Everyday Advocacy:
ALA Policy Corps members urge ongoing relationships with elected officials

BY TERRA DANKOWSKI
Associate Editor, American Libraries

Lance Werner, executive director of Kent (Mich.) District Library and one of 12 inaugural members of the newly formed ALA Policy Corps, admitted he was surprised that he had made a library advocate of a local legislator.

“We were able to get the Tea Party to support our millage increase. That’s probably the first and last time that would happen in Kent County,” he joked to attendees at the United for Libraries President’s Program, “Engaging Elected Officials with Your Library,” at the American Library Association’s Annual Conference and Exhibition in New Orleans on June 23. “We bonded over tacos, of all things,” he added.

Werner was one of four panelists — three Policy Corps members and one state assemblyperson — sharing past successes and best practices with Trustees, librarians, and Friends looking to approach and convert politicians to the library cause. His anecdote illustrated the main takeaway of the morning: Relationships are key.

“I would start with the notion that you don’t start a relationship with elected officials the moment you need something,” said Policy Corps member Todd Carpenter, executive director of the National Information Standards Organization in Baltimore. “Start building those relationships sooner rather than later,” he said.

Nicolle Davies, Policy Corps member and executive director of Charleston County (S.C.) Public Library, underscored that point. “Building relationships is a year-round, year-in, year-out activity,” she said. “It has to be genuine and it has to be real.”

Werner encouraged attendees to find those authentic touchpoints with members of their community — not just limited to elected officials — who can advocate on behalf of libraries.

“Everybody’s got their fishing,” he said. “You got to understand that your fishing might be quilting. Maybe it’s poker. Maybe it’s golf.”

Resultant of that relationship building, panelists agreed it’s important that elected officials are then physically invited to visit branches in their districts, so they understand what libraries do and can properly advocate for them.

“We are still fighting an antiquated perception of what we do,” said Davies. A common refrain she hears? “If all you do is check out books, why do you need more staff and more space?”

Davies welcomes the opportunity to set the record straight by inviting local officials in to see the summer reader

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Where to begin with library advocacy? The E’s of Libraries®

My name is Skip Dye and I am proud to be serving as president of United for Libraries. Professionally, I work at Penguin Random House (PRH) handling library marketing and digital sales. I also head up the sales operations department for PRH. During my 21 years at PRH, I have had the opportunity to work with many wonderful editors, sales people, and authors. I feel most fortunate to work for a company whose mantra is “Changing the World, one book at a time.”

When I first joined the board just shy of three years ago, I had a perception of United for Libraries’ role, but the true reality of the positive influences United has on the library community quickly changed my preconceived notions. I knew who the organization served, but I had underestimated the key role United plays in supporting and educating Friends groups, Trustees, and Foundations. Now, serving as president, I hope to continue the good works of those that proceeded me. I promise to grow and evolve this great organization.

Over the past year, I have become actively involved in library advocacy. What started it for me? I attended National Library Legislative Day for the first time in May 2017. As many other attendees, I was called “to action” as a direct response to the massive proposed budget cuts to library funding. At that first day of presentations and training, all to help prepare me for my “trek to the hill,” it just clicked in me: I have a voice which can have an impact. Me, being there, visible and present, particularly at that time of funding flux, was important, not only to others, but to myself and my beliefs around the importance of libraries. Many chords where struck in me that day. The one that echoed the loudest was: it is powerful for a person who uses the library, volunteers at their library, and works to support their libraries to advocate.

I had a challenge that was usual for me. In my passionate desire to “spread the good word” of Libraries (and that’s a capital L), I didn’t know how to start. come from a sales background. I am someone that talks to strangers in the grocery store (yes, I am one of those people). I was raised in the South for goodness sake, yet I didn’t know where to begin. There’s so much that libraries do for their communities. There’s not one dominant function. I mean think about it: Hospitals=Heal; Schools=Educate. Say that to a legislator, they get it. Libraries do so many vital things for a community. Where do I start? Where do I stop?

There is the perception verses reality gap. Perception: Libraries are nice to have (or obsolete!). Reality: Libraries are essential. We have all heard the stereotypes, particularly from someone that hasn’t been to a library since they were a kid or since they had a kid. This gap has to be bridged. It must change. Institutions which are perceived as essential have an advantage in their ability to clearly advocate for their interest.

