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## Great River Regional Library 2016 Annual Report

# Community First



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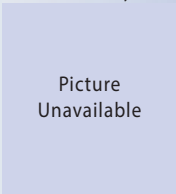
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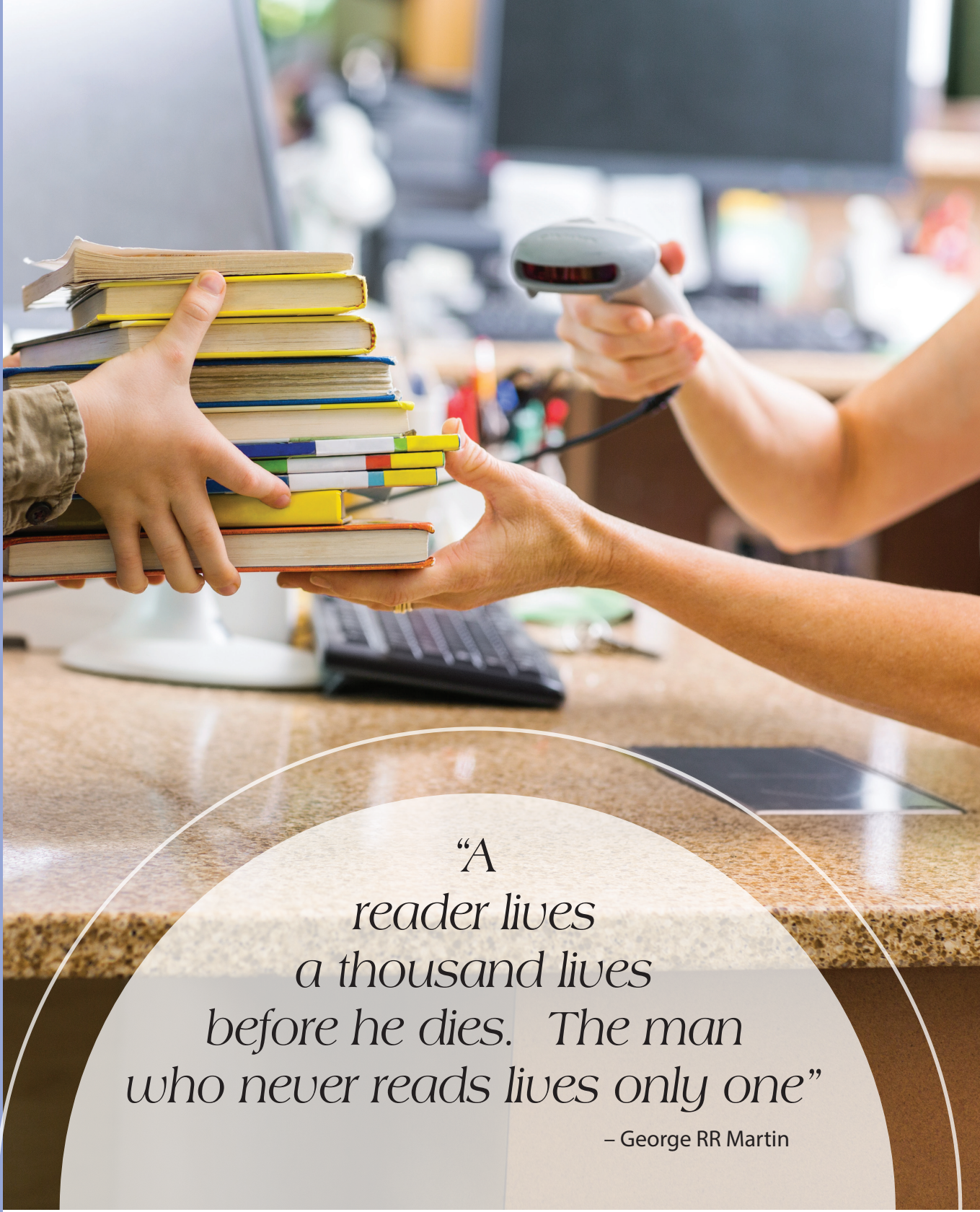
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a thousand lives  
before he dies. The man  
who never reads lives only one”

– George RR Martin

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# Letter from the Executive Director

We began the first year of our new strategic plan centered on our core services, continuous improvement and stronger community focus.

