



Published  
by the Minnesota  
Historical Society  
for local and county  
historical societies  
and heritage  
preservation  
commissions

# THE MINNESOTA HISTORY Interpreter

August 1999 Vol. XXVII, No. 8

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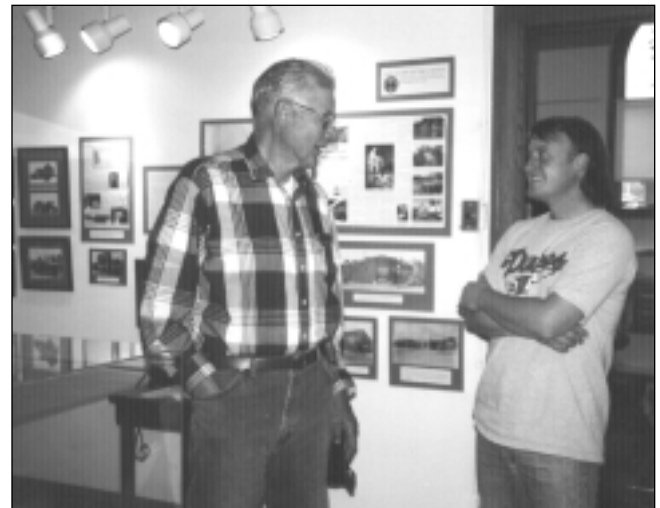
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## History of Co-Ops in Carlton County Explored in New Exhibit

*The Spirit of Cooperatives: The Legacy of Co-ops in Carlton County 1910-1999* opened at the Carlton County Historical Society (CCHS) museum on June 14, and will continue through October. The exhibit is based on research by Kyle Maunu, Cloquet resident and student at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and was assembled by Marlene Wisuri, CCHS director.

While Maunu was an intern at CCHS, he found a stock certificate for the Cloquet Cooperative Society in his grandfather's name, and he knew his family belonged to the Cloquet Co-op Society and that he had shopped there. Motivated to do more research, he found that the co-op movement played a significant part not only in his family history but in the development of the area. At one time, the Cloquet Co-op was one of the largest co-ops in the country, operating two stores in Cloquet, one in Esko and another in Mahtowa. The Cloquet Co-op Credit Union is still in business.

The exhibit testifies to the lively and varied history of the area's co-ops, which included co-ops for consumer goods, fuel, electrical goods and services, financial services, and funerals. The first co-op in the area, the Cloquet Stock Mercantile, was formed in 1910 as a way to pool resources and products. Maunu says this especially appealed to the area residents who had immigrated to Minnesota from Finland. The exhibit includes photographs,



Courtesy Carlton County Historical Society

*Kyle Maunu, right, CCHS student intern from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, discusses county co-ops with Kalvero Kokkonen, whose father, Peter, was a co-op leader and general manager of the Cloquet Co-op Society during the 1920s.*

memorabilia and artifacts; many of them have been loaned expressly for the exhibit, and others have been donated or belong to the CCHS collections

Maunu noted that the cooperatives that are still in business, such as the ones in Cloquet, Cromwell and Wright (which is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year), have broader purposes and do not follow the old model exactly. These cooperatives as well as the early ones are covered in the exhibit.

CCHS director Wisuri said that she and Maunu hope the exhibit will spur continued interest in the history of area co-ops, and that people will add to it by bringing their recollections of co-ops into the museum. Their stories are being collected in a memory book that will be part of the exhibit.

Sources: June Kallestad, *Cloquet Journal*, June 25; David McLaughlin, *Pine Knot*, June 19; and *Carlton County Historical Society News*, Summer 1999.

For more information, contact CCHS, 406 Cloquet Ave., Cloquet, MN 55720; 218/879-1938; e-mail: cchs@cpinternet.com.

## New MAP Deadlines

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) of the American Association of Museums will now accept applications for grants two times each year: Nov. 1 and March 15. Applications will be accepted at both deadlines for all three MAP assessment categories: Institutional, Collections Management or Public Dimension. For further information, contact MAP, 202/289-9118, or by e-mail: map@aam-us.org.



