



MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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**Milwaukee Public Library Encourages You to
“Get Your Geek On”**

*MPL takes part in “Geek the Library” campaign to raise awareness
on the importance of library funding support*

MILWAUKEE, WI – September 25, 2009 – Milwaukeeans may soon add a new verb to their vocabulary—geek.

Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) is participating in “Geek the Library”, a pilot, community-based public awareness campaign. Funded by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the campaign highlights what people are passionate about—or what they “geek”—and how libraries can and do support them.

‘Geek the Library’ features local advertising that introduces “geek” as a verb, and encourages the public to talk about what they “geek”—whether it’s engineering, vampires, art, etc. The campaign heightens awareness about the critical funding issues public libraries face and provides information on how people can get active and support MPL.

The website is www.geekthelibrary.org.

“This campaign is designed to provoke conversation about the vital role that public libraries and librarians play in today’s challenging environment,” said Cathy De Rosa, global vice president of marketing for OCLC, a nonprofit library cooperative heading campaign development and implementation. “We hope it will spark important community discussions about how public libraries can remain strong.”

“The Milwaukee Public Library is pleased and very excited to be chosen for the ‘Geek the Library’ campaign,” said Library Director Paula Kiely. “Milwaukeeans are passionate about many things, including their libraries. We at MPL are looking forward to helping everyone ‘get their geek on’ while informing them on how they can support MPL in a personal way.”

Most people visiting MPL understand its important role in the Milwaukee community for educational opportunities, job-search and business resources, and for entertainment. MPL circulation and customer numbers are up for 2009, with August alone showing an 11.28% and 6.5% increase, respectively, compared to August 2008 figures. But many residents do not know that libraries are at risk, especially during tough economic times. In Wisconsin, the majority of library funding comes from local tax dollars. This campaign will help educate library users and supporters learn how to make sure MPL not just survives, but thrives.

OCLC is piloting the public awareness campaign with a small number of libraries and library systems in Milwaukee as well as in Georgia and central Iowa, Shelbyville, IN and Zion, IL. Campaign efforts launched in summer 2009 and will run through early 2010. Upon completion, OCLC will make the campaign materials and other guides, along with information from the pilot campaigns, available to library leaders throughout the country to assist them in their efforts to strengthen local support for libraries. The campaign does not support nor oppose any candidate for public office, nor attempt to influence legislation.

About OCLC

Founded in 1967 and headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, OCLC is a nonprofit library service and research organization that has provided computer-based cataloging, reference, resource sharing, eContent, preservation, library management and Web services to 71,000 libraries in 112 countries and territories. OCLC and its member libraries worldwide have created and maintain WorldCat, the world's richest online resource for finding library materials. Search WorldCat.org on the Web at www.worldcat.org. For more information, visit www.oclc.org.

About Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates, Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. Learn more at www.gatesfoundation.org

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation began investing in computer and Internet services in U.S. public libraries in 1997. To date, it has provided \$350 million in grants and other support to install and sustain computers in libraries and train thousands of library staff in nearly 13,000 libraries in all 50 states and U.S. territories. In recent years, the foundation has also supported advocacy training and awareness efforts that will help libraries sustain high-quality online access for patrons in partnership with their communities.

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For more information, please contact Sandy Rusch Walton (MPL) at slrusch@milwaukee.gov or 414.286.3032. For additional information on the sponsoring organizations, please click on the links above.

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