



Libraries Need Friends:

A Toolkit to Create Friends Groups or to
Revitalize the One You Have

Sally Gardener Reed, Executive Director, United for Libraries

© United for Libraries: The Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations. This toolkit has been developed as a benefit for personal and group members. If you wish to reproduce and/or redistribute significant portions or the entire toolkit to non-members, the charge is \$5 per copy distributed and/or reproduced made payable to:

United for Libraries
109 S. 13th Street, Suite 117B
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Toll Free: (800) 545-2433, ext. 2161
Direct Dial: (312) 280-2161
Fax: (215) 545-3821
Web site: www.ala.org/united
E-mail: united@ala.org

If small portions of this toolkit are reproduced and redistributed, please credit United for Libraries in writing. Thank you.

Revised August 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	iv
How Do Libraries Benefit from Friends Groups?	1
Making the Decision to Start a Friends Group	2
Getting Started	3
Development of a Core Group (Executive Board).....	3
The Formal Operating Agreement.....	4
Establishing the Friends' Mission, Purpose, and Structure.....	5
Establishment of Bylaws and 501(c)(3) Status.....	6
Going Live: Bringing Members Into Your New Friends Group	8
Dues and “Deliverables”.....	8
Membership Recruitment.....	9
Revitalizing Your Friends Group	11
Looking Back.....	11
Looking Forward.....	12
Designing a Membership Campaign.....	13
Conclusion	14
Appendix A – Recommended Additional Reading	15
Appendix B – Sample Memorandum of Understanding	16

INTRODUCTION

Libraries need Friends – it's just that simple. In fact, across America many public libraries were established through the efforts of community members who understood the value of libraries to their communities and also understood that libraries needed community support to survive. Did you know that a criterion for securing a Carnegie grant was a demonstrated commitment by members of the community to raise additional funds and support for a new library? This concept hasn't changed over the course of the past 150 years – what has changed, however, is that academic and school libraries are also beginning to understand the value of Friends and many academic and school Friends groups are thriving on campus.

If you don't have a Friends group for your library or if you are a library supporter interested in spearheading an effort to create a Friends group for your library – you've come to the right place. This special toolkit will help with the establishment of Friends groups of all types. If you already have a Friends group and are interested in increasing its membership and/or its level of activity -- read on. The second half of this toolkit will address the *Revitalization of Existing Friends Groups*.

HOW DO LIBRARIES BENEFIT FROM FRIENDS GROUPS?

How do libraries benefit from Friends groups? They benefit by the expansion of their resources to serve the public. Friends extend a library's capacity through dollar gifts, volunteer and program support, and through advocacy. Few libraries are in a position to turn away help from their supporters – in fact, even if a library were so well heeled that additional funding wasn't needed, libraries without a well developed group of Friends will find the going tough when they need to bring in additional precious funds in an increasingly competitive environment, when they need a new building, or when they need to grow their collections and services. Additionally, any library that seeks grant funding will find themselves in a much more competitive position for those grants if they can show that they receive tangible support from the very people who use and benefit from the library.

Politically, Friends are very important and effective for libraries of all types. Friends are advocates by default! Friends wouldn't be giving their time, energy and financial support to an entity they're not willing to fight for – that entity is the library. When the case needs to be made for your library, the group most able to step up to the plate is the Friends of the Library.

Every day across America, Friends are making a difference for the libraries they serve. Think about the most successful library you know and look behind the curtains. There you will almost inevitably find Friends working behind the scenes, at city hall, with the school or academic administration, and in the public at large making sure that their library is strong, relevant, and well funded!

MAKING THE DECISION TO START A FRIENDS GROUP

Though Friends groups play a wide variety of roles for their libraries, it is important in starting a Friends group that the library administration, the academic administration (if school or college), the trustees (if public), and potential Friends are in agreement about what the expectations for a Friends groups are. The library may need a Friends group, initially, for a very specific purpose such as passing a bond issue, embarking on a capital campaign, or starting a library foundation. If this very specific need is driving the first time creation of a Friends group for your library, your plans for targeting members will be in alignment with this goal. In other words, you'll be looking for key members who have marketing experience, fund raising experience, or foundation experience.

