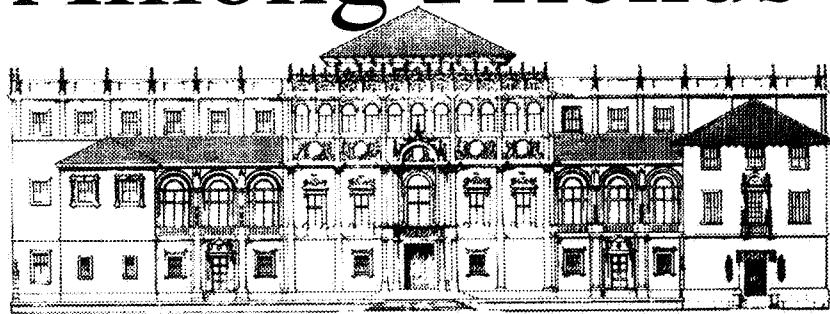


# Among Friends



QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

JULY 2007

## Friends Annual Meeting: *Be an Advocate for HPL*

As the speaker at the Friends Annual Meeting on June 7, 2007, Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson, Director of the Houston Public Library (HPL), proclaimed: "My vision is to make the Houston Public Library the best library—period." Dr. Lawson declared this statement as her professional and personal vision for HPL.

Dr. Lawson discussed a wonderful and exciting time for HPL with the opening of the Looscan Neighborhood Library and the launch of HPL Express later this year; the highly-anticipated opening of the Central Library in latter 2008, and the development of the African-American Library at Gregory School in historic Freedman's Town in early 2009.

Dr. Lawson is especially excited about the launch of HPL Express by the end of this year. The HPL Express concept transforms the traditional library into a multi-purpose facility designed to be located in only 2,000, 5,000 or 7,500 square feet of space. An HPL

Express will consist of three major areas: a Reading Center, a Computer Center with distinct facilities for Children, Teens and Adults, and a Learning Center/Classroom

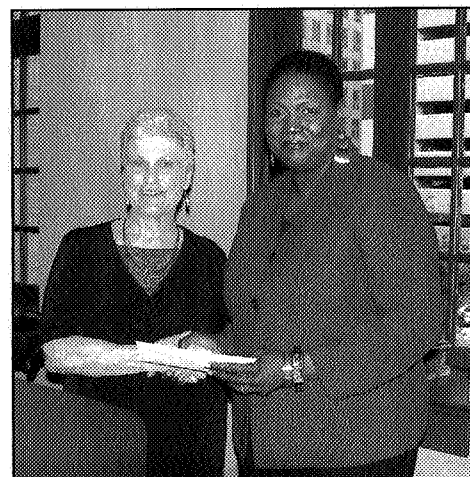
Dr. Lawson also dismissed the theory of libraries not being relevant in the age of the internet.

"Libraries aren't going anywhere anytime soon, we're going to be here for a while," said Dr. Lawson.

To support that statement, Dr. Lawson said an estimated 50% of Houstonians are not connected to the internet and many do not have a sufficient budget to purchase books of their own. In addition, libraries can offer "jewels" not available elsewhere.

"The Texas Room, the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, these are the jewels not available in book stores or on the internet," Dr. Lawson said.

The highlight of the evening was the presen-



Diane Durbin, President of the Friends proudly presents Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson, Director of HPL, with a check for \$60,000 at the Friends Annual Meeting.

Photo by Sandra Fernandez, HPL.

## Bargain Book Sale a Success!

The Friends completed another very successful book sale this year.

⇒ The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Book Sale grossed more than \$120,000.

⇒ With the proceeds from this year's sale the Friends presented the HPL with a gift of \$60,000, plus \$5,000 for their scholarship fund..

⇒ Memberships purchased at the pre-view sale increased by an astounding 44%.

With the loyal support of our book sale patrons and Friends members, we've been able

to fund materials, services and programs for the HPL.

Thanks goes to our dedicated board members, committed volunteers and faithful book lovers. Another huge thanks goes to the helpful staff members of the HPL.

We appreciate all of our Friends that completed the book sale survey. For those individuals that missed the opportunity, please find the enclosed book sale survey. Mail your survey to the Friends, your comments are important and we appreciate your feedback.

See "*Friends Meeting*" page 3

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# President's Report: New Goals for the New Fiscal Year.

*Get involved, increase memberships and offer HPL a larger gift*

As I write this report, the Friends are just ending the fiscal year and I am just ending my first year as Friends' President. We have a new administrator and new officers – the first time in over a year that all positions have been filled. And we've held a successful 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Bargain Book Sale. It has been an eventful year! We're ready to take a hard look at our budget and our priorities and begin planning for 2008.

Also in this newsletter you'll find a story about our annual meeting. We gave the library a check for \$60,000 at that meeting and added \$5,000 to the Friends' Scholarship Fund. That's a lot of \$2 books! The gift is a tribute to the hard work of our book sale volunteers and to the community who supported our sale. Not only did we provide money for the library, we got books into the hands of many community members who otherwise couldn't afford them.

