselves. Finally, it had to protect the

building from what one described as “a tyranny of one or two tenants.”



The relationship between this new entity of Open Book and the three founding organizations was a central part of the model. The three founders would operate with annual leases that would vary according to the building’s needs, and be automatically renewed unless the tenant chose otherwise. A governing board would be made up of representatives of the three founding organizations, plus up to three independent directors. This meant that each founding organization’s interests would be directly represented and negotiated at the governance level. The leases and the governing board created durable structures for assuring the building’s financial health, protecting each organization’s autonomy, and sustaining collaborative decision making.

*Open Book’s economic model assured sufficient capitalization and the founders’ long-term financial best interests.*

*“Especially for arts groups, buildings are so dangerous because they have requirements that you can’t avoid.”*

*Reserve fund.* Control over occupancy expenses meant assuring that the building would not be a drain on its occupants. Annual costs to operate the building had to be affordable to tenants, and there had to be no major building needs for which the tenants would need to raise funds. “I’ve been around long enough to be extremely wary of the power of buildings



to do harm,” says Drew Stewart. “A lot of organizations don’t fund depreciation. My belief is, you have to fund it.” Drew prepared an analysis of what elements of the building would wear out, over what period of time, and what each would cost to repair. This resulted in the inclusion of a \$685,000 reserve fund in the capital campaign. Doing so removed potential fundraising competition between Open Book and its founding tenants for the useful life of the building.

Open Book’s economic model included income streams that would support the building, thereby reducing occupancy costs for the three founding partners. The performance hall, meeting room, and other spaces would be available for rent to outside groups. About one third of the building would be leased to complementary businesses or nonprofits that would pay market rates.

Another component of the financial model was to restructure the financial health of each organization by stabilizing annual costs and gradually reducing rents as a percentage of operating expenses. The capital campaign included an amount sufficient to pay for the three nonprofits’ moving expenses and provide each with a budget for furniture, computers, or other basics needed in the new space. In addition, Drew Stewart assisted the

partners with detailed financial analysis: “We looked at their costs and income sources at the time, and what would be the change in their costs if they had the space they really needed in a new building. What would it do for their potential to earn more money? Were there any efficiencies? What pressures would be put on their own fundraising?” The analysis revealed that rent at \$8 per square foot on an ongoing basis would enable them to balance their budgets while also generating more business that would result in additional revenues.

## 7. How did the three founding organizations, so different from one another, balance their needs for autonomy and integration?

*Partner organizations were naturally at different stages of stability and maturity, but for the collaboration to work each had to come to the joint endeavor from a position of strength.*

*“Leadership (of board members) made it possible to survive enormous tensions. It needed every ounce of their business experience. Having that...created an atmosphere where we could make decisions.”*

Vision, passion, and determination were essential qualities for the individuals who founded Open Book. But they needed to be matched with commensurate qualities of organizational strength. Each partner had to be convinced that an alliance would contribute to its growth and programmatic evolution and that it was prudent financially. One person describes it quite simply as performing “due diligence.”

Determinations of institutional strength were largely the responsibility of board members. Each group was taking a risk,

and there was the combined risk that if any one of them were to fail the other two would be left holding the bag. Planners repeatedly called upon the practical business perspective of many board members. Skills in financial analysis, strategic planning, and risk assessment were of enormous value. Ultimately, these analyses gave each organization the confidence that they were proceeding from a platform of interdependency and not dependency.

*Partners crafted a way to be part of a large, visible joint endeavor and not only retain their identity but strengthen it.*

*“People in literature, presses and others, have generally been shy of collaboration, because they’re mavericks. Open Book demonstrates that you can retain your identity, your brand, your integrity, and still be part of a collaborative project.”*

Open Book partners fundamentally needed each other. Their combined forces created the vision of a home for literature and attracted the funds to build it. But they were also very different from each other and concerned about maintaining their individual identities. The legal and governance structures described earlier helped to address that concern.

Another key to preserving their separate identities is their adaptability when differing circumstances demanded more or less joint action. The early intensity of working together on every major decision served its purpose and has been put to rest. Today some aspects of their operations are intertwined. Others are independent. Means of working together are not mandated, but arise organically through partners’ frequent contact with one another.