Many Friends groups of long standing initially had their roots in a very special need such as those mentioned above. Most, however, grew out of library supporters' desire to do something "tangible" for the library that means so much to them. Or, they come about because a library is slipping in its services – demands continue to increase while budgets decline. Visionary library administrators who understand both the tangible and intangible benefits of a library support group initiate the establishment of some groups themselves.

Because Friends groups tend to prioritize their roles for serving the library and focus most on their highest priorities, it's a good idea when working to establish a new Friends group that the library and the new Friends work together to decide what is needed most. What will be the Friends' mission? Think about the following possibilities:

- Fundraising
- Library promotion and marketing
- Advocacy
- Immediate need such as a new building or a major budget increase
- Creation of a library foundation
- Creation of a strong library volunteer force

Of course most Friends groups do all of these things to varying degrees based on the current need. However, without thinking about all these goals, the recruitment of members to the new Friends group won't be as effective because you won't be able to be as clear about what you are trying to accomplish as you are when you've thought about these roles and given them some priority.

GETTING STARTED

Creating a Friends group will take some time, energy and expertise. It's a good idea to do what is necessary to do it right the first time rather than rush into it, make costly mistakes, and spend months or years to come trying to convince those who may have been turned off by a haphazard approach to join the Friends group once you do have your house in order.

Here are some of the issues that will have to be addressed as you start up a new Friends group:

- Development of a core (executive) group of Friends members who will actually be doing most of the administrative work and strategic planning.
- Development of written operating agreement between Friends and Library administration outlining respective roles and authority.
- Establishment of purpose and determining priorities for service
- Development of an implementation structure that includes such committees or task forces that will help the group accomplish its yearly goals.
- Development of Organizational bylaws and establishment as a 501(c)(3) organization for the purpose of accepting tax-deductible contributions.
- Development of a dues structure.
- Development of a recruitment campaign.

Addressing the above list of objectives may seem daunting but these constitute important structural elements for a successful Friends groups. Taken one at a time, each of these components is readily achievable and addressing each of them will ensure that your new group gets off on the right foot.

Development of a Core Group (Executive Board)

A new Friends group will be established by a core group of library supporters who may well become the group's first executive board. Because there is a good deal of "up front" work to do before a membership campaign is kicked-off, it makes sense that the work is shared among a small but hard working group with a real desire to see success.

If you are a library administrator wanting to start a Friends group for your library, you would be wise to turn to those in your community or on campus who are known for their support of your library and for their ability to get things done. If you are a library patron or supporter who knows a Friends group can work to help the library increase and/or improve its services, let the library administrator know and ask him or her to join you (or offer a library staff liaison) as you work to develop a Friends group.

Set a meeting including five to ten supporters who are willing and able to bring a group to life. Go over the list of objectives above and begin to brainstorm how and who will accomplish them. Some of the objectives can be done simultaneously and some will have to be done sequentially. For example, it's obvious that the core group will have to be established before a broad-based recruitment campaign begins. The objectives listed above are ordered in a relatively sequential order and it might be best to tackle each in the order presented. For example, you can't qualify for 501(c)(3) status until you have identified your organization's structure and developed your bylaws.

The most common way a new and somewhat taxing initiative fails is from lack of sustained momentum. That's why it's important to involve those people who you know will commit for the long term as members of the core committee. It's also important to schedule bi-weekly or monthly meetings until your core group is ready to launch its first membership campaign. What you are attempting to do is important, remember that and remind your group

of that so their level of commitment stays high.

The Formal Operating Agreement Between the Friends and the Library

What? Do we really need to get it in writing, after all the Friends and the Library both have the same ultimate goal in mind – improving and enhancing the library’s service? While it’s true that you undoubtedly are focused on the same goal, how that goal is best accomplished can be and often is the road to ruin for many Friends and Libraries. The Friends, for example, may see early childhood learning as the most important public library service – and the library itself may even agree! However, that case may have been well made to the city administration and well funded whereas the library’s program budget is non-existent and the library is desperate to create programs for teenagers. Where will the Friends money go? To picture books or teen programs? Who decides?

