When the Murphy Library Endowment Fund was created in 1989, no one knew that it would become such a success. The initial goal was to reach $50,000, the point at which, according to fund bylaws, Murphy Library could begin to spend fund earnings (interest) to purchase items that went beyond what traditional funding could provide.

The first years were exciting ones: Ed Hill and others brainstormed and developed strategies to engage contributors, devised fund-raising ideas, and initiated in-house activities such as the library rummage sale. To everyone’s delight, contributions started coming in—sometimes large and unexpected, sometimes small and recurring, but always greatly appreciated.

By 1995, the fund had reached the $50,000 milestone. This was especially exciting for library staff because now fund earnings could finally be spent. The first item funded by the Murphy Library Endowment Fund was an information kiosk, an elegant and functional venue for distributing information about the library. The kiosk is still a vital and very popular information point within the library—this and later book and equipment purchases are perfect examples of Endowment Fund donors providing products and services that make a significant difference.

In the years that followed, the fund continued to outperform expectations. By 1996, a new goal had been stated: to reach $100,000 by the year 2000. But soon, that goal had to be reevaluated: large donations from people such as Emerson Wulling came in; sales of La Crosse in Light and Shadow, the photographic history of La Crosse by Doug Connell and Ed Hill added regular capital; and continuing contributions from alums and library supporters fueled the fund to greater proportions. By 1997, the $100,000 goal had been replaced (cheerfully!) with the goal of $200,000 by 2001.

As 1999 drew to a close it became official: a major milestone had been reached; the fund had just topped the $200,000 mark—again going beyond everyone’s expectations. Generous giving by contributors and savvy management by the UW-L Foundation helped the fund grow by more than $29,000 in 1999, a year that had its share of market ups and downs. The fund ended the year at $204,931.67.

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Hmong Quilt Ceremony

Thanks to contributions to the Endowment Fund during 1998-99, a colorful, embroidered quilt that depicts the story of Hmong life was created for Murphy Library. A ceremony celebrating the quilt was held in the library on November 3, 1999.

The quilt was commissioned by the library and was created by a group of women artists who are members of the La Crosse Hmong Sewing Project. The artists participated in the ceremony, along with members of the university, the library, and the public.

Each of the 25 sections of the quilt depicts a separate story representing Hmong history and tradition, and was sewed using cloth and embroidery threads imported from Asia specifically for this work. The quilt, which hangs just inside the library entrance, will be a lasting testament to the rich heritage of the people that make up the Coulee Region.

Librarians Learn to Teach

Each year, almost 5,000 people receive formal classroom training by Murphy librarians through the Murphy Library Instruction program. This year, thanks to the Endowment Fund, Murphy Library staff and other library staff in the community were able to spend a day with an expert in libraries and learning, Gail Junion Metz.

Ms. Metz, head of Information Age Consultants in Pennsylvania, has published several books on using internet resources for learning, and is a regular contributor to library and teaching-related magazines and journals. She is active in the library profession, both having had a career as an academic librarian and having a reputation as a highly sought-after speaker, trainer, and consultant at libraries and library conferences throughout the United States.

On May 18, 1999, Ms. Metz spent the day speaking about practical ways to address different learning styles within the context of library instruction. During the morning session, which was open to library employees throughout the Coulee Region, she analyzed instruction techniques and methods in use at Murphy Library and offered suggestions and comments based on her philosophies of learning. During the afternoon session, she met with Murphy librarians and worked on individual techniques to improve teaching and learning.

It was a day well spent, and the Library Instruction program has implemented a number of Ms. Metz’s suggestions with noticeably improved results.

Although these numbers are impressive, it is critical to increase the Endowment base, from which only 5% of the principal can be expended in any one year. For the 2000-2001 fiscal year, the amount available for actual Endowment purchases is $10,200.

The remarkable growth of the Endowment Fund has been and is possible because of the generous support of donors from the La Crosse area and beyond. Their giving signifies a belief that the library is a central part of the teaching and research mission of the university and an important educational and business resource in the community.

The university community has truly benefited from the generous contributions that come from people like you. The entire staff of Murphy Library offers its most sincere thanks.

Your tax-deductible donations to the Fund make a major difference in providing the library with the means to keep up with our users’ information needs as we move toward the 21st Century. The Endowment Fund is a pledge of excellence, shared by donors.

If you have questions about the Fund or wish to make a contribution, please contact Randy Hoelzen, Department Chair (608-785-8398).