I needed a tool set. Sales handles to use. Relatable points that help me articulate why adequate library funding is necessary. I learned about The E’s of Libraries, a framework with specific attributes that are memorable, actionable, and perception-changing. The idea for The E’s of Libraries® emerged from ALA’s own advocacy around E-rate with the FCC (see http://www.ala.org/advocacy/pp/e). Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Engagement: these five “E’s” encapsulate the areas in which libraries support their patrons. These aren’t the only “E’s,” but they can be the hook in that 30-second elevator speech I was giving to my legislators. I knew that job creation was important to my state’s legislators. In my conversations, I spoke about how libraries contribute to the education of my community and of the new businesses started in my library. By addressing directly how libraries contribute, my message around why increased library funding is fundamental to the success of our state and my community directly spoke to my legislator’s concerns. I was able to connect.

I think that my experience isn’t unique. Not knowing where to start. How to begin. Practical advocacy training is one of my key initiatives as president. The challenges facing libraries is ever-present. I see United’s role as more important than ever. And, I need your help. I would like to hear from you, particularly around advocacy challenges facing you and your library. Also, I want to hear your successes or tools you have used. My hopes are that from your comments we can make sure that United for Libraries has resources that are helpful and meaningful. Please feel free to reach out to me via email: sdye422@gmail.com or united@ala.org.
Join the ‘Libraries = Strong Communities’ advocacy effort

BY LOIDA GARCIA-FEBO
2018-2019 ALA President

Libraries of all types serve as cornerstones of democracy, empowering all members of the community, young and old, to make informed decisions by taking advantage of free access to information. While striving to deliver new services that connect closely with patrons’ needs, libraries are transforming lives through education and lifelong learning.

The transformative power of libraries has influenced the launching of “Libraries = Strong Communities,” a national advocacy effort aimed at highlighting the value of academic, public and school libraries. This initiative is uniquely positioned to ignite public awareness of the value of libraries and library staff and to create a groundswell of support at the local, state, national and global level. I announced this effort during the ALA Annual Conference & Exhibit Inaugural Banquet in New Orleans.

Friends groups know the value of libraries and play a valuable advocacy role through the promotion of library services in their communities, fundraising through such events as book sales and helping to get out the vote for referendums.

I am inviting Friends and all library supporters to join Libraries=Strong Communities, my new national advocacy effort aimed at highlighting the value of libraries of all types — public, academic and school libraries.

Friends groups, library Trustees, and library Foundations can take advantage of the tools that will be provided for this initiative. “Libraries = Strong Communities” will include messaging used in conjunction with ALA’s Libraries Transform public awareness campaign. Forthcoming publicity tools, including a press release template, flyer, “Because:” statements, and Facebook frame, will be available for participating libraries as well as advocates at large. Additional information regarding the tour will be available within the next few weeks, and those interested in following tour activities in real time may follow the hashtag #LibrariesStrong.

To promote this effort, I will be touring a series of libraries, calling attention to the significant role libraries of all types play within their communities. The cross-country tour currently consists of six U.S. stops, including Pikes Peak (Colorado) Public Library District, October 6, 2018; Cambridge (Massachusetts) Public Library, October 18, 2018; Seattle Public Library, January 16, 2019; North Miami Public Library, TBD February 2019; and Los Angeles Public Library, May 15, 2019. It will conclude on June 22, 2019 during the ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition in Washington, D.C.

At each stop, participating library leaders and local advocates will have the opportunity to address local and national issues, as well as generate public awareness of programs and resources. Elected officials, community-based organizations, state library associations, ALA divisions and chapter members and the public will be invited to participate in local events and advocacy efforts.

Friends groups are essential to the success of our advocacy.

I look forward to working with all of you in this exciting effort. Together, we can bring awareness to the community of the value of libraries and the indispensable part they play in serving, engaging and transforming communities. We can do this!

United for Libraries program submissions for 2019 ALA Annual Conference due Aug. 31

We hope many of you were able to attend the 2018 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, and that you enjoyed the programs offered. The United for Libraries Annual Conference Program Committee is already gearing up for the 2019 ALA Annual Conference, and we need your help.

For the next ALA Annual Conference, which will be held June 20-25, 2019, in Washington, D.C., we would like to provide programs for all United for Libraries member categories: Trustees, Foundations, and Friends. Accordingly, we would like to have you suggest programs you would be willing to help plan or host. Here’s an idea of what we’re looking for:

- Foundation-focused programs: Fundraising, planned giving, annual giving campaigns, fundraising events, etc.
- Friends programs: Re-energizing your organization, recruiting new/younger members, new ways to sell books, online book sales, book-nook best practices, etc.
- Trustee programs: Advocacy, governance, best practices in policies, trending issues, etc.