The academic library may be in serious need of a marketing campaign to raise its profile and cache on campus but the Friends have been most successful and most interested in raising money for new computers. Should the Friends continue down their traditional path that has been so successful or channel their resources into a new, professional marketing campaign? Again, who decides?

Nothing has doomed the relationship between Friends and the Library more than misunderstandings about how the money and the time of the Friends group will be spent. Of course the best working arrangement is to ensure that both Friends and Library continue to keep one another in the loop. A Friends executive board member should always attend Trustee or Library governance meetings and library director or his/her designee should attend Friends executive board meetings. In addition, Friends should always be invited to participate in a library’s planning process. Nothing will get the Friends and the Library on the same page better than working together to design a strategic plan. When that happens, the Friends’ goals will be in alignment with those of the library greatly reducing any conflicts about how resources will be employed.

To ensure that Friends and the Library have a solid foundation for all future funding and advocacy initiatives, it’s a good idea to work out how and who will make decisions regarding the Friends efforts. The ideal agreement will involve a spirit of mutual input into the final decision. In the end, the library administration has, by policy and position, the ultimate authority to accept or reject any gift to the library.

The goal in an operating agreement should be that all Friends’ gifts (of money, time, or talent) meet exactly the highest needs of the library. An agreement that requires negotiation for all gifts offered and requested is best. In other words, the agreement might state that the Friends will work with library administration once each year in determining goals for fundraising, advocacy, and volunteer services. A model that is highly typical and works well is for the Library to submit a wish list to the Friends in priority order with strong justification for the request. The Friends may of course determine what areas of the wish list they want to support. If the once a year joint planning session has taken place, there should be no surprises in either the Library’s request or the Friends’ priorities for funding. Considerations for the operating agreement should include:

- How will the Friends be incorporated into the library’s planning process?
- Are Friends authorized to spend their funds on organizations, agencies, programs or projects that are not directly linked to the library and, if so, under what conditions? This will be included in the mission and bylaws of the Friends group, and it is good to be clear about this upfront, since money spent for other purposes can be a point of contention between the library and the Friends.

- What support will the Library give the Friends in terms of publicity, mailings, labor for the book sale, space for the book sale, office space, office staff support, etc.
- Will the Friends engage in advocacy campaigns on behalf of the library and, if so, who will be involved in the design and message of those campaigns?
- What role and authority will the Friends have for developing and implementing programs?

A sample Memorandum of Understanding is available at the United for Libraries' website. Click on "Friends Groups" and then "Organizational Tools."

Establishing the Friends' Mission, Purpose and Structure

Establishing a mission and articulating the purpose of your Friends group is an excellent way to focus your group on the roles you feel are most important and it will help you develop a useful structure. In addition, knowing and articulating your key mission will help you recruit the people with the talents you need most to serve on task forces and in other leadership roles. The purpose of your group will depend on the groups' interests and the library's need. If you are forming a Friends group for the first time, it is likely that there is some imminent need that you wish to address right away. This should be reflected in your mission but the mission should not be so narrowly defined that once an immediate need is met, the mission of the Friends isn't as relevant to meeting future needs as it should be.

If you are establishing a Friends group because the library has been chronically under-funded to such a degree that services are inadequate and you want to form a group to pass a special tax levy or create an advocacy campaign aimed at the administration, the role of advocates should be included in the mission. However, this role is best articulated generally and there should be room for other enterprises. In other words, the groups' mission might be to work to ensure adequate funds for the library through advocacy, fund raising, and promotion. Once you've been successful in achieving your initial objective (you've passed the levy or the administration has increased the library's budget), your group is now positioned to continue its good work in other ways – such as establishing a foundation, raising additional money for collections, or supporting a library marketing campaign for example. In general, most Friends groups work to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide direct additional financial assistance for needs not normally covered in the library's operating budget.
- Advocate for the library at the local level for increased financial support by the library's parent institution or the community.
- Encourage gifts.
- Raise money or pass bond issues for building and other capital projects.
- Provide volunteer services to the library.
- Increase community or campus awareness about the library.