## **Ethnic History and Culture Festivals in August**

### **Chautauqua and French Festival in Red Lake County August 28-29**

The Association of the French of the North (AFRAN) will hold its annual Chautauqua and French Festival at Old Crossing Treaty Park near Red Lake Falls on Saturday and Sunday, August 28-29. Attractions include a humanities program on the history and culture of the Métis in the area with Greg Gagnon, and another with Mathieu Koffi on the connection between area residents and French-speaking Africa.

There will be a voyageurs' encampment all weekend; art and crafts demonstrations; food (two brunches and two cafés); and childrens' activities. In a pre-festival program on Thursday evening, August 26, Alfred Fortier will speak on French-Canadian history and genealogy of the Red River Valley. For further information, contact AFRAN, Box 101, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750, or 218/253-2270.

### **Finn Creek Museum Folk Festival August 28-29**

The Finn Creek Open Air Museum near New York Mills will hold its annual Summer Folk Festival on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 28-29. The program begins at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday with a pancake breakfast and ends at 4 p.m. on Sunday with a fund-raising prize drawing.

Entertainment includes food, several musical groups, readings and presentations, as well as an antiques parade, an antique tractor pull, a horse show, wagon rides and a playground. The fair is sponsored by the Minnesota Finnish-American Historical Society, Chapter 13 in New York Mills.

For further information, call Einar Paavola at 218/385-3693.

## **Winona County Historical Society Opens Renovated Museum & Hosts 24th Annual Victorian Fair in September**



On June 13, WCHS held an open house to celebrate the completed renovation of the Arches Museum. The museum received a new roof, insulation and climate control equipment to protect its pioneer artifacts and Walter Rahn's miniatures. Visitors enjoyed pie, cake and ice cream, and the music of the St. Charles Brass Band. The renovation was funded by contributions to the WCHS Capital Campaign.

The Winona County Historical Society (WCHS) will hold its 24th annual Victorian Fair Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 18-19. The famous 382-foot-long, 422-passenger steamboat Mississippi Queen will be in

port; other attractions on the levee and at the WCHS Armory Museum include Scheer's Lumberjacks, tours of historically significant local buildings, and numerous old-fashioned fair activities such as wagon rides, jugglers, storytelling, crafts booths and food. Admission is by buttons, which cost \$4 in advance, \$6 at the door, and admit wearers to the Saturday evening Victorian revue.

For further information, contact WCHS, 160 Johnson St., Winona, MN 55987; 507/454-2723; e-mail: [wchs@luminet.net](mailto:wchs@luminet.net); or visit the WCHS web site, [www.winonanet.com/orgs/wchs](http://www.winonanet.com/orgs/wchs).

## **Freeborn County Historical Society Director Reflects on Recent Fall**

Bev Jackson, well-known executive director of the Freeborn County Historical Society (FCHS), recently fell, suffering a concussion that caused a memory loss lasting several hours. In her regular column, "History Is..." in the Albert Lea Tribune on Sunday, June 27, Bev wrote of the simple, important lesson she learned: "Every single moment of our lives is valuable." Bev has recovered and has been assured that there will be no lasting effects. She can be contacted at FCHS, 1031 Bridge Ave., Albert Lea, MN 56007; 507/373-8003.



## MHS Research Grants Available for 1999-2000

Each year, the Publications and Research Department of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) makes grants to support original research and writing about the history of Minnesota.

Academicians, independent scholars, and professional and non-professional writers are encouraged to apply. Preference is given to projects that will produce article- or book-length manuscripts to be considered for publication in *Minnesota History*, the MHS quarterly, or by the MHS Press. Projects that add a multicultural dimension to the area's history and that cover subjects not well represented in the published record, such as agriculture, urban history, workers and work, historic preservation, and sports, are especially encouraged.

Application can be made in one of four categories:

1. Mini-grants, up to \$500 for research expenses.
2. Visiting Scholar grants, up to \$1,000 for published scholars whose projects require research in the MHS collections.

3. Article grants, up to \$1,500 for research expenses on an article to be submitted to *Minnesota History*.
4. Major grants, up to \$5,000 for research expenses on a large-scale project such as a book.

**Note:** Grants are not awarded for dissertation or thesis research or for purchase of computers or other equipment.

Deadlines and award-announcement dates: Sept. 1, Nov. 1; Jan. 2, March 1; April 1, June 1. Mini-grant applications may be submitted at any time.