To submit a program, visit www.ala.org/conferenceevents/submissions. The deadline for submissions is Aug. 31, 2018. If you have questions or need assistance, please email united@ala.org. Thank you for your membership and support. We look forward to hearing from you!

— Paula Beswick & Charity Tyler, Co-Chairs, United for Libraries Annual Conference Program Committee
Are you Ready for Fundraising Success? A Step-by-Step Guide for Any Library

At the United for Libraries program “Are you Ready for Fundraising Success? As Step-by-Step Guide for Any Library,” held at the 2018 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, Michael Stevenson, principal of Bannack Group from Baton Rouge, La., presented a jam-packed program covering some basics of fundraising, as well as tips for running a successful initiative or capital campaign. He stressed the need to be prepared long before uttering the words “Let’s launch a campaign!” Successful campaigns begin with successful planning.

Laying the groundwork for the discussion, Stevenson shared that American individuals, estates, foundations, and corporations contributed an estimated $390 billion to U.S. charities in 2016. While noting that this is an almost unfathomable chunk of money — certainly an amount that is difficult to wrap your brain around — there is a hidden caveat within the numbers. More money is being gifted, but the dollars are going to fewer and fewer nonprofits. So even though the pot is large, you have to be savvy to earn the chance to dip into it.

Stevenson’s primary advice is to build relationships with donors of all types prior to asking them to invest in your library project. This can take years and many, many work hours. So who can help build these relationships if it takes that much effort? Libraries, according to Michael, are in a prime position, often being the hub of a community with a plethora of partnership opportunities. It is the collaborations that could open the doors to the shrinking pool of non-profits receiving charitable support. Libraries of all sorts have a wealth of people to call on with their staff, Trustees, Friends, and Foundations to make introductions, give tours, host events, etc. (Getting so many people involved, however, can have its pitfalls. EVERYONE has to be on the same page, reciting the same message, and never going off-point to be effective.)

The hour-long program included a lively discussion and Q&A session, along with a handout detailing the 20 items that must be in place to conduct a successful campaign (see below article, “Campaign Readiness Checklist”). Stevenson can be reached at www.bannackgroup.com or michael@bannackgroup.com.

Campbell Readiness Checklist — Leading up to a Successful Campaign Launch

BY BANNACK GROUP, LLC
www.bannackgroup.com

This preliminary checklist may be useful in constructing plans forward for an organization considering a major or comprehensive campaign. The following “Top 25” criteria describe conditions that define ideal circumstances leading up to a successful campaign kickoff.

- The organization has a clear and compelling vision of success.
- The organization has a data-driven description of the social need that it aims to address and is able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of root causes and current trends; and it can demonstrate that it is uniquely qualified and enjoys a comparative advantage among its peers.
- The organization has a clear and compelling vision of success.
- The organization has formulated a Strategic Plan that is driven by social impact and is based on a set of strategies that will expand its capacity and improve its effectiveness in addressing targeted social needs.
- The organization has formulated a Business Plan that is driven by measurable performance outcomes; the plan addresses capital requirements, prioritizes the allocation of resources, sets a timeline, and
establishes clear performance goals and objectives.

- The organization has identified a set of performance indicators that adequately correlates purposeful action with performance outcomes; performance outcomes are measured and reported regularly; and performance results are used to make improvements and substantiate progress.

- The organization has developed a financial sustainability plan that identifies reliable and diverse sources of revenue that will perpetuate and sustain elevated levels of performance well into the future.

- Specific fundraising goals and objectives have been identified and will sufficiently address the capital requirements articulated in the organization’s Business Plan.

- All board members are committed to the strategic, business and campaign plans and are prepared to support the campaign with time, energy, and personal resources, commensurate with their abilities.

- The organization’s executive is well regarded, is willing to commit a sufficient amount of time to the campaign, and is able to articulate the importance of the campaign’s priorities.

- The organization’s staff are supportive of the campaign and willing to play appropriate roles, including participation in the cultivation and solicitation of prospects with interest in their respective areas of expertise.

- The organization has identified potential volunteer leaders of the campaign who are committed to its purposes, who are prepared to commit sufficient time to leading the campaign, and who preferably are experienced in fundraising.