The way in which any of these or other objectives are achieved will be determined by the group at large along with input from the library's administration and governance. The most effective way to accomplish goals is to set up a structure within the Friends organization so that focused work can be accomplished. In today's world of busy volunteers, the most effective structure will be one that is project oriented and where work is accomplished by task forces. (See United for Libraries Toolkit, "Tapping Into the Biggest and Most Active Volunteers in Town – The Baby Boomers" for in-depth information on setting up this type of organizational structure.)

The executive board should be designed to function as a strategic leadership team. Instead of meeting every month to listen to committee reports, this group should meet (maybe only quarterly) to determine its goals for the coming year (what activities it wants to accomplish) and setting up task forces to accomplish these goals. Such task forces might include, for example:

- Membership Drive
- Friends Promotion
- Library Promotion Campaign
- Friends Promotion Campaign
- Book sale
- Fundraising
- Author Program

Special committees can be assigned for Nominations and perhaps, Newsletter.

The charges for these task forces will mostly be self-evident but in contrast to committees, they have a very specific goal, a timeline for accomplishing that goal, and clear instructions for what is needed, understanding of what resources will be available to them, and a liaison from the executive leadership team who will provide support and be a conduit for the state of progress to the leadership team.

Because task forces work for a specific purpose and within a specific time frame, they can be very attractive to today's busy volunteer – the volunteer who doesn't want a yearlong (or longer) commitment, doesn't want to sit through meetings, but does want to contribute. Keep this in mind because you will find that it is often easier to get volunteers with specially needed expertise when you can promise them an end to their commitment!

Establishment of Bylaws and 501(c)(3) Status

Before you go “live” with a membership drive, it's important to establish your Friends as a 501(c)(3) organization. The 501(c)(3) status means that your organization is non-profit and, therefore, tax exempt -- which means your group can accept tax-deductible contributions. It's not that difficult to get this status but in order to ensure that you cover your legal bases (on both the state and federal levels) it is best to either hire an attorney, prevail upon your institution's attorney, or see if you can find an attorney within your library “family” and try to get pro bono assistance.

There will be some restrictions with the 501(c)(3) status such as a limit on advocacy. This doesn't mean you can't engage in capital campaigns or public awareness campaigns but it does mean that you will be restricted as to how much of your group's income can be spent on “lobbying” (See United for Libraries Fact Sheet #24, “Limits on Lobbying”). Much of what the Friends do in promoting the library, however, is “educational” – i.e. informing the community or administration about the value of libraries. Very often an advocacy campaign will include much that is simply “educational” in nature and funds spent in this manner are completely legitimate.

One criterion that will be required for your 501(c)(3) status is that you have established Bylaws for your organization. These bylaws should include:

- Name of the Friends group and its headquarters (which might be the library itself).
- Mission statement.
- Who will be served by your organization?
- Governing body, including:
 - o Titles of officers.

- Terms of office.
- How officers are selected.
- Appointment and duties of standing committees.
- Provisions for special or ad hoc committees.
- Meetings:
 - Time, place, and frequency of meetings.
 - Method for calling regular and special meetings.
 - Attendance requirements.
 - Quorum requirements.
 - Order of business.
- Procedures for amending bylaws.
- Parliamentary authority.
- Dissolution clause (detailing what will happen to the group's assets if it should dissolve.
- Date of adoption.

Be sure to check the requirements for your 501(c)(3) status before adopting your bylaws, as the IRS requires that certain items be included. To get an excellent overview of what will be required to establish your Friends as a nonprofit organization go to <http://www.nolo.com> and in the search window at the bottom of the lower left hand side of the first webpage, type in "nonprofit organizations." Next, click on "How to form a nonprofit organization." In addition to this excellent overview online, Nolo Press has a number of publications addressing the legal requirements for nonprofits.