Our Board of Trustees created a Finance Committee and a new base budgeting process. The process came to us through Benton County. It is more transparent and helps simplify budget setting. We are fortunate to have this dedicated group of commissioners and citizens governing our library system. They are truly dedicated to our service priorities of Literacy, Access and Lifelong Learning. They also ensure our library system is centered on Exceptional Service, Operational Excellence and Community Focus.

Mid-year the Board set course with a new Library Assessment Plan. This pathway will increase library access through improved facilities and new alternative services. We began work with our city partners to update facilities and services to meet changing patron needs. We adjusted open hours in three libraries – Delano, Swanville and Grey Eagle - and expanded them in two more – St. Michael and Big Lake. The new schedules better fit with local community needs. We also began a new partnership with the City of Sartell to offer alternative library services that will expand access to that community.

Our virtual services also got a facelift. Two staff committees researched patron use and needs. They applied new technology options. In June, we launched an updated catalog and website. Both are now easier to use on mobile devices. Searching on the catalog is more robust through a faceted discovery layer.

Throughout the year, we reached out to our communities in new ways. We held community listening sessions in Delano, Staples, Sauk Centre and Becker. Local library staff set action plans to reach new users. Numerous libraries reached out to their schools to register children for library cards. Our more flexible policies and new technology tools allow us to work with teachers and media specialists to register children for library cards at school. This grants them access to Great River digital resources, like e-books, online language learning and web tutorials.

We also experienced a major trauma through an arson incident in August. This resulted in a three-month closure of our largest library, St. Cloud. The crisis showed Great River's strength in action. Staff throughout the region pulled together to ensure high quality library service. Regional staff found creative ways to keep our central systems running, which allowed our behind-the-scenes operations like delivery and the website to continue seamlessly. St. Cloud staff went to work in Clearwater, Albany and Waite Park. This allowed us to expand open hours temporarily in those locations. The Distribution department sent materials returned to St. Cloud out to all of our other libraries. This optimized access to the collection, a significant benefit to all our patrons. While it is an event no one wishes to repeat, I am proud of how everyone pulled together to deliver the best possible patron experience.

We started the year with a new plan. We ended it transformed and more responsive to patron and local community needs. Great River is on course to meet the changing needs of Central Minnesota now and into the future. We look forward to serving you in 2017!

*Karen Pundsack*

Karen Pundsack  
Executive Director



Karen Pundsack  
Executive Director



## Local Action Plans

In 2016, Great River made a region-wide commitment to improve and expand literacy skills, both within branches and out in the community.

Each location in the GRRL region has engineered a unique local action plan to improve or expand literacy efforts to a specific target audience of underserved populations.

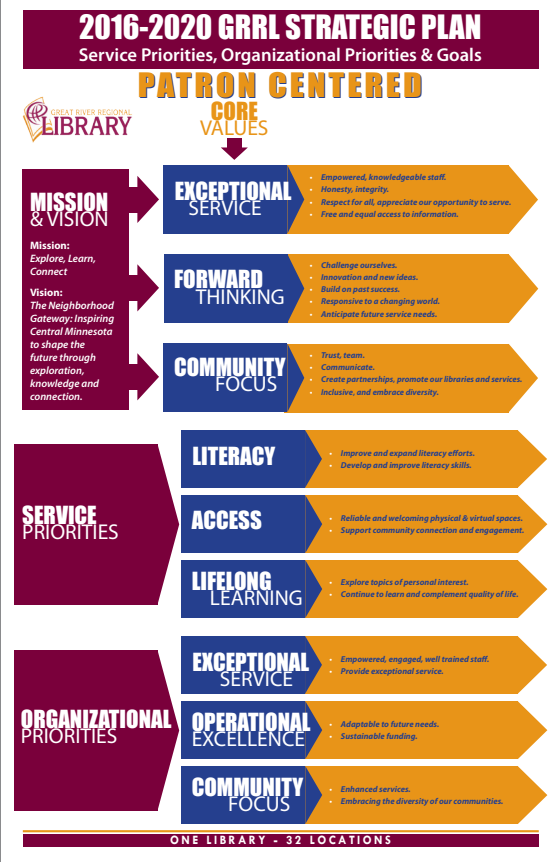
Six target audience groups have been identified through the Local Action Plans:

- Adults over 55 yrs.
- Education/Chamber of Commerce
- Immigrants
- Pre-K
- School Age
- Teens

Each of our 32 locations is unique and staff have experimented with a number of new and expanded programs targeted those groups, such as: expanding adult offerings in Grey Eagle, Tech Tips in Paynesville, Crafternoons in Delano, Family Story Time in Becker, and library camps in Eagle Bend, Staples, and Waite Park.