- There are prospects who have the capacity to make leadership gifts totaling a significant portion of the anticipated campaign goal — and who have been cultivated to a point of readiness to make such commitments.

- There are a sufficient number of prospects who have a relationship with the organization, who have a known or demonstrated commitment to its purposes, and who have the financial capacity to provide the gifts required to attain the balance of the proposed goal.

- The organization has adequate knowledge of its prospects—including records, prospect research, and other information regarding the interests, philanthropic priorities, financial capacity, and life circumstances.

- The advancement office is led by a professional who is a member of the organization’s leadership team, is well regarded by the governing board, and preferably has significant fundraising experience.

- The advancement staff is sufficient in size, is properly configured, and possesses the experience and skills required to execute a campaign.

- Donor information systems and services, including prospect research, are adequate to support a campaign.

- The advancement office has established relationships with such specialists, either internal or external, as may be needed during the campaign, for example, fundraising counsel, planned giving counsel, and professionals in communications, publications, and event management.

- Adequate budgetary resources have been committed to the campaign.

- There are no conditions affecting the organization that will have a negative impact on the campaign, for example, recent controversies, internal political divisions, or competing fundraising efforts among units within the organization.

- There are no conditions in the external environment that will have a negative impact on the campaign, for example, a poor economy or competing campaigns by other organizations in the same community.

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program and highlighting the socioeconomic, business, and academic advantages the library creates for its patrons.

Nevada Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, herself a Trustee for the Las Vegas-Clark County (Nev.) Library District, told attendees that it’s okay to play to politicians’ needs to show off their districts, stroke their egos, and have their photos taken.

“People love to see and promote things that are happening in their communities,” she said.

Chief to remember is that “libraries are uniquely bipartisan,” said Carpenter. “You shouldn’t assume the letter after their name is indicative of whether they support libraries.”

Added Werner: “Anything’s possible if you make that effort ... You don’t have anything to lose; you only have everything to gain.”

This piece was originally published June 24, 2018, on the American Libraries website at http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/everyday-advocacy. Reprinted with permission.
Penny Weller and Craig Wilson named ALA Trustee Citation recipients

The American Library Association and United for Libraries have named Penny Weller and Craig Wilson, Trustees at Kent District Library (KDL) in Kent County, Mich., recipients of the ALA Trustee Citation.

The ALA Trustee Citations were presented on June 22 by 2017-2018 ALA President Jim Neal at Opening General Session of the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, which featured former First Lady Michelle Obama and Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden. Accepting the ALA Trustee Citations were Weller and Lance Werner, executive director of Kent District Library (on Wilson’s behalf).

The ALA Trustee Citation, established in 1941 to recognize public library Trustees for distinguished service to library development, honors the best contributions and efforts of the estimated 60,000 American citizens who serve on library boards.

Weller has served on the Kent District Library Board of Trustees since 2010, and is currently chair. She has served on the pension board, development board, and on the Alliance of Friends. She has also served on the Book Bash and Literary Libations committees.

Wilson has served on the Kent District Library Board of Trustees since 2013, including two years as chair. He worked to gain city support to pass a bond that financed a renovation and expansion of the East Grand Rapids location of Kent District Library. He is a member representative for Kent District Library on the Ada Library Building Committee, which is establishing a 20th branch of the Kent District Library.

“We as an organization have been very fortunate to have Penny Weller and Craig Wilson serve as Trustees because they both have been incredibly supportive of KDL’s mission and KDL’s leadership,” said Werner. “They have given valuable insights when facing promising and positive situations, but problematic ones as well, and they’ve each shown to be passionate and dedicated chairpersons and have always given more than what is expected.”

For more information about the ALA Trustee Citation and to learn how to nominate a Trustee, visit www.ala.org/united/grants_awards/trustees/trusteecitation.

Trustee from the Tool Room: Libraries Promoting Early Learning

BY DAVID HALLENBECK

In order to be effective in governing their libraries, Trustees need to be knowledgeable about their community and its needs in addition to knowing library law and policy development. This column continues our discussion of policy tools that public libraries can use to help meet the evolving needs of their community. The tool set we are looking at this time promotes early learning. Libraries can assist in building literacy from birth, in strengthening school learning, in addressing special needs, and in partnering for success. A recent ALA brief described this opportunity in more detail:

• The United States needs to better prepare the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs — especially young children from families or communities with meager opportunity.
• Look to libraries to strengthen early childhood learning. Libraries constitute a ready-made infrastructure that provides resources and expert guidance to help parents and caregivers advance children’s literacy, which have far reaching academic and economic impacts.
• Librarians work with and in schools (nursery and elementary) and day care centers to promote early learning. School and public libraries inspire reluctant readers and extend learning for all beyond the classroom and the school day.
• Libraries serve as a community lynchpin for family engagement and early learning networks — bringing learning materials to children who might not otherwise have access, serving families with special needs and circumstances, and laying a foundation of learning for all children.

