

Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation



THE CHALLENGE

Cedar Rapids Public Library (CRPL) board of trustees had been exploring the need to update their downtown facility to better meet the needs of the community. In June 2008, the flood that hit the area decided that need for them. The City of Cedar Rapids found a new location with a slate of possibilities for a state-of-the-art, LEED-certified building to serve the 250,000 people in the metro area.

With flood recovery efforts and 22 other identified fundraising campaigns in the area, CRPL and its affiliated foundation had their share of work for a new \$49.6 million downtown library. While their priority was to raise funds for the building, they also set an additional goal to augment their endowment.

The flood presented just one of a number of challenges. Both the library director and foundation director were new to the area; the library was viewed as a city government function receiving tax support; some perceived libraries as irrelevant; and people were wary about the economy.

Amperage Fundraising Advisers identified these issues, among several others, during the library's feasibility study. But the strengths of CRPL and potential support Amperage found during this critical process led to recommendations on how to successfully proceed.

THE SOLUTION

Interviews with 42 prominent community leaders, a focus group with area media and board-of-directors surveys showed that CRPL had strong recognition in the community and that the area knew about the need to replace the flooded building.

The library's mission is one of a passionate advocate for literacy and lifelong learning—providing services ranging from access for those who do not have resources the library provides, to a teen blog, to the more traditional offerings of a library. Springboarding on this mission, along with the library's vision of being more than books, Amperage created the unique theme and logo for CRPL's capital campaign, "Library 3.0," playing off of names of software versions. This theme aptly reflected both the history of the library, having had two buildings prior to this needed third replacement facility, and the future of the library, showing technology advances don't negate libraries, but rather enhance them.

Amperage, CRPL and foundation staff, and campaign volunteers incorporated the theme and logo into all strategies and tools.

This included:

- A compelling campaign DVD, featuring happy children showing library statistics
- An informative and powerful case statement with renderings and testimonials
- A well-attended public campaign kickoff event
- A creative campaign website
- Training for and coaching of staff and volunteers

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THE SUCCESS

The leadership phase of the campaign, under Amperage's management, began strongly with a \$3 million Hall-Perrine Foundation grant and more than \$2 million in pledges within the first five months. From there, major gifts continued, thanks to campaign volunteers diligently meeting with potential donors. The public campaign announcement, promotions in city and library publications, Facebook posts, publicity at farmers markets, presentations to area groups and a three-tiered direct mail campaign helped round out the overall campaign. The successful campaign raised \$7.2 million in a little more than one year from when face-to-face asks began.

One of the many highlights came at the end of the campaign, when the American Library Association selected CRPL Foundation as the recipient of the prestigious Gale Cengage Learning Financial Development Award. The award is presented annually to a library organization for exhibiting meritorious achievement in carrying out a project to secure new funding resources for a public or academic library.

Amperage campaign management also included a variety of events, such as the campaign kickoff and groundbreaking ceremony, and organizing media and event details. The new CRPL opened in August 2013.

Foundation Executive Director Katie Geiken said, "The creativity and know-how that Amperage brought to this historic project helped the library shine in our community, bringing light to what we offer today and inspiring investment in the visionary plans for our new library in downtown Cedar Rapids. It has been a joy to work with such a competent team of professionals."

