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ORGANIZATION

Loft Literary Center

POSITION

Executive Director

BRIEF

Ballinger Leafblad is pleased to conduct the search for Executive Director at the Loft in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Loft Literary Center is one of the nation's leading nonprofit literary centers. With a focus on encouraging and supporting writing, and connecting writers with readers, the Loft promotes the written word and storytelling as vital to civic life.

The Loft offers more than 300 creative classes each year for youth and adults at its home at Open Book, in community settings, and on-line, serving thousands of writers and readers annually. In addition, the Loft presents dozens of gatherings and happenings each year, awards fellowship grants and mentorships to writers, maintains a small resource library, offers writing studios and a book club meeting room, and provides a wealth of online resources about the value and craft of writing and the writing experience. The Loft's annual festival Wordplay, and conference Wordsmith, are recognized for their scope, innovation, and excellence.

The Loft's annual (non-pandemic) operating budget is \$2.7 million with 37% of its revenue coming from earned income, 5% from its 3.8 million endowment, and the remainder from contributions. The Loft has enjoyed balanced budgets in all of but two of its 45 years. The organization accomplishes its work with a staff of 17 employees, 250+ contract artists and teaching artists, and 15 board members. The Loft shares a permanent arts center facility called Open Book with the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and nonprofit publisher Milkweed Editions. Open Book is an independent nonprofit run jointly by these organizations.

Minnesota has one of the most celebrated communities of word-lovers in the country due to its wealth of people engaged in writing, number and quality of its independent presses, thriving library systems, and locally owned bookstores.

