

MinnPost.com

2009 Year End Report

Remarkable results in a tough environment

2009 was a very tough year to be a news publisher, a nonprofit organization or a startup enterprise. MinnPost was all three. Given that backdrop, we had a remarkable year.

Revenue from advertising and sponsorship grew 35% compared with 2008, our first full year of operation. Revenue from members and our annual benefit event, MinnRoast, rose 29%. Our total donor list grew 44%. Traffic to the site grew more than 60%.

One year ago, I wrote in our 2008 Year End Report: “We have not yet proven that a nonprofit model for high-quality online regional journalism will work long-term.” Today, with another year under our belts, I’d say: If we keep making the kind of progress we’ve been making, this model will work and we will be here to stay.

After running a deficit of \$605,000 in 2008, our first full year, we reduced the deficit to \$125,000 in 2009.

In part, this was achieved by reducing costs, as promised in our 2008 report. Expenses for 2009 were \$1.21 million, down 20%. Much of the reduction came from cutting back on our budget for freelance payments to journalists.

But we also generated a substantial increase in our revenues, a truly impressive result in light of economic conditions:

- Revenue from advertising and sponsorship rose from \$160,000 in 2008 to \$217,000 in 2009.
- Revenue from individual donors and from MinnRoast rose from \$356,000 to \$458,000. (This excludes from the 2008 total the last payment on one of our 2007 founder gifts.)

These two revenue streams are the key to long-term sustainability. Based on these results, I am confident that we can fulfill our goal to be sustainable by 2012, relying on foundation grants only for special projects but not to keep the lights on.

For now, of course, foundation support is critical, and we are extremely grateful to the Knight Foundation in Miami and the Blandin, McKnight, Minneapolis and Bremer Foundations in Minnesota for their generous backing.

There is ample evidence that MinnPost is developing a growing and passionate audience.

In 2009, MinnPost recorded more than 5 million visits and 9.6 million page views, more than 60% higher than in 2008. (The year-to-year comparison covers 11 months of each year, since we don’t have reliable data for January 2008.) Looking only at the last three months of each year, visits rose 17% and page views 19% in 2009, even though in the last quarter of 2008 we were in the midst of electing both a President and a U.S. Senator from Minnesota. Better yet, traffic from repeat visitors was up 27% for the quarter.

Some other exciting measures of MinnPost’s growing followership:

- The number of people receiving our daily email newsletter is now about 5,750, up 15% from a year ago.
- Our weekly Greater Minnesota email goes out to 2,600 people, up 70% from a year ago.
- More than 5,200 people follow MinnPost on Twitter, about five times what it was a year ago.
- MinnPost’s Facebook page has more than 1,500 fans, up more than 50% in just the past two months.
- The number of commenters on the site increased 68% over 2008, and the number of posted comments nearly tripled.

In 2009 we added more than 500 first-time donors, bringing our total to 1,707. And 174 donors gave more than they had the previous year.

We are proud of our journalists and the great work they do for MinnPost and for all Minnesotans. Co-managing editors Roger Buoen and Susan Albright describe some of the highlights in this report.

In 2009, we improved the quality of MinnPost’s coverage while reducing our spending on news. We’re starting 2010 on a plan to keep expenses for current operations flat, and to increase revenues. This will enable us to start rebuilding our reserves to assure us the stability we need for the long term. But we also will look for additional revenue sources that could enable us to expand news coverage this year.

MinnPost has so many supporters that we wish to thank: readers, donors, commenters, volunteers, funders, advertisers, sponsors, and of course our staff, contractors and freelance journalists. Laurie and I are deeply moved by your commitment to our shared mission: to sustain our community and our democracy with high-quality journalism.



Joel Kramer, Editor and CEO

MinnPost is a nonpartisan, nonprofit journalism

enterprise. We publish online, primarily Monday through Friday, beginning early in the morning and continuing with updates throughout the day, at www.minnpost.com. MinnPost launched on November 8, 2007. Everything published since the launch is available at no charge. The IRS has determined that MinnPost is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Donations are fully tax-deductible.

MinnPost’s message to the community is simple:

High-quality journalism is not just a consumer good, and we can no longer depend only on the private sector to provide it. High-quality journalism is a community asset, the underpinning of democracy, community, and quality of life. Minnesotans who care about it need to support it, every way they can.

Journalism highlights of 2009

This past year was a busy one for news in Minnesota – from politics to arts to business to sports. At MinnPost, we offered our readers in-depth coverage and analysis of the top stories, added new features and journalists to the site, and kept our focus on providing important and interesting information for the news-intense reader.