For further information and an application form, write: Deborah L. Miller, MHS Research Supervisor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102; e-mail, [debbie.miller@mnhs.org](mailto:debbie.miller@mnhs.org); or visit the "grants" page in the MHS web site, [www.mnhs.org/about/grants/index.html](http://www.mnhs.org/about/grants/index.html).

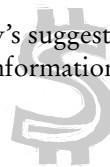


### Innovative Fund-raising Methods: Two Examples from County Historical Societies

#### Mower County: Suggestion for Special Donations by Lifetime Members

The January 1999 issue of *Museum Messenger*, the newsletter of the Mower County Historical Society (MCHS), includes a copy of the letter from Dorothea Guiney in which she had enclosed a \$25 check "in hopes that it will be used to offset record management and mailing expenses associated with non-renewing memberships such as your Life category." Ms. Guiney, who now lives in Minneapolis, went on to say, "As a museum professional I cannot in good faith reap the benefits of a membership without contributing in some small way. I'm sure many of your other Life members would also be happy to contribute towards the expense of their membership if asked."

The *Messenger* editor thought that Ms. Guiney's suggestion was a very good idea, and decided to reprint the letter in the newsletter. We agree. For further information, contact MCHS, P.O. Box 804, Austin, MN 55912; or call 507/437-6082.



#### Nicollet County: A Brick Program

The north patio of the Nicollet County Historical Society's History Center (NCHS) will be paved with bricks (brick-colored concrete pavers) engraved with the names of donors. The brick program will help retire the mortgage debt on the museum at the Treaty Site History Center and be a lasting way to honor individuals, families and corporate donors. The bricks will be available in three sizes to accommodate the donors' messages and donations, from \$125 for members, \$250 for sustaining members and \$500 for patron members.

For further information, write the NCHS, 1851 N. Minnesota Ave., St. Peter, MN 56082; call 507/931-2160, or contact Wayne Allen, executive director, by e-mail: [weal3@mnhs.net](mailto:weal3@mnhs.net).



# Some Basic Considerations about Using Information Technology in Your Work

by Robert Horton  
State Archivist, Minnesota Historical Society

*This article is adapted from a presentation made at the 1999 Minnesota Historical Society Field Workshops.*

Several members of Minnesota's historical organizations have inquired about guidelines and models for the use of information technology—particularly in cataloging the material that enters their collections and documenting their work.

This isn't surprising. Historical societies, like all other businesses, are looking to computers to help with their work and particularly to aid the cataloging function of their business. In my work I am asked now and then to read applications to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) for grants. In many of them, I find that cataloging is related to information technology in fairly basic terms—buy a computer, hire someone to do data entry, put the results up on the World Wide Web.

That may sound pretty straightforward, but it really covers a lot of ground; the concepts of cataloging and documentation can include all the functions of a historical organization, such as:

- initial contact with potential donors;
- recording information about the material acquired;
- documenting rights and restrictions in the use of that material; and
- providing information to the public about that material.

All of these functions raise questions about the value of information technology. In this brief article, I would like to introduce some of those questions, some possible answers, and some of the information you need to make the appropriate decisions for your situation and organization.

I say “appropriate” because all organizations are different—each has different resources, different areas of expertise, different needs. What works for one organization might not work for another. But we all need to know what our options are and the consequences of those choices.

### *Making things easier?*

In local and county historical societies, usually one or two staff members, sometimes with the help of volunteers, do almost everything—and each does a little bit of everything. In these circumstances, it is natural to look for help and to hope that information

technology will make the work easier. But the truth is that if it's hard with paper, it will not get any easier with a computer. Computers don't make things easier. They make things possible, which is a very different thing.

A good example of this can be found in the kitchen. If you have a Cuisinart, you probably have felt the burden of cleaning it. It can be quite a demanding operation just to turn the thing on. But you can do things with a Cuisinart you never dreamed of doing before, and you even can do things you have no good reason to do. But remember: It's a complex piece of machinery and its use engenders a whole new set of responsibilities. It doesn't really make your life any easier. It just makes certain things possible.

### *Thinking ahead.*

It's up to you to decide if you really want to do those things and so assume the responsibilities and the burdens they carry. It is the same with computers. If you want to use them in cataloging effectively, you should first put some thought into the process so that you know the consequences of your decision.