GOING LIVE: BRINGING MEMBERS INTO YOUR NEW FRIENDS GROUP

Once you've completed all the groundwork involved in establishing a Friends group, it will be time to "grow" your group. Initially you have probably worked with a fairly small core group of committed volunteers but to ensure that your group is successful over the long haul, you'll want to include as many members of the library community and others who have a stake in the library's success as possible. You'll have to determine a number of things to wage an effective membership campaign. Among them will be:

- Dues.
- Deliverables (what will members get in return).
- Membership approach and supporting materials such as brochures.
- Promotion.
- Follow-up.

Dues and "Deliverables"

Before you start your membership campaign, you will have to figure out what you want your membership dues to be and what members will get in return, in other words the "deliverables." This information will be incorporated in the brochure and other membership promotion materials. What you ask for dues and what you return as deliverables could well depend on the priorities of your organization. For example, if this Friends group is being developed to establish a strong and united voice to employ on behalf of the library's budget, you may want to start dues at \$5. This way everyone who wants to join can and you will get a lot more names in your database. If you offer several levels of membership, you will probably find that the vast majority of people join at the higher level but again, you've ensured all voices can be counted.

Obviously, if raising money is your goal, you might well want to start memberships at a much higher rate, say \$35 and graduate the levels up to as much as \$200 a year if you think that is attainable. One effective way to persuade folks to join at higher levels is to graduate the benefits they will receive accordingly. For example, you might want to offer just receipt of the newsletter at the bottom level of membership and offer such incentives as "First Night" tickets for the annual book sale for higher level givers and perhaps an invitation to an annual author event or formal dinner at the highest level.

Only you know what you are trying to accomplish and only you can determine at what levels you are likely to strike a balance between ensuring broad based participation and bringing in a fair amount of revenue – certainly at least enough revenue to cover the cost of membership benefits (including the newsletter).

In addition to annual membership dues, you might want to consider a "life time" membership, or in the case of a new group, a "founding" membership. This will help in two ways. First, the category option itself might inspire a potential member to make a significant gift towards your effort – more (startup) money for your group. Secondly, you will know from the response you get to this option which members have both the wherewithal and the love of your cause to make a major gift. This is valuable information. Be sure to consider cultivating such members for future slots on your executive committee and for a role with the Foundation if your library has one or if your Friends group plans to establish one.

Membership Recruitment

You've done all your homework. You have an active and committed executive board. You have established your mission and have worked with the library staff and trustees to develop an operating agreement. You are now a 501(c)(3) organization. You know how you want to structure the group and you have determined what you will charge for membership. The time has come to bring on as many community members as possible. The membership campaign begins. This would be a perfect job for a membership task force!

The most effective way to get members on board is to promote, promote, promote. Develop a brochure that is distributed at the front desk of the library and all its branches. Include in the brochure a list of the membership categories along with what they'll receive in return for their contribution, a location to send their check, a phone number where the prospective member can get more information, and a list of committees that the Friends will be establishing. Include a space where new members can opt to become more engaged in the group by joining one of the named committees and be sure you are ready to follow up with that new member. If your group is typical, most new members will simply show their support by writing a check and wish for nothing more than to receive a monthly newsletter. Others, however, will see this as an opportunity for community volunteer work and will be delighted to join a committee. Those that do become actively engaged will evolve into a larger core group of Friends from whom you will get most of your volunteer support and future officers. It's important to keep these more active new members engaged and nurtured.

Be sure you let your prospective members know what they will get for their membership. They will get a better library for one thing and you should press that point home. Most people will welcome the opportunity to provide additional support to the library via the Friends and will want nothing more. Others will want that opportunity to be involved via task force assignment and ultimately a chance to be an officer. Many will look forward to a newsletter once a month to let them know what's new. Still others will be attracted to knowing ahead of time about library book sales and have an opportunity to attend a "sneak preview night." All these are the "deliverables" that your core group has determined prior to the membership launch.

