

COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF LIBRARIES

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Friends of the Library are community-based non-profit groups of citizens who promote, encourage, and enhance the work of their local libraries. In Washington State there are over 150 Friends groups whose members volunteer thousands of hours of their time, skills, and knowledge to support their local libraries.

Friends groups have undertaken many creative projects to help libraries. They have raised funds to help support building or remodeling a library facility or to underwrite special library programs. The proceeds of their book sales have contributed funds to purchase new library materials. They have volunteered to assist library staff with children's programs, shut-in services, or special projects. They have sponsored author book talks, art shows, antique shows, discussion groups, and all manner of programs that have contributed to the educational and cultural opportunities in the community. They have labored to create and maintain the library landscaping. The Spokane County Library notes that Friends groups also assist the library by "Creating public interest in the library, supporting and promoting knowledge of the District's mission, goals, services and resources, and fostering public support for development of the library so it may adequately serve the needs of community residents." Even their membership drives can raise community interest in the library.

Legal Requirements for Friends of the Library Groups

As a non-profit corporation, the Friends group should work with an attorney to assure that all laws and regulations related to a non-profit corporation are met, that the Internal Revenue Service tax-exempt status is maintained and that funds are properly managed, reported, and distributed.

Relationship of Trustees and Friends of the Library Group

There is an on-going working relationship with the local Friends group. Libraries have often started Friends groups, but the Friends are independent non-profit organizations with their own officers and bylaws that describe the separate, but cooperative working relationship.

Friends groups have often served as the training ground for future library trustees because enthusiastic volunteers become well acquainted with and support the library's mission and goals. Current library trustees and library staff ought not to be officers in the Friends group in order to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The library board of trustees is the governing board for the library and Friends are a supportive citizen organization that serves the library interests. The roles of trustees, librarians, and Friends are related but distinct. Trustees represent citizen governance of the library; the library director represents administration and management of the library; and Friends of the Library represent citizen participation within the library.

Trustees are urged to adopt a Friends policy, working with the library director to draft appropriate procedures. The policy should lay the groundwork for accepting funds or gifts and it should clarify the role of Friends in relationship to the library board, the library director, and staff. Trustees might further enhance good communications by:

- Inviting and welcoming Friends to library board meetings.

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- Encouraging the Friends group to appoint a regular liaison to attend board meetings.
 - Assure that Friends have information about the board meetings and library activities so they are aware of the library plans, progress and needs.
 - Appoint Friends to advisory board committees, particularly when citizen input is desired.
 - Assure that a board member or library staff attend Friends board meetings and special events.
 - Appoint a trustee to be a liaison with the Friends group.

It is of primary importance that Friends understand their auxiliary role and avoid interfering with the functions of the trustees or the jobs of the library director and staff.

Fundraising

Fundraising can take many forms. Friends might sponsor special events such as author book talks, or plays, or musicales; they can run book sales; they can spearhead community-wide campaigns to gather donations for special needs; they can purchase and then resell library related items such as coffee mugs or note cards; or any number of other ideas. Some Friends groups have established library stores that sell books and other items in order to benefit the library.

Fundraising by the Friends is accomplished with the knowledge of the library board of trustees and the library director. The Friends group will decide what activities or items they would like to support, but the decision is made in conjunction with the library director and trustees so library priorities are met. Funds should always be used as a supplement or enhancement of the library budget, never as a substitute for operational funding of basic services.

Friends as Library Advocates

Friends groups can be especially helpful when they advocate for libraries. As individuals, they are often in a position to be influential in lobbying, demonstrating citizen support for the library. They can actively campaign for bond issues, levies, or annexations. They can share information about the library, its plans and its needs as they participate in other social and organizational activities. As an organization, the Friends group can speak powerfully for library budgets, library legislation and other issues.

Organizations that Support Friends of the Library Groups

Washington Library Friends and Trustees Association (WLFTA)

The Washington Library Friends and Trustees Association, an Interest Group of the Washington Library Association (WLA), is an especially active and helpful resource for friends groups.

In addition to their newsletter, members have the opportunity to meet during the annual Washington Library Association conference as well as participate in workshops and forums throughout the year. WLFTA publishes their *Friends' of the Library Handbook* and other information in their section of the WLA homepage at <http://www.wla.org>.

The Washington Library Association also sponsors an annual Friends' Week that is scheduled each spring during National Library Week. This provides an opportunity to honor the work of Friends in the community.

For membership information contact the Washington Library Association.

Friends of Libraries U.S.A. (FOLUSA)

The Friends of Libraries U.S.A. is a nationwide membership organization of local Friends groups and individuals. More than two thousand member groups represent hundreds of thousands of library supporters.

Their mission is:

“To motivate and support local Friends groups across the country in their efforts to preserve and strengthen libraries, and to create awareness and appreciation of library services by:

- Assisting in developing Friends of the Library groups in order to generate local and state support.
- Providing guidance, education, and counsel throughout the Friends network.
- Promoting the development of strong library advocacy Programs.
- Serving as a clearinghouse of information and expertise.”