Here are the basic steps to take before investing in technology:

1. Define what you want to do.
2. Calculate your resources.
3. Find partners.
4. Think of standards.
5. Decide what you need to change.
6. Then, do what you want to do.

Let's briefly consider each of these steps.

#### *1. Define what you want to do.*

This means defining your goals as precisely as possible. These may include:

- Improving the internal handling of material—create better documentation of donors and their donations, or determine what's been sent where for conservation work.
- Improving public access—you have these collections, you want people to use them, and you think you should provide information about them over the Internet.





## Using Information Technology

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- Improving the accuracy of your cataloging—you have six people describing your collections, but none uses the same descriptive terms, format or style. You need to establish some consistency and meet some standards.
- Improving the documentation of your accessioning—you have numerous photos, but you only have rights to some uses, and not to others. You need to address copyright issues more effectively.
- Collecting government records. Suppose you've just read about the various laws that govern the use of government records, and you want to make sure you're not allowing access to private data. You don't want to be sued.

The common point in these examples is that, while they all can be described under the rubric of "cataloging" or "documentation," they all raise different questions and can lead to different answers.

Not all available software packages and information technology options will do most of these things. If you're looking for a software application, you have to decide first what your critical functions are. Ask yourself, "What do I really need to do?" Decide this up front, before you make any other decisions about procedures or information technology. This decision will dictate what's practical for you.

These include planning, training, installing the new system, making the changeover to the new system and migrating older legacy data from other applications and systems. There also are continuing costs to be considered. The technology—your hardware and software—will change rapidly, and you will need to change with it in order to support your operations and meet your patrons' expectations.

There is a final element to consider here as well. While it may often be possible to attract grant support to start a project, it is normally difficult to get grant money to support ongoing costs and routine system maintenance. This is usually an expense that you will have to meet from your operating budget, and that means that your purchases of technology will have "tails"—costs you haven't envisioned. Which must be taken into account.

### 3. Find partners.

This is the best advice I can give anyone. Information technology, even on a pretty basic level, is so complicated, and it changes so rapidly, that no one person or organization can know everything. Basically, it is not cost-effective to try to do everything ourselves.

The value of finding partners also applies to learning about routine professional practices. These are the functions you want to automate, which can involve archival, museum or library operations. Learn all you can about your options before investing in technology and use all the available local, regional and national professional organizations as resources. For example, they can provide you with information about how to write catalog records or finding aids, and how to do it according to professional standards and practices. This is a good foundation for technology planning.

The possible list of partners also includes schools, libraries and government offices. They all use the Internet and can help you get information out to your audiences. Make deals with them for the exchange of services and products or for collaborative investments. They might have the technology, but you have information, and that is what makes the technology worthwhile. If you can supply information, then you have something to offer.

But as you plan to exchange data for services, here's something to keep in mind: Data sharing only works when everybody speaks the same language. This leads to the next point, standards.

## Keeping Records: A Large View

Every time we help agencies of government, at all levels, keep better records; every time we provide ready access to records that are useful and beneficial to people; every time we come up with records to help people document their identities and verify their entitlement to rights and benefits as citizens, we are contributing to the health of democracy itself. Every time our records enable people to analyze the actions of their government and hold their officials responsible; every time we help people figure out what really happened in our history and assess the meaning of it—I repeat, every time we do those things, we are contributing to the health of democracy itself!

*From an address by George Carlin,  
Archivist of the United States, July 9, 1998.*

### 2. Calculate your resources.

Determine what is feasible relative to the resources you have. This is especially important because there are some considerations over and above the basic question "how much will the computer cost?" You need to consider a variety of other costs, all of which demand some resources and attention.



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#### 4. Standards.

You have to follow some rules in order to communicate. When we write we use standard grammar, standard spelling and a common vocabulary. Anybody trained according to the same rules can read what you've created. The same is true for information technology. For computers to share information, they have to follow certain rules, to accept certain standards.

There are many different standards. There are also variations on every standard. You can follow or not follow these as you see fit; you can even make up your own. The point to remember is that, without standards, you cannot share information effectively, use the Internet, find collaborators, or, in most cases, attract grant support.