We started the year by hiring a full-time Washington correspondent to cover Minnesota's congressional delegation, making us one of only two Minnesota news operations with a full-time reporter in the nation's capital. We were accepted as the first online-only member of the Regional Reporters Association, an association of state-based news organizations with Washington bureaus.

The biggest political story of the first half of 2009 was the ongoing Franken-Coleman recount. Jay Weiner covered the ins and outs of the recount for us daily, earning the prestigious Frank Premack Public Affairs Journalism Award for excellence in breaking news coverage.

There was plenty more politics to report on in 2009. MinnPost's Doug Grow analyzed the state's budget problems and the governor's "unallotment" moves. Doug and Eric Black offered insights on the developing governor's race, and our editors created an interactive graphic to help readers quickly figure out who's in and out of that race as well as get important background about each candidate.

Health care was another big ongoing story. As our Washington bureau covered the debate in Congress, Casey Selix looked at the state of health coverage in Minnesota, sought out the hopes and fears of leaders in health care and identified the reform legislation's potential effects on Minnesotans. Another important health story – the H1N1 outbreak – was thoroughly examined by a medical expert, MinnPost's Dr. Craig Bowron. And Susan Perry began writing a personal health blog for us called Second Opinion.

The highlight of MinnPost's expanded Greater Minnesota coverage in 2009 was a multipart series by Sharon Schmickle that examined how the recession is playing out in Minnesota's economy. Other Greater Minnesota coverage included Chuck Haga's "In shrinking economy, Red Lake Band bets on expansion," and Catherine Conlan's articles describing struggling timber and taconite operations in northeast Minnesota.

We continued to have the best media coverage in town. David Brauer has become a must-read for everyone interested in the media, serving up countless exclusives on the Star Tribune's bankruptcy and other trials and tribulations of Minnesota media.

MinnPost's journalists broke national news in 2009 about very dissimilar subjects. We were the first to report the tragic tale of legendary wrestler Verne Gagne, who, suffering from Alzheimer's-related dementia at age 82, threw a 97-year-old man to the floor. The man died 20 days later, and our story was prominently reported in the Twin Cities and around the nation. Eric Black reported Seymour Hersh's findings of a U.S. "executive assassination ring," prompting another flood of national attention and debate.

There was a lot of sports news as well, including the Twins and the Vikings advancing to post-season play. Pat Borzi followed the Twins for MinnPost, and we added Jim Klobuchar, famous for his Vikings writing, to our lineup of sports journalists to chronicle the Vikings' remarkable season.

We expanded coverage in other areas too. We hired Brad Allen to cover local business news and supplemented his coverage with reports from Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal. We also added Beth Hawkins to cover schools and other news, and Max Sparber and Brian Lambert to write one of our most popular features, the Daily Glean. We added a blog about science news and a new section on book clubs hosted by former Star Tribune books editor Sarah T. Williams. And we expanded our national and foreign reporting, adding coverage from the Christian Science Monitor and Global Post to the site.

In November, to mark MinnPost's second anniversary, we published and distributed 10,000 free copies of *The Best of MinnPost.com*, a tabloid-size commemorative print edition. The print edition included some of the articles mentioned here and many others. For a complete list, go to <http://www.minnpost.com/best/>.

Financial report

In 2009, MinnPost recorded a total of \$1,082,000 in revenues, an increase of 26% over 2008. This included \$217,000 in sponsorship and advertising, \$388,000 in foundation grants, \$354,000 in individual donations, \$104,000 in gross receipts from MinnRoast and \$19,000 in other revenue.

In 2009, MinnPost's expenses were \$1,209,000, down 20% from the previous year. The deficit for 2009 was \$125,000 compared to a deficit of \$605,000 in 2008. Cash on hand at year end was \$125,000, compared to \$202,000 at the end of 2008.

Philanthropic support and sponsors

In 2009, MinnPost was grateful to receive significant new grants from the McKnight Foundation and the Otto Bremer Foundation. Five foundations now provide major philanthropic support:

- **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** – three grants totaling \$455,000.
- **Blandin Foundation** – \$225,000 over three years (2008-2010) to increase coverage of and outreach to Greater Minnesota.
- **The Minneapolis Foundation** – \$100,000 over two years (2009 and 2010) for donor-supported local reporting.
- **McKnight Foundation** – \$60,000 a year for two years (2009 and 2010) for general operations.
- **Otto Bremer Foundation** – a one-year grant of \$40,000 for Greater Minnesota coverage.