15,000

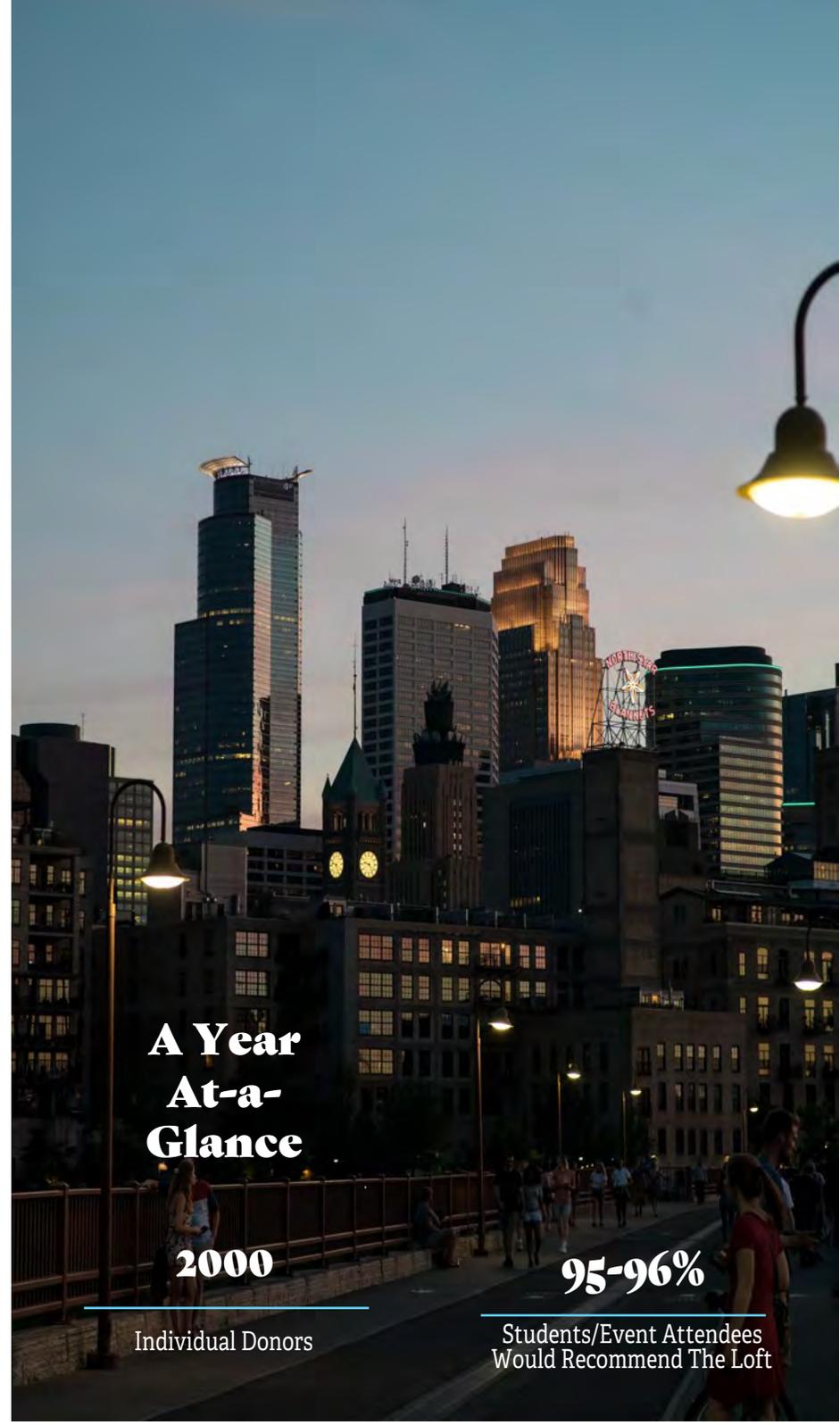
Audience & Participants

\$600,000

Paid to Artists

300+

Artists and Teaching Artists



A Year At-a- Glance

2000

Individual Donors

95-96%

Students/Event Attendees
Would Recommend The Loft

HISTORY

Founded in 1974, the Loft is a haven for reading and writing, one of the largest centers of its kind in the country. Incorporated on August 22, 1975, the organization began when a group of writers gathered to share work and learn from each other in the upstairs loft of Marly Rusoff's bookstore. Over the years, the Loft grew into a presenting organization, an artist service organization, a community school for the arts, and a gathering place.

In 1999, the Loft, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and Milkweed Editions, joined together to renovate and connect three 1880's vintage warehouses located on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis. This \$5.5 million capital campaign resulted in their permanent home known as Open Book.

OPEN BOOK

Open Book is a cultural and artistic center dedicated to the book. It is the first in the nation to serve as a gathering place that celebrates the book community. It is a meeting place or quiet sanctuary and a destination for all who are interested in or inspired by the literary and book arts. In addition to housing the Loft, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and Milkweed Editions, it includes for-profit businesses including a coffee shop, a software consulting firm and a massage studio. The Open Book building features performance and meeting spaces suitable for receptions, meetings, and book clubs.



Open Book's Mission:

- To inspire and welcome a vibrant book community.
- To be a catalyst for artistic collaboration.
- To engage the community in activities and programs for all interested in book art and the written and spoken word.
- To provide a sustainable home for literary and book arts organizations.

Every third year (2023, 2026, 2029), the Loft Executive Director will provide leadership as Open Book's Acting Director. Other years are rotated between chairing finance and external relations committees.

Read the story of Open Book:

<https://www.openbookmn.org/documents/OBMonograph.pdf>

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The award-winning Loft is renowned, not only for the quality of its programming and its service to the community, but as a great place to work. Loft staff members enjoy a flexible schedule, four-day work week, generous vacation and holiday time off, health insurance and other benefits, and the company of dedicated and creative colleagues.

The organization is staffed by a combination of long-time and new team members with an orientation to bringing fresh approaches to further the mission.

Staff members reflect with pride on how the organization pivoted successfully to a virtual environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. All are committed to ongoing, critical work to be not just inclusive and equitable, but to become actively anti-racist within the scope of the Loft's programming and organizational practices.