FOLUSA has a number of publications, including facts sheets and a member's newsletter. They also publish *Friends of the Library Sourcebook*. Publications are available through purchase or available on their Website <http://www.folusa.com> The group sponsors awards and nationwide programs such as Literary Landmarks and Books for Babies.

Complementary Roles of Board, Director, and Friends

The roles of library boards, library directors, and Friends of the library in providing the community with public library service are related but distinct. Best results occur when all concerned recognize the relationship of these roles.

Note: Depending on local laws some library boards may have more power delegated to them than this chart indicates.

Library Board	Library Director	Friends of the Library
A small number of appointed or elected citizens representing the community who, together, constitute the body which is responsible for guiding the library to serve the community's needs.	The person employed by the local governing authority to administer the public library; chosen because of his/her personal and professional competence to function in that capacity.	A group of individuals or any number of persons who value public library services and who give of their time, talents and efforts because of their beliefs.
Planning		
Considers library's strengths and weaknesses; adopts long and short range plans for library's growth; advises on course of action and time schedule to implement plans, based on recommendations of the library director.	Analyses library's strengths and weaknesses; recommends plans for library's growth and means for implementing plans. Administers library in terms of plans adopted by the board and amenable to local governing authority.	Offers assistance in implementing surveys and questionnaires that the library director and library board want to be conducted.
Policy		
Considers what policies are needed to carry forward the library's plan most effectively. Gives adequate consideration to librarian's recommendations and member's suggestions. Adopts appropriate policies and keeps them up to date by periodic review. Supports library director in policy implementation.	Recommends policies needed; advises board on merit of decisions they are considering. Administers the library in accordance with adopted policies. Interprets policies to staff and public.	Offers assistance in communicating policies to citizens in community to promote understanding of library services.
Budget		
Reviews budget submitted by librarian; recommends changes that seem necessary, officially endorses budget request to be submitted to local governing authority. Taking librarian's recommendations into account, accepts assistance from Friends where appropriate.	Prepares budget request recommendation based on present and anticipated needs in relation to plan for library growth. After income for coming year is known, recommends revisions in planned expenditures, if necessary. Decides on use of money within the budget allotment. Submits budget to local governing authority.	Contributes funds for books, travel, materials, equipment, services, etc. to supplement what cannot be provided by the budget and with regard to a list of needs given to it by the librarian. Makes the most of its unique position to influence public opinion and governmental action on local, state and national level on behalf of public library services.

Library Board	Library Director	Friends of the Library
	Funds	
Entire board (or representatives) appears at budget hearings to interpret library's financial needs and support library director. Also explores all ways of increasing the library's income through tapping other sources of funding and taking advantage of all available means of cooperation with other libraries.	Librarian usually presents the budget at the budget hearings and answers questions on library administration and financial details to the local governing authority. Supplies facts and figures to board to aid in interpreting library's financial needs. Calls board's attention to ways of stretching budget and advises board on cooperating with other libraries.	Individually and collectively use influence to assist the library board and library director in getting desired financial support from local, state and national sources at the request of the library director.
	Public Relations	
Serves as "connecting link" between the library and the community, interpreting the one to the other. Upholds all policies adopted by the board and presents a united front to the public.	Interprets policies to staff and the public. Administers library efficiently and participates in community activities. Strives to see that own actions and those of staff contribute to "goodwill".	Serves as additional "connecting link" in interpreting the library and community to each other and conducts fundraising and book and author-related events endorsed by the library director.
	Education	
Allows time at board meetings to study topics of concern to the library. Reads trustee materials that come in the mail or are called to its attention. Sees that new trustees have planned orientation. Attends regional, state and national trustee or trustee-related meetings. Belongs to the Washington Library Association and members are active in the WLFTA.	Encourages board to study library-related topics by supplying information. Calls significant trustee materials to attention of library board. Helps with orientation of new trustees. Makes sure trustees know of important meetings to attend. Recommends budget allocation for trustee expenses for membership and attendance at state, regional and national meetings.	Keeps informed of the library's plans, progress and problems, is willing to assist in carrying out their objectives. Belongs to the Washington Library Association and members are active in the WLFTA.
	Personnel	
Hires or recommends employment of a suitable library director. Works to improve salary scale and fringe benefits for total staff. Recommends policies for staff development and training.	Directs all staff in accordance to rules set forth by local governing authority. Works for needed improvement in working conditions, fringe benefits and salary scale. Capitalizes on skills and initiative of all staff members.	Provides reliable volunteer help for projects when asked by library director.
	Responsibility	
Has indirect responsibility through adoption of plan, policies and budget. Keeps in touch with library's progress and problems through librarian's reports and own use of the library.	Has full responsibility for administration of the library within framework of the library's plan, policies, budget, and regulations of the local governing authority. Reports at each board meeting and in other ways keeps board informed of library's progress and problems	Guards against infringement of trustee's or librarian's role in connection with the operation of the library. Assists in any ways compatible with the scope of their role and as requested by library director.