Finally, having to grapple with collaboration decisions meant that the partners were continually clarifying matters of boundaries and fit. What could they do jointly versus preserve as their own? How could they articulate to the public their individual identities while marketing the joint entity? Where were the margins between each organization’s physical space and their shared spaces? Answers to these questions were not simply of pragmatic use. They served to reinforce and clarify each organization’s mission, reach, and relationships to the community, thus strengthening identity.

## **8. What made the case for establishing Open Book so compelling to community members, and is it fulfilling its promise to the community?**

*The strength of the Open Book case as a collaboration was that it established something greater than securing the well-being of the founding partners.*

*“Open Book is a statement to the world that the word is critical. It needs to be anchored in our minds, and our hearts, and in the ground.”*





Open Book presented a case to the public that defined literary arts as foundational in our culture. It lifted up a vision of how this community could enhance and preserve literature's importance. It sounded a caution that, in this society in which reading is declining, literature plays an important role in maintaining democracy, helping people "broaden their minds and engage their critical thinking." It presented a model of how the book and literary arts could "assume their rightful place alongside the visual and performing arts in the public's imagination."

This model rested on the strength of the individual founding organizations. Each was a national leader in its own field, with deep local roots, loyal supporters, and a broad base of participating artists. A plan simply to co-locate these groups would certainly have attracted attention, but this proposition was much larger.

The partners positioned themselves as three points along the continuum of the literary arts. Anchoring them more firmly would amplify and reinforce the whole field. Donors could help to ensure the longevity and success of all three crucial organizations, and at the same time support the broader idea of a home for literature.

This idea captured the imaginations of over a thousand donors. This was a story that did not exist anywhere else in the country, and they would make it come true. As one funder put it, "Supporting Open Book was supporting individual artists, supporting mid-sized groups, supporting the kind of activity that creates the fabric and texture and depth that make this place worth living in."

## Chapter 5: The Territory Ahead

### Extending the reach

*“The challenge is to go back to what brought us together in the first place. What do we look like to the community? How can we make literature even more visible?”*

The dust has settled from the move into Open Book. The founding partners have created new rhythms and patterns for their work. Of central importance to each is the wide range of collaborative programs and activities undertaken with other organizations in the community:

*MCBA* created a collaborative brochure with four other organizations that are centers for various forms of visual arts—textiles, clay, photography, and printmaking. Its partnerships with schools draw nearly 36,000 children to Open Book annually. *Milkweed*, already unusual among presses in its commitment to schools, also brings in school children from its Alliance for Reading program to learn more about how books are created. *Milkweed* hosted the 2000 Regional Press Fall Preview in Open Book’s performance hall and sponsored a celebration for students of the Sheridan Global Arts Middle School’s Designated Reader

Program. *Milkweed* also arranges for other literary nonprofit presses to display books on its lobby bookshelf. *The Loft* collaborated with the Star Tribune and Minnesota Public Radio to launch the Minnesota-wide book club program, Talking Volumes. Open Book has made it possible for the Loft to create programs and events through partnerships with well over a hundred community organizations, public schools and universities, media outlets and arts groups.

These examples illustrate the many ways in which the three founding organizations extend their reach into the community. They convey Open Book’s commitment to the literary and book arts and to the original dream of creating a gathering place where they can be promoted and celebrated.

And yet, *Milkweed*, *MCBA*, and the Loft recognize that this is only the beginning. In their first four years at Open Book, they have strengthened internal operations and sent their roots even more deeply into the community. They have partnered with other organizations and made the building available to hundreds of groups and thousands of people. Now the Open Book board is embarking on a long range planning process. Partners want to take time to consider what else they might do to fulfill the promise and potential of Open Book.



## Strategic issues for the future

*"It's a conundrum. Being a physical place makes the Open Book vision tangible, but it also seems to take care of it. The new iteration of the vision doesn't have to do with the building, but with what it represents."*

On a recent day in spring, several Open Book partners gathered in the third floor meeting room to talk about the status of the collaboration. One part of the discussion centered on Open Book values. Participants realized that the commitment to success, which so powerfully motivated partners throughout the formation of Open Book, was focused on the building. Now that the building stands, they asked one another, how is that value to be understood? It was always about commitment to the book, and commitment to the community. Given this, what would success look like in the future? What strategic issues would Open Book need to address? The following preliminary thoughts arose from that discussion.