In offerings, outreach, practice, and its collegial environment the staff aspires to make the Loft:

- *Playful*
- *Challenging*
- *Genuine*
- *Equitable*
- *Innovative*

VALUES

This work is essential. We believe that story, verse, and writing aren't just nice things to put on a shelf, but are core to a full existence. At their best, words help us connect, entertain, mourn, provoke, educate, and empathize.

We accomplish our work by bringing essential conversations, artists, readers, and learning opportunities together under one roof, including classes, conferences, festivals, events, grants and awards, one-on-one services for writers, residencies, and community engagement.

MISSION

The Loft advances the artistic development of writers, fosters a thriving literary community, and inspires a passion for literature.

EDUCATION

Classes



The Loft offers hundreds of adult on-line and in-person classes in standard genres like poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction, as well as offerings in creative process, children's literature, young adult literature, playwriting, screenwriting, the business of writing, graphic

storytelling, blogging, mystery, romance, video game narrative, and horror. Adult students range from 18 to 90, with a equal numbers participating simply to exercise their creativity and to seriously pursue publication. Experience levels range from brand new writers to authors with several published books who participate for the ongoing community and accountability.

In 2016, in collaboration with one of the community's most celebrated writers and teaching artists, David Mura, the Loft launched a series of classes taught by writers of color, for writers of color. The classes are designed to both address some of the barriers to participating in regular Loft classes and to provide a comfortable community in which writers of color can share their work and lived-experience.

In addition to classes for adults, the Loft offers a light schedule of primarily afterschool classes for youth during the school year and a robust program for young writers during the summer.



Year-long Writing Projects

The Loft's Novel Writing Project, Creative Nonfiction/Memoir Writing Project, and the new Poetry Apprenticeship are year-long, cohort-based intensive programs designed to help writers complete a book through instruction, workshopping, critique, personal mentorship from the published author leading the cohort, visits from authors, editors and publishers, and a culminating public reading .

SERVICES

One-on-One Coaching

The Loft offers all levels of personalized services to help individuals reach their goals. Individuals have a video conversation with an expert in order to answer a specific question related to writing and writing careers.

Manuscript Critique Service

This service is more intensive and is designed to match an individual with a writer/editor to get feedback on their work and take the next steps to get a manuscript ready for publication.

Bring the Loft to You Community Programs

The Loft works with schools, libraries, workplaces, and service organizations and will tailor a creative writing program to a specific group.

Studios & Book Club Room

Renters describe the Loft's studios as "magic"-- many books have been written within their quiet sanctuary. The book club room provides a comfortable, welcoming space for both book clubs and writing groups to gather.

EVENTS

Each year, the Loft presents two major annual gatherings – Wordplay festival and Wordsmith conference -- as well as an array of more intimate events throughout the year.

WORDPLAY

Wordplay is a festival for readers of all kinds to come together, connect, and celebrate the year in books. The Loft's Wordplay launched in May 2019 as Minnesota's largest celebration of readers,



writers, and great books. Attendance surpassed 10,000 for the inaugural festival weekend, joining authors such as Stephen King, Edwidge Danticat, and Amy Tan in a celebration of books. The event included readings, conversations, writing workshops, kids' activities, and one-of-a-kind happenings with outdoor stages, book signings, quiet reading corners, boisterous parties, food trucks, beer tents, and books, books, books.



Wordplay has something for every reader. Wordplay's mission is to celebrate the ways in which people connect to and through words and welcomes anyone who shares a belief in the connective power of story.

With the need to go virtual in 2020, the Loft was able to successfully pivot the event to entirely online in a matter of weeks, generating 75,000+ views of 53 virtual Wordplay events. Wordplay 2021 also took place online with programming for youth in the morning, international writers over the lunch hour, and three ways of looking at a topic with a poet, a fiction writer, and a non-fiction writer in conversation.