In addition, staff have engaged in a number of outreach events such as the Cinco de Mayo Festival in Long Prairie, business expos in Cokato and Rockford, and Chamber of Commerce presentations throughout the region. A new book club at a nursing home in Howard Lake has been so successful that residents have asked for a second book club to discuss a different range of titles.

Staff will continue to deliver high quality programs and outreach in order to reach a wider range of patrons, both inside and outside of the libraries.



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Friends of the Library, Cold Spring  
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Lincoln Area Business Assoc  
Linda and Doug Nordang  
Linda Beuning  
Linda Kielty  
Linda Layman  
Linda Mies



## Library Open Hours Adjusted

Access is one of our strategic plan priorities. It is our goal to ensure all users will have access to reliable sources of information. One objective in 2016 was to complete a full evaluation of our current open hours. The Library Assessment committee developed a final plan which included recommendations for extending or adjusting open hours.

Grey Eagle - The adjustment shortened Monday open hours from 10-5 to 10-4, and extended Wednesday open hours from 3-8 to 2-8. The adjustment was made to increase access during a busy period. Library checkout data from 2015 showed that Wednesdays were significantly busier than Mondays.

St. Michael - The adjustment extended Thursday open hours from 1-8 to 10-6, an increase of one open hour. It also made 10 the consistent opening time Monday through Thursday. The adjustment was a response to patron concerns about the lack of Thursday morning hours.

Going into 2017, GRRL also crafted plans to adjust the open hours at three other branch libraries – Big Lake, Delano, and Swanville.

- Big Lake added one hour on Monday and two on Wednesday
- Delano added one hour and shifted two on Thursday
- Swanville shifted hours on all open days

Going forward, library use will be reviewed each year, and hours will be adjusted based on need and traffic patterns.





“You’re never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child.”  
-Dr. Seuss

### Successful “Book-a-Librarian” Program Exceeds 2016 Expectations

Great River’s Book-a-Librarian service continues to experience strong growth and popularity across the system.

The relatively new program aimed to serve 125 patrons in 2016. At year’s end, that number had nearly doubled, with 230 patrons served region-wide.

Book-a-Librarian sends librarians from the Great River headquarters in St. Cloud around the region, by appointment, to help patrons hone their technology and research skills. Each appointment lasts an average of 30 minutes to an hour.

While the program is available to meet a wide range of needs, the overwhelming majority of sessions focus on teaching patrons how to use their smartphones and tablets.

Book-a-Librarian, which began with a small batch of pilot sites in 2014, now serves all 32 GRRL branches with a team of three patron services librarians.



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## Thank you!

Great River Regional Library (GRRL) seeks to build public and private partnerships that provide innovative learning opportunities for our 470,000+ citizens.

As expenses for core services continue to grow, donor support is more significant than ever. Donations allow GRRL to provide various services and an extensive collection free of charge to Central Minnesota. Private donor support has made possible the purchase of thousands of new books and other materials, computers for individuals with visual and hearing impairments, and prize incentives for the Summer Reading Program serving over 11,000 children and teens.

The Great River Regional Library wishes to extend sincere appreciation to the individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations listed here for their generous support throughout 2016. These donors have enriched lives and helped build stronger communities in Central Minnesota.

Thank You!



# Administrative Team



**Patron Services**  
Brandi Canter  
Lead Patron Services Supervisor



**Public Relations**  
Julie Henne  
Associate Director



**Patron Services**  
Ryan McCormick  
Patron Services Supervisor



**Accounting**  
Aron Murphy  
Accounting Coordinator



**Information Technology**  
Jay Roos  
Associate Director



**Human Resources**  
Julie Schmitz  
Associate Director



**Patron Services**  
Rachel Thomas  
Patron Services Supervisor



**Collection Development**  
Jami Trenam  
Associate Director

## Website Overhaul

As outlined in our Strategic Plan, a plan was developed to enhance the library website, allowing greater access from mobile devices and improving the user experience.