### *Community focus*

Open Book has achieved an apparent equilibrium between an inward focus on the needs of the founding organizations and an outward focus on the community. The building is heavily used by a variety of groups. One person had heard Open Book referred to as "the soul of the neighborhood" because it promotes creativity, participation, and learning about literature in a community setting. This was an important element of the original vision: to take an intensely solitary, personal art form and make it public. At the same time, that equilibrium should not be taken for granted. Now that things have stabilized for the three organizations, what more could they do to assure that Open Book remains a "center of gravity" for literature? Do each

organization's constituents relate to the whole vision and not only to a particular class or event held at Open Book? What more can partners do to be a catalyst for the development of audiences and participants in book and literary arts?



### *Visibility*

Outside the front doors, the pace of development accelerates. Is Open Book ready to compete with the changes coming to the neighborhood? One participant speculated that "the assumption that we are a jewel is incorrect" and that Open Book "cannot wait for others to come to us, despite having a dynamic, vibrant building where it seems something special is expected to happen." In order to compete with new businesses and arts venues in the neighborhood, Open Book may have to present a new face, to establish a new case. Founders may need to communicate more with the public, and even with their own constituencies. They should aspire to achieve "a state in which this community can't exist without us." This sort of visibility would benefit the founding organizations, while helping to fulfill the fourth campaign promise: to be a leader and anchor in the renaissance of the Mississippi River/Washington Avenue corridor.



### *The board's goals*

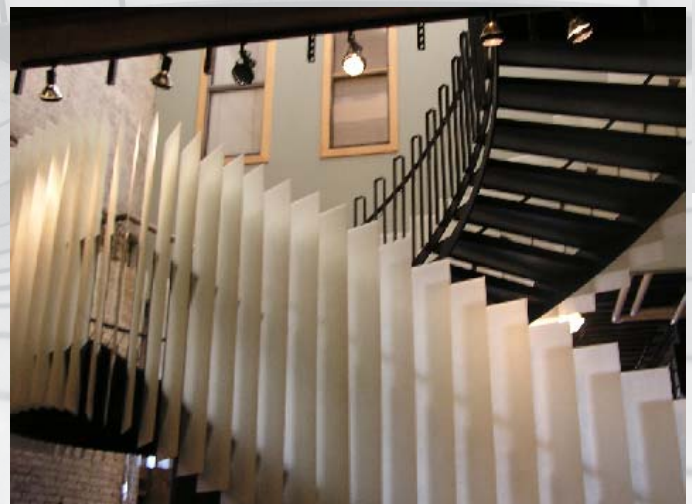
These strategic issues prompted the group to consider the board's goals and objectives going forward. Much of the board's current activity grows directly out of the history of establishing the organization and the building. Board agendas primarily attend to internal building management and financial matters. It functions partly as a landlord, looking out for the interests of the founding organizations and respecting their independence. These roles have been crafted over time, the result of careful efforts to find a territory of leadership that would complement that of the founding organizations, rather than competing with its tenants.

*Considering the challenges that now lie ahead, group members wondered whether it is time for founding organizations to take greater advantage of the board as a strategic asset with a potentially broad leadership charge. It is of great value that the board continues to manage the status quo intelligently and ethically. But, as one said, "dealing with parking is important, but it's not aspirational." Should the board do more to help founding organizations keep alive the collaborative values that brought them together? What could the board do, that individual organizations cannot, to strengthen the community focus and help ensure the building's visibility? What is its public role in speaking to the vibrancy of the literary arts?*

This sampling of strategic issues for the future does not so much raise new questions as revitalize the dialogue surrounding old ones. Though the mix of people has changed, with "settlers" joining "pioneers" at the joint table, Open Book partners remain engaged with one another and with core questions stemming from their commitment to the book.