WORDSMITH

Wordsmith is the Loft's craft, career, and connection conference for writers of all levels. The event provides help to those preparing to publish their work and an opportunity for writers to pitch their work to agents.

The next conference will be presented October 1-4, 2021 and will be called "Wordsmith Deconstructed" with programming offered a la carte due to the fact that it will be virtual. In addition to craft talks and panels, the event will have 14 agents and two editors available for virtual one-on-one consultations.



OTHER EVENTS AND SERIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The Loft typically hosts dozens of events in the Open Book performance hall each year. The Big Ideas series uses books to generate thoughtful discussion on topical issues. With Equilibrium Spoken Word (EQ) the Loft

showcases nationally acclaimed spoken word artists of color paired with local emerging spoken word artists. Two themes per year drive curation of additional author events and readings and there are always opportunities to partner with other essential literary organizations including our local presses Coffee House, Milkweed Editions, and Graywolf Press.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

The Loft has a long legacy of supporting promising Minnesota emerging and mid-career writers with grants and experiences to advance their work.

McKnight Artist Fellowship



Five \$25,000 awards annually are given in recognition of excellence to accomplished Minnesota writers. Four fellowships are awarded each year, alternating between creative prose and poetry/spoken word. Similarly, one award annually is given to a children's/young adult author alternating between middle grade and young adult. The fellowships are judged by prominent American authors and editors who also visit the Loft, meet the winners and honorable mentions, and make a public presentation or give a craft talk.

Mentor Series

The Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose selects twelve emerging Minnesota writers out of hundreds of applicants



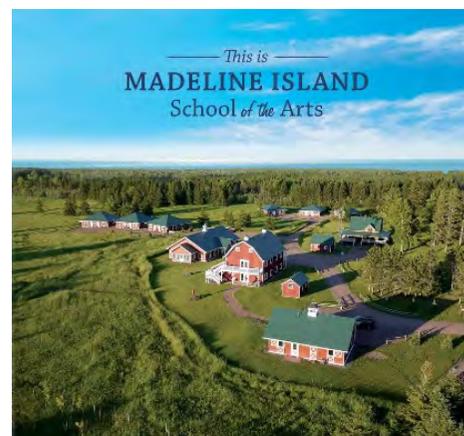
for the opportunity to work intensively with six national acclaimed writers of prose and poetry for one year. Since 1979, the Mentor Series has both validated and encouraged emerging writers who meet monthly as a cohort, receive genre-specific coaching as well as cross genre workshops and craft lectures, individual consultation, and share the stage with the mentors for a reading

Mirrors and Windows

The Loft created the Mirrors and Windows mentorship program to address the disparities in representation of diverse perspectives and authors in books for young readers. Through this program, launched in 2018-2019, ten to twelve early career/emerging Minnesota writers of color/indigenous writers will take part in a six-month mentorship and instructional program with a diverse and qualified group of professionals and established artists.

The Loft's Mirrors and Windows mentorship program is engaging the selected fellows in monthly workshops, along with manuscript consultation and access to other services and support.

Excellence in Teaching Fellowships



The Loft Literary Center and the Madeline Island School for the Arts (MISA) have partnered to award two fellowships for a one-week stay at MISA to work on a writing project of the artists' choice.

POSITION PROFILE

Executive Director

The Executive Director at the Loft is an exciting role at one of the country's most treasured literary centers. The Executive Director reports to the Loft's board chair and serves as the organizational leader. The Executive Director is responsible for providing the vision, strategic planning, and management oversight to effectively carry out the Loft's mission. The Executive Director represents the Loft's interests to its diverse constituencies including the media, the literary community, educators, the cultural and philanthropic communities in Minnesota and nationally.

The Executive Director sets the Loft's overall programmatic direction and ensures the appropriate organizational structures to accomplish the annual goals. The position also oversees administration of the Loft's programs and activities, and the management of the staff. The Executive Director is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the board and of the Executive Committee, and is responsible for ensuring outstanding governance practices and sound board management and recruiting.