Library Board	Library Director	Friends of the Library
	Meetings	
Attends all regular and special board meetings. To promote mutual understanding and aid in coordination, arranges to have a representative of the board attend Friends of the Library meetings.	Attends all regular and special board meetings and Friends meetings (or sends a liaison).	To promote mutual understanding and aid in coordination, arranges to have a representative from the Friends of the Library attend board meetings.
Perpetuating the Relationship Among Library Board, Library Directors and Friends		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has policy regarding relationship of the library board and Friends. 2. Fulfills the legal and professional responsibilities of trustees and keeps informed of library developments. 3. Is aware of ways that Friends could be helpful and lets them know. Is receptive to offers from Friends. 4. Supports the goal of good library service. 5. Encourages good communication with Friends, e.g., has ex-officio representative from library at Friend's meetings and vice versa. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assists Library Board in formulating a policy statement concerning Friends and in following it. 2. Administers the library competently with foresight; aids trustees and friends by providing pertinent information and sound recommendations. 3. Helps trustees and friends to achieve full cooperation, e.g. have good rapport with both. Offers suggestions when needed. Is flexible in reacting to ideas they propose. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopts bylaws that include clear statement of Friends' supportive role. 2. Keeps informed of library's plans and policies. 3. Is alert to recognize ways the Friends could be helpful and be receptive to suggestions from library director. 4. Is enthusiastic and resourceful in carrying out whatever projects are undertaken and/or projects proposed by the director. 5. Makes continuous effort to maintain good communication with library board and director.
<p>(Quoted from the <i>Florida Public Library Board Manual, 1988</i> by Elizabeth A. Curry and Susan Sellers Whittle, State Library of Florida.)</p>		

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are a valuable community resource and an important source of support for libraries. Many Friends of the Library contribute volunteer services to libraries, usually assisting with a wide variety of one-time library events, fundraising or other activities. Other volunteers take a more formal approach—accepting a regular schedule and job assignment at the library. The board needs to adopt a library volunteer policy that addresses both the formal and less formal forms of voluntary action.

It may be tempting to use volunteers to provide a library service that the community wants, but this approach is usually unsustainable in the long run. It is also crucial that the volunteer policy and plans acknowledge that volunteers will not supplant the long-term responsibilities and functions of trained library staff. The role of volunteers is to assist with tasks, or projects, or provide supplementary services under the guidance and supervision of staff.

A volunteer program requires a good deal of coordination with volunteers, as well as between volunteers and staff. Ideally, a staff member can be assigned to work with the volunteer program.

Managing a Voluntary Program

In addition to the volunteer policy, the library should develop a volunteer plan that supports the overall goals, objectives, and priorities of the library. Like any plan it will describe specific activities, identify timelines, responsibilities, and provide for evaluation.

The board-adopted policy needs to address liability insurance, worker's compensation reporting requirements, funds to pay for library-related activities, policy on use of library vehicles and equipment, etc.

The plan should establish a set of expectations, agreements, regulations, and directions that will guide the relationship.

Jobs that Volunteers Might Fill in the Library

The board needs to ensure in policy that the library weighs the benefits as well as the costs of staff time in recruiting, interviewing, placing, training, supervising, and evaluating volunteers.

In order to identify jobs that may be appropriate for volunteers the library needs to survey its programs and needs. For each potential position the library should identify the skills and knowledge and abilities that may be required, the amount of time that must be committed to accomplish the job, and whether a certain schedule of days or hours may be required. It also needs to identify the level of supervision and training that the library may need to provide to a volunteer. As these initial descriptions are compiled, it may become evident that the proposed activity is not appropriate for volunteers.

Recruiting Volunteers

In addition to describing the volunteer positions that are open, the library should make it clear that the library has performance expectations, such as dependability, promptness, and adherence to the philosophy of the library. It should be made apparent that volunteering is a job that has requirements as well as meaningful rewards.

Volunteers should complete an application and each volunteer should be interviewed. While volunteers may express a job preference the library maintains the right to determine specific job assignments.

Once a Volunteer is Accepted

The volunteer policy will emphasize that volunteers are to be treated with the same respect, information, and opportunities as a staff member. Volunteers should receive:

- A library tour, as well as an orientation to the library operations and organization.
- An introduction to the library mission, its goals, and plans.
- A fact sheet or handbook about the volunteer program.
- A review of the position description and its requirements, including a description of the volunteer's role and responsibilities in comparison to staff roles and responsibilities.

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- A description of the line of authority and an assigned supervisor.
 - A schedule for needed training and documentation of completed training in their volunteer file.
 - Feedback about their work in a probationary evaluation and then annual evaluations.
 - Information that describes the circumstances when volunteers might be transferred to another position.
 - Information that informs volunteers that if their work is unsatisfactory, or if they fail to abide by library policies and procedures, they may be dismissed.

Reward Volunteers for Their Efforts and Contributions

Celebrate your volunteers! Plan regular opportunities to thank volunteers internally as well as recognize them externally in newspaper articles or by other means.