Most library and museum professions have established standards for describing the materials and records they collect. The bibliographic community, for example, relies on the MARC format (Machine Readable Cataloging), which is used to describe both books and archival material. There are other kinds of descriptive standards. Many web site designers are using the Dublin Core as a model for web page metadata. There are also standards for storage media and data formats, for everything from image files to text encoding.

Identifying and complying with standards will also help you preserve your records over the long term. Remember that the information technology industry is volatile; it creates, upgrades, replaces and

abandons media and formats very rapidly. Data can become obsolete unexpectedly—which should give you pause—and one form of protection is the use of industry standards. These are the standards most likely to be supported over the long term.

#### 5. Understand what you need to change— maybe it's you.

At this point, you may think that it's not worth it; you could be saying to yourself, "I don't want to automate. It's too much trouble." But keep in mind that what has been discussed so far is just the tip of the iceberg. Once you have selected the most appropriate application for your needs and determined the software and hardware to run it, you still face the challenge of implementation. Sometimes the most cost-effective way to implement information technology is to change your procedures. You are more adaptable than most software packages.

But while these things are easy to say, they carry an enormous potential for friction and irritation. Not everyone wants to change, and hardly anyone actually enjoys it. To an extent, the adoption of even a very user-friendly package like PastPerfect (see sidebar) is going to be an adventure. Established procedures, no matter how unsatisfactory, are familiar and just that much more comforting than the brave new world of information technology. The human side of the equation is always more challenging than the technological.

#### 6. Do what you want to do, but...

Maintain a balance between doing things right and doing things right now.

### Conclusion

While each of the six basic steps noted here is important to keep in mind, the first is the most critical: Define what you want to do. It is at this stage where you determine your priorities and where you start sorting out your options. It is at this stage where you have the latitude to make mistakes and the most opportunities to correct them. Once you have selected a software application and certainly once you have implemented one, your options narrow dramatically. It is far simpler and cheaper to correct a plan than to rebuild an information system.

Again, the best overall piece of advice I can offer is get help and find partners. The key to success in any endeavor involving information technology will be collaboration. As the Internet has demonstrated, the greatest potential for information technology lies in its collaborative networks. You do not want to re-invent the wheel; you do not need to.

### PastPerfect

PastPerfect Museum Software, according to a software survey by MDA, an English consulting firm, "is an affordable, comprehensive collection- and membership-management program that handles objects, photographs, archives and library materials. PastPerfect provides full automation of accessions, loans, donor records and membership."

The program works in the Windows environment and requires at the minimum: Pentium 75 MH z processor, 16 Mb RAM, 30Mb harddrive, color monitor, and a CD ROM drive.

Contact: AltaMira Press, c/o Scolaris Sage Publications Software, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; phone 805/499-1325; fax 805/499-0871; e-mail info@scolaris.com. Web site: www.museumsoftware.com.



## County Historical Society Staff News

### Washington County Historical Society Seeks Museum Manager

The Washington County Historical Society (WCHS) is searching for a person to serve as part-time manager of the Warden's House Museum in Stillwater. The manager cares for the collections, trains and supervises volunteers, handles publicity and develops local history programs. Strong organizational and communication skills are needed; museum experience

is desirable but not required. The salary is negotiable. Fewer hours are required during the winter months.

For more information call Nancy Jensen, chair, WCHS Search Committee, at 651/769-0279, or write to her at WCHS, PO Box 167, Stillwater, MN 55082-0167.

### Goodhue County Historical Society Seeks New Executive Director

The Goodhue County Historical Society in Red Wing seeks a knowledgeable, skilled, self-starting individual to lead a staff of six at a new state-of-the-art county museum. The new director must excel in organization, leadership and management. Skills in strategic planning, fund-raising, interpretation, and team-building are desirable. Annual budget: approximately \$300,000; salary, plus benefits, is competitive.

Send resume as soon as possible to: Search Committee, c/o Grace Nelson, 1166 Oak St., Red Wing, MN 55066.