Work with the library staff to encourage them to give the brochure out to every patron at the check-out desk. If you are supporting an academic Friends group, work with your development office to see if there is a list of parents or alumni you can use to solicit membership from those who have a stake in the library even if they aren't students. Be sure, as well, to solicit both membership and involvement among the faculty.

Think of places outside the library where you are likely to attract new members with your brochure. How about doctors' offices, grocery stores, the student center and cafeteria, local bookstores? The brochure that you develop may be very simple and inexpensive at first. As time goes by and your membership grows, you may decide to make your promotional materials more polished with a Friends logo and a professionally designed layout. For now, however, the important thing is to get the opportunity for joining to as many outlets as possible.

Another good way to promote membership is to write a press release about the importance of library support through Friends. Make the press release compelling enough that it is likely to be published. For example, start out with a proclamation that the "new" Friends of Johnson Library" are embarking on a community or campus-wide membership campaign. Let the readers know why. What prompted you to start a Friends group in the first place? Was it a need for a better budget, a new building, more books and programs? Whatever caused your core group to establish a Friends group should be reiterated along with a strong pitch for the reason why it is so important. Be sure to include contact information, the range of dues members are asked to pay, and the opportunities members will have to be engaged in the organization – in other words the task forces you will be trying to fill.

Many Friends groups increase their membership ranks by hosting programs that will attract members of their community. An author program, for example, will no doubt be popular. Another perfect opportunity to pull together a task force. Think about asking a local author do a program on how to get published. If you provide the author with an opportunity to sell books and you promise lots of promotion about the program, you are likely to get a local writer to do it for free. Use this program (and all public programs your group sponsors) as an opportunity to promote membership in the Friends. Be sure you have a lot of brochures and encourage folks to join on the spot.

Be sure that everyone involved in the core group assists in extending your reach to members by promoting your Friends group at every opportunity. The members of your core group are likely involved in other civic or social organizations as are the Trustees. Be sure they are asked to take a quantity of membership brochures to meetings of these groups. You can help motivate this core group by setting a challenge. Ask that each member of the executive board bring in a minimum of 10 new members. After a defined length of time, honor that executive member who has brought in the most new members by taking her or him to lunch – the rest of you have to pay!

Let your imaginations go in deciding how you will encourage members in your new Friends group. With some ingenuity and a little work, you'll be surprised how many people in your community or on campus are willing to support the library through the Friends.

REVITALIZING YOUR FRIENDS GROUP

It often seems that sustaining and growing Friends groups can be even harder than establishing such a group in the first place. Over the years you may find your general membership stagnant or even dropping. You may come to realize that the work for programs, book-sales, and other activities is always performed by the same small group of people – and they're not getting any younger! You may find it more and more difficult to bring in new officers and new “worker bees” to keep the Friends group active and vital. It's time to come up with a way to revitalize your group.

Understanding what went wrong or why interest in your group has waned will help you to develop an action plan for renewed membership and activity. It's important for the core group of active members (including some who have been around for a long time) to take time out to look back over your organization's history. You might plan a mini-retreat at someone's home to begin to assess where your group has been as a basis for brainstorming ways to bring your group to new levels of membership and activity. You should include in an agenda the following issues and areas for discussion:

- Why was the group initially established?
- What have been the “golden” years of your organization when membership and activity was high?
 - Are there characteristics about your group that were different then than now?
 - Is the library's need different now than then?
 - Are the members different now – for example were they mostly housewives then, were they mostly women, were they younger in general, were they more active as volunteers for the group?
 - For academic or school groups were the members mostly students? Parents? Alumni? Faculty?
- Who are the potential members today?
- How can the Friends be more responsive to the changing characteristics of potential members?
- How can the current needs of the Library be used to make a compelling case for membership?
- What is your greatest need from membership – is it funding or is it a need to attract more volunteers to assist Friends with their activities, or both?
- Is the dues structure right for today's potential members?
- How can a renewed membership campaign be designed to attract new members in today's environment?