You can read the entire brief “From Baby’s First Words: Libraries Promote Early Learning” at www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/access/Early_earlychildhood_A-WEB_01-17-17.pdf.

After you have read it, please take our short survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/GTZZD2Y and share stories about what your library is doing in actively promoting early learning. Stories are more effective than statistical data in making the value of libraries real to the decision makers and funding community. While this impact is true at both the local and state level, it is particularly important at the federal level where Congressional Representatives hear directly from their own voters about the difference their libraries are making in their lives.

For a look at our earlier discussion, please check out Building Entrepreneurial Opportunities at www.ala.org/united/trustees/trusteefromthetoolroom.
Identifying barriers to library board service: United for Libraries’ Emerging Leaders project survey results

BY LINA BERTINELLI, MADELINE JARVIS, KATHY KOSINSKI, & TESS WILSON

According to 2016 Pew Research Center data, millennials are more likely to have visited a public library in the past year than any other adult generation. Despite being core users, they are often underrepresented on library boards and other advocacy groups. To identify possible barriers to inclusion and develop strategies to recruit more millennials into library advocacy, United for Libraries is sponsoring a project in the 2018 ALA Emerging Leaders (EL) Program. “Beyond Using the Library: Engaging Millennials as Advocates and Civic Library Leaders” places new library workers in project-planning groups guided by ALA divisions and affiliates.

To examine current trends, we talked to board members within our networks about their experiences, motivations, and challenges. Based on the insight we received, we developed an online survey that was distributed through the United Listserv and personal networks. “Identifying Barriers to Library Board Service” received 866 responses across 41 states. The majority of the participants (62%) are currently serving on a board, but respondents also included members of Friends boards, members of Friends groups, past trustees, library administrators, and foundation participants. Through the survey, we collected information on how respondents became involved with their organization, their preferences in board work, the demographics of their board, and the strategies employed by their board. We also asked for their birth year to determine which generation they belonged to, using Pew Research Center’s parameters.

SURVEY RESULTS

Baby boomers saw the highest representation in our survey data, with 51% of respondents born between 1946 and 1964. Only 6% of respondents were millennials, born between 1981 and 1996. Members of the silent generation (born 1928-45) and Gen X (born 1965-80) each made up 19% of survey participants. Only one respondent was born after 1996; 53% of respondents reported that there were no millennials on their board.

Before our research, we thought millennials might want to join a library board for career development or as a way to build professional connections. Yet survey results indicate that millennials get involved owing to more altruistic motivations, such as willingness to serve; excitement about their community; and love of libraries and reading. Only one respondent listed improving their résumé as their reason for joining a board.

As to how they got involved, 62% of baby boomer respondents, 63% of silent generation respondents, and 62% of Gen Xers — versus 46% of millennials — indicated that they learned of a vacancy on the board through word of mouth. Respondents were most commonly recruited by directors, other staff, current board members, municipal staff, and personal friends.

While word of mouth seems to be an effective way to garner interest, relying on personal connections can lead to a homogenous board. Adding “diversity and alternate perspectives” was important when recruiting new members, according to 82% of respondents, yet only 33% said the demographics of their board reflected those of their community. In order to increase diversity, it is imperative for members to reach out to communities that are missing from or underrepresented on the board. Millennials who might have spent the past few years building a family, getting an education, or moving between jobs could have missed opportunities to form the connections upon which word of mouth systems rely.

Meeting logistics proved to be a potential barrier. Efficient use of time should be considered, as should the time of day chosen for meetings. While we did not specifically ask about occupation in the survey, about 25% of respondents mentioned that they are retired or that their board is largely comprised of retirees, and many retired participants acknowledged that they have more time than board members in the workforce. Managing expectations of how much time each person can dedicate may make it easier for those with full-time jobs or young children.