A website redesign team was formed, met and brought forward a new look and layout for griver.org. This technological overhaul was far from simply cosmetic. After performing usability testing and taking into account the rise in the number of people accessing websites via Smartphones, the new Great River Regional Library website now features responsive design –meaning that the page reacts to whatever kind of device or screen it’s viewed on in order to give the user the best experience possible.

We also transitioned our catalog to a new, open-source search engine called VuFind, managed and updated right here at Great River. The new search engine gives a more Google-like set of results and facets allowing patrons to quickly narrow search results down to just what they’re looking for.

The new site was launched in June, providing our patrons an enhanced way to *Explore, Learn and Connect!*







### Brain Fitness Kits to Keep Minds Sharp

To assist in keeping our patrons' minds nimble, GRRL created Brain Fitness Kits in 2016, available at every branch. Each kit includes four games, each based on matching, storytelling, memory retention and numbers. Games include Pathwords, Story Cubes, Brick By Brick, Scrabble, Boggle and more. Each kit also includes a sheet of resources, as well as a booklet with questions. The kits were purchased with support from the St. Cloud Friends of the Library.

Additionally, several GRRL branches have hosted programs educating attendees on Alzheimer's and related issues. To date, GRRL's catalogue includes over 280 books on Alzheimer's.

Memory problems are typically one of the first signs of Alzheimer's disease. According to the National Institute on Aging, Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, but recent estimates indicate that it may actually rank third – just behind heart disease and cancer – as a cause of death of older people.

Memory problems associated with Alzheimer's may manifest in language use, visual/spatial skills and reasoning ability. There is some evidence to suggest that keeping the brain active, along with a good diet, plenty of sleep and regular exercise, can help prevent dementia.

#### **Tips from the Alzheimer's Association include:**

- Stay curious and involved – commit to lifelong learning
- Read, write and do puzzles
- Attend plays and lectures
- Enroll in courses at your local adult education center or community college
- Play games
- Garden



## Our Great Staff Members

Dennis Ackerson  
Rebecca Aleckson  
Beverly Anderson  
Jane Anderson  
Katherine Anderson  
Jane Armstrong  
Margaret Aschenbrenner  
Carla Asfeld  
Sara Asfeld  
Janet Atkinson  
Heather Atwood  
Rose Bailey  
DeeAnne Barthel  
Cyrene Bastien  
Katelyn Bennett  
Michael Bennett  
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Anne Blom  
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Yadira Frey  
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Michelle Goebel  
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Karen Pundsack  
Samuel Puterbaugh  
Sharon Quale  
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Sherri Rasmussen  
Kathryn Rasset  
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Beth Ringsmuth Stolpman  
Michael Rishavy  
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Gretchen Thompson  
Suzanne Timm  
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Haldenwanger  
Richard Torrence  
Kelly Travis  
Jami Trenam  
Nancy Tschida  
Susan Vail  
Kathryn Vento  
Sharon Verchot,  
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Mary Wherry  
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Susanne Wilson  
Nancy Wind  
Emma Wing  
Tracy Wing  
Amy Wittmann  
Judy Wolak  
Lorie Wuolu





GRRL employees attend 2016 staff training day.

### Revamped Budget Process Takes Effect for GRRL

2016 brought changes to the way Great River Regional Library builds and approves its operating budget.

One of the key purposes of this redesign is to break down costs more effectively between departments with a focus on core services.

GRRL now includes a finance committee, comprised of six county commissioners and one GRRL citizen member. This team is responsible for reviewing quarterly financial statements and approving the preliminary budget.

This new budget process is modeled after Benton County budget-building practices. GRRL expects this to be a simpler and more understandable system for GRRL staff, the Board of Trustees and the counties we serve.

#### Financial Analysis

Overall 2016 revenue was \$9,969,625.89, an increase of 7.15% over the 2015 figure of \$9,304,507.77. This increase in revenue is mainly due to the timing of our State aid: Regional Library Basic System Support, Regional Library Telecommunications Act, and Arts & Cultural Heritage Legacy Amendment. Total 2016 expenditures were \$8,575,092.54, an increase of 2.17% over the 2015 figure of \$8,393,303.52. This increase in expenditures is mainly due to employee wage increases and increased vendor costs.