### **The story continues**

The story of Open Book is really many stories combined. It is the story of The Loft Literary Center, Milkweed Editions, and Minnesota Center for Book Arts—three organizations that "went beyond all reason" to express their commitment to literature. It is about their imagination, their faith, and their shared journey to create a building. It is also the story of their individual growth and change. It is a tale of a community of funders and believers, strong supporters of the arts, and of a community of artists, new and seasoned, who have come to Open Book by the thousands. It is testimony to the power of the gathering place that Open Book has unleashed the creative energies of those thousands, enlarging and enriching artistic expression in the life of the community.



## Appendix A

### People Interviewed

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Brian Bergee  
Manager  
Open Book

Emerson "Chip" Blake  
Editor in Chief  
Milkweed Editions

Emilie Buchwald  
Founder and former Editor in Chief  
Milkweed Editions

Jay Cowles  
Unity Avenue Associates  
Open Book board member

John Cowles  
Open Book donor

Neal Cuthbert  
Senior Program Officer  
The McKnight Foundation

Sid Farrar  
Former Executive Director  
Milkweed Editions

Nancy Fushan  
Senior Program Officer  
Bush Foundation

Nancy Gaschott  
Administrative Director  
The Loft Literary Center

Cynthia Gehrig  
President  
Jerome Foundation

Dorothy Goldie  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Center for Book Arts

Tom Hoch  
Historic Theatre Group, Ltd.  
Minnesota Center for Book Arts board member

Peggy Korsmo-Kennon  
Bell Museum of Natural History  
Former Executive Director, Minnesota Center  
for Book Arts

Chuck Leer  
North First Ventures  
Open Book board member

Chris LaVictoire Mahai  
Aveus, LLC  
Open Book board member

Linda Myers  
Executive Director  
The Loft Literary Center

Liz Petrangelo  
Business Owner  
The Loft Literary Center board chair

Charlie Quimby  
Words at Work  
Minnesota Center for Book Arts board chair

Hilary Reeves  
Managing Director  
Milkweed Editions

Debbie Reynolds  
Milkweed Editions board member

Garth Rockcastle  
Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, Ltd.  
Open Book architect

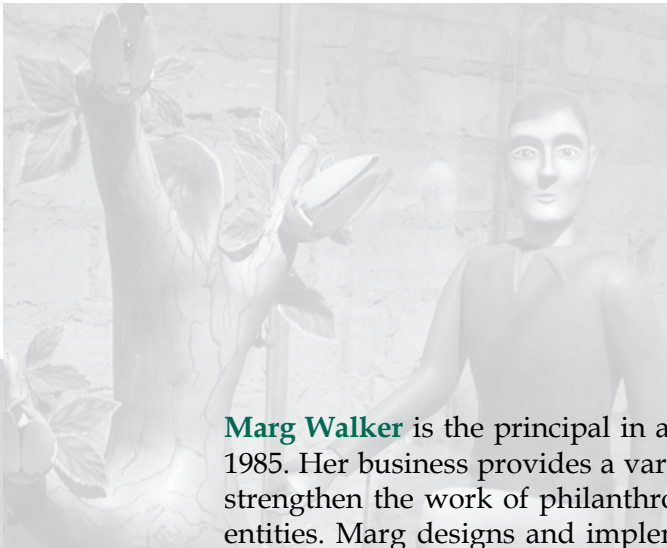
Jon Scoll  
Lindquist & Vennum PLLP  
Open Book board member

Gail See  
Open Book board member emerita

John Sherrell  
Coffee Gallery owner

Drew Stewart  
Management Consultant  
Open Book capital campaign director

Scott Tankenoff  
Hillcrest Development, LLLP  
1011 Washington owner



**Marg Walker** is the principal in a consulting firm that she founded in 1985. Her business provides a variety of services designed to strengthen the work of philanthropic, nonprofit and public sector entities. Marg designs and implements research, organizational development and evaluation projects. Her work principally has been in the human services arena, focusing on children and families, HIV/AIDS, violence prevention, immigrants and refugees, mental health, and other issues. She also has worked with numerous arts organizations. While completing her Ph.D. in organizational learning, Marg discovered a special interest in narrative research. She has developed a process called “storyography,” which helps organizations use narrative inquiry methods to gather and interpret stories as sources of knowledge for evaluation and learning.