We also want to thank our major site sponsors:

- **UCare**, sponsor of Second Opinion, our health care blog.
- **Greater Twin Cities United Way**, sponsor of Community Voices.
- **The Minneapolis Foundation**, sponsor of Community Sketchbook.

For sponsorship opportunities, contact Sally Waterman, director of advertising and sponsorship, at swaterman@minnpost.com.

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MinnRoast 2010

**Monday, April 26, 5:30 p.m.
At Pantages Theatre + Seven**

More than 600 news junkies and newsmakers attended MinnRoast 2009, and we're planning for 800+ in 2010. To be a 2010 sponsor, please contact lkramer@minnpost.com. Sincere thanks to all our 2009 sponsors listed below.

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Keith Butcher
Kathy Cahill
Brent Carlson
Majel Carroll
Annette Caruthers
Marilyn Cathcart
William Cento
David Chang
Donna Chicone
Faith & Lynn Christine
Neil Clark
Patricia Clarke
John Clawson
Steve Clemens
Patrick K. Coleman
Patrick L. Coleman
David Colwell
Mary Sue Comfort
Ken Corey-Edstrom
Brenda Cornelius
Charles Fuller Cowles & Constance
Mayeron
Lisa Czech
Lucy Dalglisch

Pat & Jack Davies
Jo Davis
Philip Dech
Paul Demko
David Dempsey
Joyce Denn
Stephen Dent
Justin Dessonville
Thomas Dickinson
Joe & Genie Dixon
Jack Doepke
Susan Doherty
Timothy Dolan
Robert Donnelly & Nancy Koo
Thomas Donovan
Steven Downing
Hillary Drake
Molly Duff Woehrlin
Loren Dunham
Christine Durand
Michael & Margie Earhart
Penny Edgell
Tom Eggum
Ardyce Ehlich
Kent & Katherine Eklund
Robert Elde
Pat & Ron Eldred
Joan Elwell
Michele Erickson
Esme Evans
Sara Evans
Roy Everson
Esther Fabes
Marta Fahrenz & Brent Collins
Linda & Kurt Falkman
Don Feeny
Barbara Felt
Gregory Filice
Steven Fillbrandt
Deborah Fisher Goldstein
Joseph Fleischman
Keith & Elizabeth Ford
Kenneth & Barbara Ford
Louise Fowler
Ann Fox
Mike Fralick
Douglas Franchot
Roger Franke
Robert & Norma Franklin
Elaine Frankowski
Katie Franson
Thomas Fraser & Mary Strand
Christian Fredrickson
Christine Friedlieb
Jane Friedmann
Susan Fuller
Shannon Gardner
Sieglinde Gassman
Beth Gauper
Greg Gaut
Nancy Gibson
Mark Giorgini
Martha Gohmert
Bennett Gordon
Kathleen Graham
Gayle Graham Yates
Richard Greene
Mary Beth & Patrick Greffin