Position Vision

The Executive Director is a passionate advocate of the literary arts who is able to articulate a compelling strategic vision for the organization and to lead staff, board, and volunteers to turn that vision into a reality. This leader joins the Loft board and staff in their quest to be an anti-racist organization that upholds and uplifts the voices of all communities and uses the resources of The Loft to better all communities. The Executive Director must be able to make critical decisions, take risks, and meet challenges. This individual must be a creative leader with excellent board, staff, and project management skills and be an effective communicator sharing the Loft's mission, values, and strategic plans to the public and media in a variety of settings. The Executive Director will cultivate working relationships with media, grantors, foundations, corporations, and individuals to expand outreach to and promotion of the literary arts locally and nationally. The Executive Director is ultimately responsible for the financial stability, smooth operation, and programmatic success of the organization.

Essential Responsibilities

Organizational Leadership

- Lead an organizational culture that is passionate about the power of words and committed to anti-racism. Recruit, motivate, and retain a talented staff to creatively carry out the organization's work.
- Directly supervise, coach and collaborate with the Loft's leadership team. Assist them in creating a collaborative environment that promotes initiative, fun/balance and creates individual growth opportunities.
- Constantly review all Loft programs and activities to ensure impact, quality, mission alignment, and good use of Loft's resources.
- Be a positive champion of change, providing guidance, direction and oversight as the organization continues to serve new communities and their needs.

POSITION PROFILE

Executive Director

Strategic Planning

- Create and communicate a clear strategy for achieving/expanding mission to staff, board, and stakeholders.
- Develop and implement long- and short-term strategies and goals, and galvanize the organization to assure that it fulfills its mission, including its commitment to anti-racism work, remains true to its core values, and uses resources effectively.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impact of Loft programs and initiatives and make improvements or changes as necessary.

Community Advocacy and Public Relations

- Serve as the lead external spokesperson for the organization to constituents and stakeholders including: funders, students, teaching artists, and the literary field.
- Facilitate effective relationships with all external stakeholders including visitors, members, community partners, the press, funders, and politicians.
- Build collaborative strategic alliances to further advance the Loft's mission.
- Promote the Loft's mission and leadership role in the field while fostering a collegial atmosphere among partner organizations.

Board Relations:

- Engage the board of directors in shaping the vision for the Loft's future, actively soliciting their input on key issues in a timely manner, and formulating recommendations for consideration by the Board and its committees .
- Communicate, inform, discuss, and guide the board in affairs of the Loft and in issues that require policy decisions, evaluations, and direction for new policies, procedures, or programs to improve the overall operations and programs.
- Work with the board to identify and recruit potential board members to diversify and expand the outreach of the Loft.
- Structure participatory board meetings and encourage active involvement of all board members.

Fiscal Responsibility

- Develop appropriate annual and long-term financial objectives; lead the Loft in consistently achieving these objectives, including a balanced operating budget.
- Manage the budget to strategically grow earned and contributed revenue for the organization and implement growth plans.
- Steward and help grow the Loft's endowment.

Fundraising

- Set and reach fundraising goals per an annual fundraising plan with regular assessments.
- Personally nurture and sustain close, productive relationships and collaborations with key donors, colleagues, and supporters of the Loft who are in a position to advance the mission.
- Lead fundraising for special campaigns, annual gifts, sponsorships, government grants, and other strategies.

POSITION PROFILE

Executive Director

Open Book

Serve as the primary liaison between the Loft and the collaboratively run building, Open Book (independent nonprofit). Every third year (2023, 2026, 2029), provide leadership as Open Book's Acting Director. Other years rotate between chairing finance and external relations committees. Serve on Open Book's board of directors.