The speaker at our annual meeting was the library director, Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson. She's the fourth library director since the Friends was organized in 1953, but the first to be the featured speaker at our annual meeting. Her vision is to make the Houston Public Library the best in the nation. Dr. Lawson spoke about the need of Houstonians, especially children, for the many services pro-

vided by the library. We learned that about half the students who start first grade in Houston leave school before graduation, and about half the families in Houston do not have a computer in the home.

Just two days later, I represented the Friends at the final Hip Hop Café event of the year and saw for myself just how great the need is. About two hundred children and young adults came to the library at the Fifth Ward Multi-Service Center to be entertained, learn about a healthy lifestyle, the Summer Reading Program, and other educational and recreational opportunities. The Friends helped fund the four Hip Hop Café events along with a \$10,000 grant from the McGovern Foundation, and it was certainly a worthwhile investment. With the need for informing kids and their parents about the services available at the library and then actually providing those services, the Houston Public Library could have easily used twice the amount we were able to give.

The needs of the library are great and the services it provides to the citizens of Houston are invaluable. That's one reason a priority for our next fiscal year is to increase membership. Our membership base is supportive and loyal, but it's not big enough. A city the size of Houston should have thousands of

members in their library Friends organization. Instead, we have never had even 2,000 members. We need to get the word out to more of our citizens about the work the Houston Public Library does. If you can afford it, please consider raising your membership level. Better yet, consider giving a tax-deductible gift membership to the Friends to a friend or family member. It will enable the recipient to attend our Member's Only Preview Sale, receive our newsletter, and, most importantly, support the work of the Houston Public Library.

Like every other public or private organization, the Friends is feeling a financial pinch. The costs to put on the sale continue to rise – think of the cost of gasoline for the 18-wheelers that make several trips to transport 70-80,000 books from our warehouse to the sale. Think of the rent for a warehouse where books are sorted all year long in preparation for the sale. Think of the cost of renting sale space where costs for cooling, electricity, security, and maintenance continue to rise. Our last two gifts have been smaller than the \$100,000 we once were able to give HPL. An increased membership base would help defray the costs that now must come from book sale profits that would otherwise

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*See "Aid HPL" page 6*

## New Friends Board of Directors, Administrator

The Friends welcomed new Board members, R.H. "Bob" Baillio, Jennifer A. Bryant, Allen J. Van Maanen and new Administrator, Rhonda Ortale.

R.H. "Bob" Baillio, Jr. has joined our ranks as a newly elected Board member. Bob was a natural at the book sale, stepping up and lending his support where it was most needed. Bob was so helpful and resourceful most believed his expertise mirrored the actions of a seasoned veteran. Bob was recommended by Houston Public Library Foundation Board member Cathryn Rodd Selman.

Jennifer A. Bryant brings her energy and experience in the legal arena as a newly inducted Board member. Jennifer is currently an attorney at Jackson Walker L.L.P. and is now a proud supporter of the Friends. Jennifer has frequented the bargain book sale purchasing what she describes as "a bag of treasures." In addition, Jennifer has assisted with the planning and fundraising efforts of the Parkinson's Association. Jennifer values the important contribution that libraries offer our

community and would like to do her part towards their continuance. Jennifer was nominated by fellow Board member Caren Luckie.

Allen J. Van Maanen will serve as the Treasurer of the Friends for the next two years. Allen will bring his abilities in budgeting, forecasting and financial goal setting to the Friends. A licensed personal banker with Wells Fargo, N.A., Allen is a member of National Association of Securities Dealers, possessing his Series 7 and Series 66 professional licenses. Allen believes the Friends support the Library in offering an invaluable service to the City of Houston. Without the Friends, Allen believes the Library would lose a significant resource. Allen was nominated by Board member and big sister Marie Wise.

Rhonda Ortale is the new Friends' Administrator. Rhonda brings a vast amount of expertise and understanding of public libraries to the administrator position. Rhonda has more than 30 years of experience with the Des

Moines Public Library, most recently completing her service as a reference librarian. In addition, Rhonda also served as the President of the Staff Association. As President, among one of her many accomplishments was the creation of a library cook book that raised funds for the Association. Furthermore, she successfully coordinated a Centennial celebration for more than 120 people at the Library. During her many trips to Houston, Rhonda volunteered at the Friends Annual Bargain Book Sale, as well as at the warehouse.

These newest members join Diane Durbin, President; Caren Zentner Luckie, Chair; Barry Bishop, outgoing Treasurer; Marie Wise, Secretary; as well as continuing Board members Sandy Clough, Charles Fuller, Don Gray, John Miers, Elizabeth Smith and Lee Anderson Smith. Please give them a warm Friends welcome.