George Gribble	Virginia King	Julie McLain	Thomas Quinn
Rose Gurley	Seth Kirk	Catherine McMahan	David Quist
Deborah Hadas	Douglas Kline & Bill Venne	Jane B. McWilliams	Robin Rainford
Jennie Hakes & Steve Hawrysh	Jeffrey Klein	Tim Meidinger	Diana Rankin
Peter Hames	Wendy & Michael Klein	Daniel Menssen	David Raymond
William Hamlin	Robert Klepperich	Margaret Etta Meyer	Segwald Reckdahl
Liz & Ted Hammack	Robert Klukas	Marcy Micek	Don Reeder
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Patricia Hampl	Carol Koepf	Toni Middleton	JamieLyn Reinschmidt
Elaine Handelman	Jeffrey Kolnick	Rohn Jay Miller	Jacqueline Reis
Pamela Hanson	David & Candace Kragthorpe	Merle & Roland Minda	Byron Rice
John Harlander	Leslie Kraus	David Minge	JoAnn, Gabriella, Maya & Zoe Rice
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Elizabeth Hawn	Margaret Kvam	Jean Morris Trumbauer	Julie Ring
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Matthew & Lesley Herzberg	Margaret Larson	Sue & Chuck Muscoplat	Charlene Roise
Denise Hesselroth	Nancy Larson	Joseph Nathan	Gary Rolek
Geri Hetterick	Norman Larson	Iric & Marlene Nathanson	Karen Rosar
Russell Heuckendorf	Paul Larson	Kit Naylor	Scott Rosenbaum & Gretchen Piper
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Elizabeth Hinz	Gabrielle Lawrence	Barbara Nelson	McDonald
Janet Hively	Kurt Lawton	Bonnie Nelson	Deborah Ross
Elizabeth Hodges	Lawrence Lee	Catherine Nelson	James Roth
Louise Hokenson	Linda Leeson	Sally Nelson	Gretchen Rowe
Judith Hollander	Janice Leichter	Tammy Nelson	Stephen Rufer
Patricia Holt	Russell Lemker	Sylvia Nickel	Richard Rummel
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Eric & Margit Johnson	Daniel Lussenhop	Audra Otto	Susannah Schouweiler
Joan & Stuart Johnson	Charles & Hertha Lutz	Shawn Otto	Jennifer Schubert
Kelli Johnson	Anne Mahle	Mark Oyaas	John Schultz
Nancy Johnson	Pamela Mahling	Steven & Vicki Palmquist	Stephen Scofield & Susan Maas
Nancy Jones	Aaron Maloff	Joseph Panone	Doug Seitz
Erin Jordahl Redlin	Robert Manske	Parker Creative Communications	Mike Senkovich
Catherine Jordan & Steve Lick	MAP for Nonprofits	Stephen Parsons	Jean Shannon
Paul Jorstad	Steven Marchese & Jodi Sandfort	Frances Paulu	Alan Shapiro
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Judith Kahn	Ray Martin	Karl Pearson-Cater	Catherine Shreves & Tom Bird
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James & Jane Kane	Jeanne Massey	Kent Pekel	Miriam Simmons
Matt Kane & Elizabeth Conway	Addie Mattson	Catherine Perrault	Carl Sims
Shirley Kaplan	Barbara Mauk	Susan Peters & Charles Carroll	Doris Skalstad
Steven Kaplan	Ryan & Stacy May	Earl Peterson	Bruce & Laurie Smith
Michael Kassner	Kathleen Mayer	Naomi Peterson	Dane & Mary Smith
Barbara Kaufman	Mary McCarthy	Sonja Peterson	Donald Smith
Michael Kelberer	Maureen McCarthy & Michael Vitt	Anthony Pfaff	Sheila Smith
Michael Keliher	Michael McCarthy	David Piehowski	Tom Snee
Thomas Kendrick	Lynda McDonnell	Justin Piehowski	Suzanne Snyder
Ellen Kennedy, Ph.D.	Grace McGarvie	Jeremy Powers	James Soderberg
Carol Keyes-Ferrer	Renee McGivern	Richard Primuth	Richard Sollberger
George & Shirley Kimball	Ann McKinnon	Peter Quale	James Southwick

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 Jeff Spencer
 Diane Sprague
 Steve Spruth
 Mike Spry
 Bruce Stahlberg
 Clay Steinman
 Marcy Strauss
 Janet Streff
 Kathleen Stuart
 Jana Studelska
 Curtis Stull
 Richard & Barbara Swanson
 Stephen K. Swanson
 Dudley Swedberg
 Maryann Sweeney & John Dyer
 Patricia Sweeney Hart
 Michael Swirnoff
 Christopher Taykalo
 Charles Taylor
 Bruce Tennebaum
 Peter Thelen
 Claire Thoen-Levin
 Robert Thomas
 Doug Throckmorton
 Deborah Tolmach Sugerman
 Charles Tombarge
 Jerry Tomlinson
 John Toren
 Stanley Trollip
 Kris Troske
 Albert Trostel
 Parker Trostel
 Tom Trow
 Steve & Penny Truax
 Jennifer Tudor
 Jennifer Turrentine
 Jeff Urban
 Stephen Usery
 Eugene Vader
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 Elana Wolowitz
 Jeff Van Wychen
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 Danie Watson
 Peter S. Wattson
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 Jay Weiner & Ann Juergens
 David Weir & Barbara Wine
 Joel Weisberg
 Kirsten Weiss
 Thomas Weist
 Abe Welle
 Mark Welter
 John Whitaker
 Anne White
 Dawne White
 Lawrence Wigley
 Amy Wilde
 Barry Wilderman & Roz Stronger
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 Meghan Wilker
 Douglas Williams
 Bonnie Wilson
 Steve Winnick
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 Marie Wolf
 Mariel Wolter
 Billie Young
 David Zaffrann
 David Zander
 Alfred Zdrrazil
 Paul Zerby
 Fred & Joanell Zimmerman

Copy Boys & Girls (up to \$49)