Courtesy Washington County Historical Society

The Warden's House Museum (above) is headquarters for the Washington County Historical Society and a museum of pioneer and lumberjack life of the late 1800s. It was built in 1853, is one of the oldest residences in the state, and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

## 15 Minnesotans Receive National History Day Honors

Fifteen Minnesota students received National History Day awards at a ceremony at the University of Maryland/College Park on June 17. They are:

### JUNIOR DIVISION

- Second place**, individual exhibit: *Hannah Moos*, Washington Technology Magnet, St. Paul.
- Fifth place**, group exhibit: *John Kinzer and Daniel Ott*, Anthony Jr. H.S., Minneapolis.
- Sixth place**, research paper: *Mark Thomson*, Breck School, Minneapolis.
- Seventh place**, individual media: *Laura Zeccardi*, Chatfield H.S. (also chosen for an Outstanding Junior State Award).
- Ninth place**, group performance: *Amy Gustason, Adam Bluhm, Melody Fiscus, Rose Fricke and Gloria Carlson*, Christ's Household of Faith School, St. Paul.

- 12th Place**, individual performance: *Drago Flores*, Cedar Creek Community School, St. Francis.

### SENIOR DIVISION

- Fifth place**, individual exhibit: *Karen Hibbard-Rode*, South H.S., Minneapolis (also chosen for an Outstanding Senior State Award).
- Seventh place**, individual performance: *Adella Alsbury*, Christ's Household of Faith School, St. Paul.
- 10th place**, research paper: *Joel Wertheim*, Hopkins H.S.

The senior group exhibit, "Making the Body Whole: Prosthetic Technology in America," which won first place in its category at the state level and was a national finalist, will be displayed at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, D.C., through October. It is the work of Hilary Lundquist and Caitlin Reid from South H.S. in Minneapolis.

On June 18, State History Day coordinator Tim Hoogland and two winners, Hannah Moos and Adella Alsbury, appeared on KTCA-TV's "Almanac." On June 26 the History Channel aired a documentary titled "Generation H: National History Day." Hoogland and several Minnesota students were featured in the program.

For more information contact Tim Hoogland, 651/297-2081 or check the History Day page on the Society's web site, [www.mnhs.org/school/historyday](http://www.mnhs.org/school/historyday).



## 59th AASLH Annual Meeting



“Caring for Our Treasures at the Millennium” is the theme of this year’s meeting of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), co-sponsored with the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums. The meeting will be held at the Omni Inner Harbor Hotel in Baltimore, Sept. 29 through Oct. 2. Speakers include Ben Bradlee, former *Washington Post* editor, and Robert G. Stanton, director of the National Park Service.

For information about program details and registration fee options, visit the AASLH web site, [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org); call at 615/320-3203; fax 615/327-9013; or e-mail [history@aaslh.org](mailto:history@aaslh.org).

## Northern States Conservation Center Now in New Location

The Northern States Conservation Center has moved into its new laboratory facilities at 2010 E. Hennepin Ave., Bldg. 12, Minneapolis, MN 55413. Its mailing address is P.O. Box 8081, St. Paul, MN 55108; phone, 612/378-9379; e-mail, [altenhuber@wavetech.net](mailto:altenhuber@wavetech.net); web site, [www.collectioncare.org](http://www.collectioncare.org).

## Renovation Underway on Book and Literary Arts Building

In April 2000, the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, The Loft Literary Center and Milkweed Editions are scheduled to move into a new home at 1011 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis. The building will bear the name Open Book and will operate as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization with its own board of directors. Its legal name is Minnesota Book and Literary Arts Building, Inc. Renovations officially began at a “namebreaking” rededication ceremony on May 25.

The Minnesota Center for Book Arts provides services for masters and novices in letterpress printing, hand book binding and papermaking. The Loft, an independent literary center, offers classes and programs for writers, and Milkweed Editions is one of the largest non-profit literary small presses in the country.

For information during the renovation period, call 612/349-2720, or e-mail: [OpenBookMN@aol.com](mailto:OpenBookMN@aol.com). A web site is currently under construction and will be launched sometime this summer.

The Minnesota History **Interpreter** is published by the Historic Preservation, Field Services and Grants Department of the Minnesota Historical Society, and distributed to Minnesota’s county and local historical societies and heritage preservation commissions.

Readers are invited to submit information for publication. To be considered, items must reach the editor by the 18th of the month, two months before publication (example: the deadline for the October issue is August 18). Send to: **Interpreter** Editor, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; (651) 296-8196 or [jim.smith@mnhs.org](mailto:jim.smith@mnhs.org).

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