Looking Back

The fact that you are interested in revitalizing your group means that there were better days in years past. The first order of business should be a discussion about what was unique about the organization, the library's needs, and/or the membership make-up during the best years of your Friends group. It is possible that your group was originally formed to meet a well defined and compelling need – like fundraising for a new library or library addition. It's possible that the “type” of members you had in the past are not as available as they once were – women at home, for example, or parents of students who had time to assist and were easy to contact.

Clearly, our environment has changed. Many of the first Baby Boomers are beginning to retire and many more are still working. But one thing this group has in common is that they comprise the largest cohort of volunteers in America today. That's right! And

you thought it was the over 70 crowd. Not so but as mentioned earlier, these active volunteers are busy. They are looking for opportunities to be involved in projects that have a beginning and an end. They want to be involved in task forces not committees!

Understanding how the environment for your membership has changed over the years will go a long way in helping you design programs and a campaign to bring in members who are likely to be entirely different than members you've had in the past. In addition, if your group was formed and active because the library had a well defined and pressing need that has since been met, you will want to discuss ways in which to promote the *new* and equally compelling needs of the library. For example, a new building requires a bigger budget, more staff, more computers, and more materials. Friends groups can reposition their publicity to promote membership to address these needs, either through fund-raising or advocacy or both.

One danger in looking back at "the good old days" may be a temptation by some to try to hang on to what worked then. Sometimes groups begin to fail because the leadership wants to hold on to old programs and ideas that used to work rather than evaluating *why* they worked then and *why* they may be less effective now. The environment is constantly changing, it's important for your Friends group to key into the realities of a new environment and analyze those changes to direct your thinking about new programs, initiatives, and promotion techniques.

Looking Forward

Now that you've evaluated how your environment has changed and come up with reasonable explanations about why membership and activity in your group is dropping, it's time to look ahead at how you bring in new members, new membership revenue, and new volunteers who will help support and promote the Friends.

It's a good idea to consider just who is likely to become a Friend as well as who should be targeted for membership. You should also determine what you need new members for. If it's to increase your revenues through dues, or if you are looking for a larger database of supporters to whom you can write for special programs or initiatives, you might want to focus your appeal on the importance of their contributions to the well being of the library. If your primary goal is to raise funds and increase your database of library supporters, you will want to focus on the importance of additional funding and support for the library. In the academic environment, this kind of drive can reach well beyond students and faculty to include parents of students who are excellent candidates for financial support and advocacy when the need arises.

Most groups, however, are interested in revitalizing their Friends groups because they see a dramatic decline in the numbers of people who will volunteer to support Friends activities and to be active on its various committees. Sure, you want and need dues revenue, but more than that, you need members who are engaged in the group and who are willing to put in time as well as money. (See United for Libraries toolkit, "Tapping into the Biggest and Most Active Volunteers in Town – The Baby Boomers!") Because younger volunteers (think Gen X and Y as well as high school students) want the same sort of opportunities as the Baby Boomers, you may want to find special projects that would appeal to them and reach out for their volunteer support.

If you are revitalizing an academic or school Friends group you will no doubt consider students as wonderful volunteers. A reduced rate for membership will help attract some and there are other incentives as well. Students are often looking for opportunities to engage in meaningful volunteer work so if you can promote fun volunteer opportunities, you may have good success. Don't forget about specially targeting local parents, faculty and staff. They are often willing to become more active to support the library and can also be recruited into officer positions (as can students!).

Designing a Membership Campaign

Much of what you do to develop a new group is the same for revitalizing your group and increasing your membership. (See *Going Live*, *Dues and Deliverables*, and *Membership Recruitment* above). You will want to develop a marketing and membership promotion campaign that includes development of a (new) brochure and lots of local publicity about your renewed efforts.

In order to get more active participation in your group, be sure that your membership brochure includes categories that a new member can check to become more involved. For example, in addition to the usual information in a membership brochure such as category and dues, name and address; be sure to list committee options. A few sentences such as ***Our Friends Group Needs You! Please let us know if you would be interested in helping in the following areas:***

- Programs
- Book sale
- Membership
- Marketing and Promotion of Library
- Library Volunteer

Be sure you ask for a contact phone number and be ***extra*** sure someone in your core group is prepared to follow up with these new recruits immediately! Nothing will lower your credibility and create ill will faster than failing to contact someone who has offered to help.