Anonymous (18)
 Roger Aiken
 Joan Akers
 Robert Alf
 Helen & Alan Anderson
 Leigh Anderson
 Siri Anderson & Rob Nelson
 Tal Anderson
 Margaret Anderson Kelliher
 Mark Andrew
 Caroline Anfinson
 Susan Asinger
 Anne Baland
 Aaron Barnes
 Nancy Beach
 Virginia Belden-Charles
 Pamela Belding
 Cheryl & Byron Bennett
 Judith Bennett
 Craig Berdan
 Brian Berg
 Brian Berggran
 Catie Bitzan
 Thomas Blyth
 Helen Brooks
 Seth Brugger
 Mike Buchholz
 Sam Calvert
 Dale Carlton
 Jerdis Cerney
 Scott Chambers
 Steven Chesney
 Blair Christensen
 Mark Cohen
 Daniel Cragg
 Roann Cramer
 Carol Daly
 Susan Darley-Hill
 Jennica Date
 Leslie Davis
 Erin Dawson
 MaryAnn Dean
 Raul Debrigard
 Hannah Dentinger
 Kedar Deshpande
 Pamela Desnick
 Robert Dixon
 Laura Drabant
 Alison Edgerton
 Claudia Egelhoff
 John & Amelia Engberg
 Eric Ferguson
 Meg Forney & Jon Fageron
 Amy Frankfurt
 Addy Free
 Catherine Friend
 Andrea Fox Jensen
 Adam Fulton
 Camille Gage
 Nicole Garst
 Shireen Gandhi
 Roger Gomoll

Susan Green
 George Goebel
 Marjorie Goldberg
 Jules & Janice Goldstein
 Sheila Goldstein
 David Gonnerman
 Sara Hallman
 Melissa Hansen
 Jason & Janine Hanson
 Robert Hays
 Susan Herridge
 James Hetland, Jr.
 Cathy Hinko
 Harriet Horwitz
 David Johnson
 Sarah Johnson
 Gary Joselyn
 Maria Kaefer
 Gerald Kahlert
 Michael Kellett
 Joseph Kelley
 Raleigh Kent
 Eric King
 William Klein
 Kari Kloos
 Senta Knuth
 Orrin Konheim
 Jonna Kosalko
 Rae Kramer
 Ted & Colleen Kroeten
 Jake Levy-Pollans
 Linda Lincoln
 Ann Lindstrom
 Rick Linsk
 William Lorsung & Liadan McKiernan
 Kathy Low
 Andrew Luger
 Molly MacGregor
 Kathy Magnuson
 Robert Mairs
 Rachel Mann
 Ann Manning
 Joseph Mansky
 John Marty
 Conner McCall
 Terry McDanel
 Kathleen McGee
 Deborah McGrath
 Ronald McGriff
 Michael Menner
 Greta & Robert Michaels
 Mary Minnehan
 Jane Mobeck-Wilson
 Carol Morton
 Gerald Mullin
 Nicholas Myers
 Steve Nelson
 Uri Neren
 James & Paula Nessa
 Edward Newton
 Charlie Nocker
 Chris Noonan
 Karin Noren
 J. Michael & Janell Norman
 Lesley Novich
 Kelly O'Brien
 Dorothy Parker
 Aaron Pearson
 Cynthia Pearson
 Constance Pepin
 Craig Pederson
 Dave Peterson
 Scott Peterson
 Edward Pickett
 Benjamin Pofahl
 Jim Porter
 Carol Poulson

Teri Power
 RD Ideas
 Joe Radosevich
 Mark Radosevich
 Ashkay Rao
 Barbara Raye
 Alice Reimann
 Suzanne Rhees
 Rochester Citizens Coalition
 Barry & Francie Ross
 Robert Rossi
 Kelly Rowan
 Helen Rubenstein
 Ann Rutledge
 Dorothy Saltzman
 Dean Sanberg
 Steven Schaban
 Rick Schara
 Robyn & Ben Schein
 James Schenz
 Jon Schumacher
 Ashley Schweitzer
 Donna Scudder
 Jack & Susan Sell
 Joe Selvaggio
 Betty Settergren
 Joel Shinder
 Robert Shirk
 Robert Shumer
 Eugenia Siegler
 Donald & Betty Skoglund
 Julie Smith
 Richard Stettehaugh
 Michael Slusser
 Melanie Soucheray
 Richard Soule
 Ann Stanley
 Nick Steffel
 Mae Sylvester
 Jack Tanner
 Barbara Tigan
 Karen Tingstad
 Karen Tolkkinen
 Dusty Trice
 Hayley Tsukayama
 Paul Udstrand
 Daniel Vogel
 Joan Wahl
 Alanna Walen
 Susan & Steve Waterman
 Laura Weber
 James Welna
 Beth Welshons
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