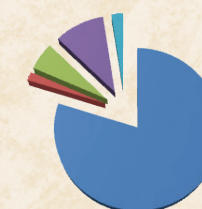
2015 Revenue	
Signatory Payments*	67.96%
Other	2.79%
Fundraising	0.56%
State Grants	18.13%
Fines & Miscellaneous	3.88%



2015 Operating Expenditures	
Personnel	78.79%
Other	1.71%
Services & Contracts	6.01%
Library Materials	10.99%
Automation	2.51%



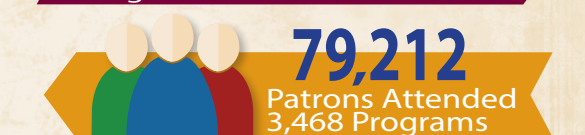
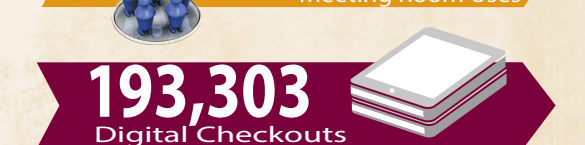
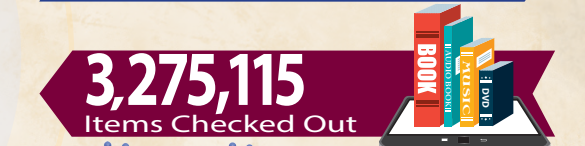
2016 Revenue	
Signatory Payments	70.47%
Other	6.71%
Fundraising	0.87%
State Grants	18.41%
Fines & Miscellaneous	3.54%



2016 Operating Expenditures	
Personnel	79.8%
Other	1.74%
Services & Contracts	5.76%
Library Materials	10.26%
Automation	2.43%

\*Signatory Payments from Benton, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd and Wright Counties

## SERVICE *Totals*





*“I don’t have to look far to find treasures.  
I discover them every time I visit a library.”*

-Michael Embry

# MOVING AHEAD

## All Staff Day Focuses on Future of Libraries

GRRL staff are spread across 5,000 square miles in six counties. Each year we come together for a day of training and camaraderie.

“Come curious, leave inspired” was the theme of GRRL’s annual All Staff Day in 2016. The day focused on how libraries are moving through the 21st century to meet the needs of patrons.

Toby Greenwalt, the Director of Digital Strategies and Technology Integration at the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, was the keynote speaker. Greenwalt’s two hour program focused on community connectivity, and how libraries can incorporate and prioritize local needs into their local action plans.

Staff also had Annual Compliance training presented by Attorney Tom Jovanovich from Jovanovich, Kadlec & Athmann. Tom covered important topics and changes related to data privacy and harassment policies.

EAP Service Manager Jeff Krause has a wealth of clinical expertise as a behavioral health therapist, EAP consultant and clinical supervisor. He addressed the importance of resiliency and strong mental health in the workplace.

To wrap up the day, GRRL Patron Services Librarians Ariel Kirst and Connie Laing led an interactive presentation on our ever-expanding digital library, the different formats for GRRL’s e-content and how they work on various devices.

There are over 280 employees at GRRL and it goes without saying that each one plays an important role in thriving communities throughout Central Minnesota. Our staff has shown continuous dedication and commitment to GRRL, patrons and the communities they serve.



## St. Cloud Public Library Fire

On the afternoon of August 17, 2016 approximately 250 patrons and staff were evacuated after a patron set a fire on the second floor of the St. Cloud Public Library. The fire destroyed a chair, cracked a window and did structural damage totaling nearly \$1 million dollars.

The St. Cloud library is the headquarters for the entire 32-branch Great River Regional Library system. Materials for all the other 31 locations circulate through the St. Cloud Public Library. A three vehicle delivery system visits each library five days a week. The building area responsible for the regional library operations was relatively protected from the fire effects. Staff were able to maintain operations causing little disruption to the rest of the region during the extensive clean-up.

On November 15, the library welcomed back patrons, thanking them for their patience, with a special day of celebration.

A heartfelt thank you to all GRRL staff, city officials and many different cleaning and restoration contractors who worked diligently to make sure the St. Cloud Public Library was back to pre-fire condition and a safe environment for all patrons and staff.