Management Responsibilities

The Executive Director reports to the Board Chair with significant involvement with all board members. Roles reporting directly to the Executive Director include the managing or associate director, marketing and communications director, development director and three artistic program directors (education, awards/events and festival/conference.) A total of 15 dedicated full-time and two part-time staff work at the Loft, supported by five paid interns, and over 250 outstanding volunteers each year.

Required Qualifications

- Related experience with a track record of success, especially in anti-racist work and engaging marginalized communities.
- A track record of being an inspiring and service-oriented leader who has long-term vision and can effect change; capable of imparting credibility, trust, integrity, enthusiasm, and the ability to motivate others.
- Strategic planning and programmatic planning and implementation experience.
- Meaningful experience in fundraising, sales, or related activities, with an ability to raise money from individuals.

Desired Leadership Style and Characteristics

- Commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Deep love and appreciation for words, books, stories and the importance of reading
- Collaborative interpersonal skills with the ability to create a supportive community
- Solid skills and track record of positively managing people, projects, and budgets
- Ability to multitask, and work calmly under pressure; detail oriented
- Diplomatic, kind, and patient; able to make and communicate hard decisions
- Sense of humor
- Excellent writing and communication skills
- Ability to work with diverse communities and varied personalities
- Creative, innovative, bold thinker

Compensation and Benefits

The compensation range includes a \$120,000 annual salary and participation in the organization's comprehensive benefits plan.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

The Twin Cities metro area includes Minneapolis, Saint Paul and the surrounding suburban area. Making up the 14th largest metropolitan area in the country, it is a unique blend of a small town and major cosmopolitan hub. Both urban cores boast a thriving business atmosphere. Saint Paul, as the state capital, is home to state government and has a more historical vibe. Minneapolis is the larger and more commercial of the two cities.



Separated by the Mississippi River, both cities share a common root of being river towns - and the great outdoors are still a major attraction for residents and visitors alike. There are over 100,000 acres of parks, walking and bike paths, and other outdoor spaces.

Outside of the central downtowns, however, both cities have many distinct neighborhoods, and residents identify more with their individual communities than with the larger city as a whole. The area has a diverse range of neighborhoods and homes, with an atmosphere of a small town feeling with the conveniences and cultural hallmarks of a big city.

3.6m

Population in the
Greater MSP region

1,750+

Regional Lakes

300

Parks

1,000

Miles of dedicated on
& off-road bikeways

60+

Museums in the
metro area.

The Twin Cities offer something for everyone, from six professional sports teams to a robust arts scene. There is a thriving “foodie” culture offering award-winning restaurants (several chefs have been regional James Beard Award winners). Shopping is plentiful with area malls and unique shopping districts in both cities and in the suburbs.



There are over 30 theater venues (the Twin Cities boasts more theaters per capita than any other US city), 10 dance companies, and 30 classical music groups in the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul alone. Arts organizations like Penumbra Theatre, Forecast Public Art, Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association, and The Minneapolis American Indian Center showcase a range of artistic expression. For the museum-goer, there are over 60 museums in the Twin Cities.

Cultural celebrations abound, including Cinco de Mayo, Dragon Festival, Selby Jazz Fest, Little Mekong Night Market. And, nearly every weekend there are several outdoor events for participants and spectators, displaying the uniqueness of each season.

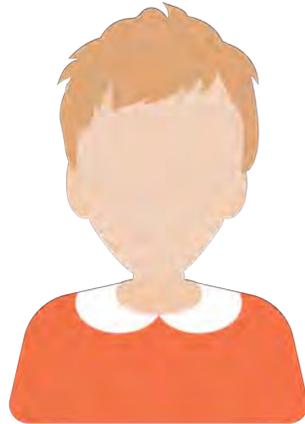


RESOURCES

[Greater MSP Partnership](#)
[MeetMinneapolis](#)
[Saint Paul Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
[Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Saint Paul](#)
[Minneapolis Park & Recreation](#)
[MakeIt MSP](#)
[HomesMSP](#)

WE INVITE YOU TO GET IN TOUCH.



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