New active members will instill your group with new ideas and new life. It's important to involve them right away and it's important to give serious consideration to any ideas they come up with. It is so easy for long-time members to dismiss new ideas out of hand because they've been tried unsuccessfully in the past or even because they've never been tried! If your group is serious about expanding your ranks and including new leadership, you must be prepared to let go of some of your old ways and experiment with some new ideas.

Very often a well established group has difficulty in recruiting new members because they are perceived by the community as a closed organization – in other words that the officers are always the same and the programs and book sales are always the same. You can say that you are interested in new membership or you can show that you are by handing the reins over to someone new to try something new.

CONCLUSION

In any case, whether establishing a new group or revitalizing an existing group, the most important ingredient for membership is promotion and follow through. Your goal should be to ensure that every single person in your library community knows that there is an effort underway to increase support to the library through Friends membership. Every member in your community should be invited to join and once they do, they should hear back from your organization right away thanking them for their participation.

Libraries need Friends – your efforts are important. Good Luck!

Appendix A

Recommended Additional Reading

Books:

- 101+ Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends* by Sally Gardner Reed, Beth Nawalinski, and Alex Peterson
- Even More Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends* by Sally Gardner Reed and Beth Nawalinski

Toolkits (available to United for Libraries members in the Friends & Foundations Zone):

- Tapping Into the Biggest and Most Active Volunteers in Town – The Baby Boomers!*
- School Media Center Friends Groups: A Prescription for Success*
- Friends and Libraries Working Effectively Together*
- Incorporating and Tax Exempting Procedures for Friends of Libraries*
- Expanded Model Friends' Cooperative Network*

Fact Sheets for Friends and Foundations (available on the United for Libraries website):

- #1 Starting a Friends Group
- #4 Starting an Academic Friends Group
- #6 Friends of a School Library or Media Center
- #7 Revitalizing Your Friends
- #10 Role of the Friends Board
- #11 Role of the Trustees
- #14 Board Development
- #18 Getting and Keeping Members

Appendix B

Sample Memorandum of Understanding Between Friends and Libraries

The following will constitute an operating agreement between the Friends of the Anytown Public Library (Friends) and the Anytown Public Library (Library). It will stand until and unless it is modified by mutual agreement of the Friends executive board and the Anytown Public Library administration. The Friends mission is to raise money and public awareness in the community to support the services and programs of the Library. As a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, however, it is a legally distinct entity and is not a part of the Library.

The Library agrees to include the Friends in the long-term planning process to ensure that the Friends are aware of the goals and direction of the Library.

The Library agrees to share with the Friends the library's strategic initiatives at the beginning of each fiscal year and discuss with Friends how their resources and support might help forward these initiatives.

The Library agrees to supply the Friends with a "wishlist" each year that indicates the anticipated needs for Friends support.

The Library agrees to provide the Friends with staff support to assist them with development of the newsletter, mass mailings, meeting coordination, and Friends promotional materials.

The Library agrees to provide public space for Friends membership brochures and promotional materials.

The Library agrees to provide the Friends with space in the Library for book storage and sorting, book sales, and office needs.

The Friends agree to publicly support the Library and its policies.

The Friends agree to include a member from the library's administration as a non-voting presence at all Friends' meetings and to allow room on the agenda for a library report.

The Friends agree that any and all monies raised will be spent exclusively for library programs, services, and other Library defined needs unless otherwise agreed to by both the Friends and the Library.

The Friends agree that the library administration has the final say in accepting or declining any and all gifts made to the library.

The Friends agree to engage in advocacy efforts on behalf of the Library under the guidance of the Library and the Library's Board of Trustees.

The Friends agree that if they cease to actively fundraise and promote the Library, they will disband, allowing for a new Friends group to be established in the future.