NEXT STEPS

The four members of the United for Libraries Emerging Leaders team will continue their work on engaging millennials on Friends, Trustee, and Foundation boards as part of a United for Libraries Task Force. More resources on increasing millennial membership and support tools for millennials who want to be involved will be available at www.ala.org/united.

The Emerging Leaders team is comprised of Lina Bertinelli, Greenville County (S.C.) Library System; Madeline Jarvis, Marion (Iowa) Public Library; Kathy Kosinski, Library of Michigan; and Tess Wilson, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. United for Libraries board members Veronda Pitchford (a 2005 Library Journal Mover & Shaker) and David Paige are providing support as member guides for the project, and Executive Director Beth Nawalinski is serving as staff liaison. For more information on the EL Program, visit www.ala.org/education careers/leadership/emergingleaders.


This piece originally appeared in Library Journal’s Library Hotline; reprinted with permission.
Memorable moments and enlightening takeaways: Reflections on the ALA Annual Conference from the 2018 United for Libraries/SAGE Academic Friend Conference Grant recipient

BY DYANNA BLACK

I approached the 2018 ALA Annual Conference with excitement, hoping to bring insights back to our group in Kansas City. We are the Friends of the Library Board for the University of Missouri – Kansas City. Our goals are to increase membership, establish a healthy financial endowment, and lay a foundation to support our university library for many years to come.

My priority in attending ALA was to seek sessions which could inspire and strengthen our Friends group in the achievement of our goals.

Four United for Libraries sessions stood out as most helpful and appropriate for our Friends group:

- Engaging Elected Officials with Your Library
- Your Library in Their Language: Strategies for Creating Library Advocates Among Business Leaders in Your Community
- Leveraging Your Community Ambassadors: Transforming Your Friends of the Library
- Are You Ready for Fundraising Success? A Step-by-Step Guide for Any Library

There were many enlightening points made at the sessions. Some of the key takeaways for our Friends group were:

- Remember that Friends board members are uniquely positioned to advocate for the libraries they support. Friends are uncompensated and not employed by the libraries they represent. Because they have nothing personal to gain from their advocacy, supporters and potential partners are more inclined to listen to their message.
- Friends group boards should first solidify their mission and vision (i.e. strategy), then turn their focus to brand-building, program execution and running campaigns. One session gave us very helpful guidelines on performing a SWOT analysis, and holding a strategic planning session.
- We should be proactive about building relationship with business leaders, and with elected officials. Ask them about their challenges and goals — and find ways to support those goals. We shouldn’t wait until our library has a need to approach them, and we shouldn’t begin a partnership by asking for something. While growing our relationships with these partners, we can invite these elected officials and business leaders to the library; give them first-hand experience in the space; thank them for their partnership and support. We can and should publicly recognize these leaders for their contributions and support of the library.
- An effective approach to marketing is to talk about the value our library brings to the community — not just about programs or usage. We should have data available, and tell stories about lives changed, highlighting the library’s contributions to the community.
- Michelle Obama is just as wonderful, smart, and fabulous as I imagined, and I’m glad I was able to attend her keynote session.

There were also a few surprises. Here are some of the memorable “a-ha” moments:

- Fundraising campaigns are very time- and labor-intensive. We should be prepared to spend months planning and working; and be prepared to contact thousands of potential supporters in order to find a few hundred new donors.
- 70% of nonprofit contributions come from individuals, and estate bequests comprise 9%, but corporate giving is only 5% of the total. Our board has been focused on building corporate partnerships (we have none), but these statistics will likely encourage us to pursue estate bequests (we have many aging Friends supporters — and had not even thought about approaching them on this!). Also, this information helps us as we plan fundraising efforts — we can reach out to individuals as well as corporations.
An unforgettable experience: Tips and thoughts from the 2018 ALA Annual Conference from the United for Libraries/ThriftBooks Friend Conference Grant recipient

BY JENNIFER KAMINSKI

Thousands of librarians, celebrity sightings, free books — most signed by the author! — a Beer and Boil, a huge convention hall, beads and staying in a hotel by Bourbon Street, more classes than you can possibly attend without cloning yourself... It all added up to a grand experience at my first American Library Association Annual Conference June 21-26 in New Orleans. From the expansive Friday Opening General Session featuring former First Lady Michelle Obama (!) to the inspiring Closing General Session with Oscar-winning actor Viola Davis, my week at ALA was one I will never forget.

I felt honored to be chosen for the United for Libraries/ThriftBooks Friend Conference Grant. What a validation for my lifelong love of reading and libraries — from my childhood when I made check-out cards for my own books, to my past decade serving as secretary of the Friends of the Daviess County Public Library in Owensboro, Ky. On a side note, I consider instilling in my children a love of reading one of my greatest accomplishments (they are now 25 and 21). We know this gift keeps on giving, and it’s free if you go to the library!

I drove with my husband and daughter from Kentucky to New Orleans and arrived early (Wednesday evening) so we could take a day to see the city. After beignets at Café Du Monde, music on Jackson Square, shopping for jewelry at the French Market and walking to the Old Ursuline Convent (I work for the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph), we drove to the Morial Convention Center so I could sign in. My first sight of the conference were all those eye-catching banners for new books. I got a First Time Attendee ribbon for my badge, and my daughter took my picture by the Mardi Gras float. Later, we drove to the Ninth Ward to see the area affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. That evening, we had a delicious meal at Gumbo Shop in the French Quarter.

My first session was the New Member Roundtable on Friday, where conference veterans offered tips. The biggest takeaway was to TALK … your badge is an excuse to strike up a conversation with anyone wearing a badge … if you’re not an extrovert, pretend to be … thank the exhibitors … you are here to represent your library and librarians like to share. We finished the session with a mingle bingo game.

What would I tell future ALA new-comers? I didn’t realize you received free signed books at author panels — I missed United for Libraries’ mystery and nonfiction author panels, but made it to romance. I didn’t know the interesting Cognotes newsletter was different free books, but I didn’t quite believe vendors actually GIVE THEM AWAY! I came home with dozens of wonderful books — some classics, some new — and I am thoroughly enjoying them.

I am grateful to have such inspiration and guidance to bring back to our Friends of the Library group, in support of our University of Missouri Kansas City Library.

For more information about the United for Libraries/SAGE Academic Friend Conference Grant, visit www.ala.org/united/grants_awards/friends.

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• Most Friends groups operate in parallel with their libraries. These Friends groups are removed and somewhat separate, and they have their own strategy sessions and they set their own agendas and missions. The “Transforming your Friends of the Library” session highlighted a strong relationship between their Friends and their university library, while clear it was a parallel — not enmeshed — partnership. This description was surprising to me, because our Friends board is overseen by our library faculty and staff, and our Friends group has been placed in a somewhat subordinate relationship to the library. Our board is very engaged, and wants to support the library, create an endowment and build a foundation for success, but we may need more independence to accomplish all of our goals. Hopefully the board can discuss our relationship with the library staff/faculty — and find a relationship structure that will enable the Friends to effectively support our library, while being free to maintain our vision and mission.
• Free books! I was told to expect
An unforgettable experience continued from page 9

every day. I didn’t think I saw another person from Kentucky, but when I searched the ALA app, I found 19 of us, plus three speakers and two presenters!

After orientation, I joined a LONG line for Michelle Obama’s talk with Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, which was preceded by music from Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews. Large screens were set up in the vast room to allow us to see presenters up close. Michelle Obama was an amazing speaker, very personable with lots to say. She told us that she and President Barack Obama read to their daughters every day. President Obama read all of the Harry Potter books aloud. Another favorite was Calvin and Hobbes. Michelle would fall asleep while reading at the White House because it was a hectic eight years. She likes to have a book in her hand. She praised her mother for helping raise her granddaughters in the White House and making them do laundry and “keeping them humble.” At the same time, Mrs. Robinson would ask them, “What do you think about that?” which translates to, “Your opinion matters.” Michelle said to measure children not by their grades but how they treat others. She said if children are acting out, something is wrong. “You can’t save the world if your own household is not solid,” she said. She believes higher education is vital, and women need to put a monetary value on their work and ask for what they want.

That night I went to the Penguin Random House/United for Libraries reception at the National WWII Museum. We enjoyed the songs of the Victory Belles and appetizers and getting graphic novels signed by authors including Meg Cabot … I knew her from the “Princess Diaries” because of my daughter. We explored the museum, which provided a fascinating history lesson.

My second day featured “Engaging Elected Officials with Your Library” (invite them to use your space, build a relationship based on mutual interests, your politics don’t matter because libraries are apolitical, thank them with a certificate, help them promote what is happening in their districts) … a Friends discussion (recruit new board members by starting them out on committees, do a membership drive during National Friends of the Library Week, give the Friends credit for projects to raise awareness) … and “Engaging Millennials on Library Boards (Trustees, Friends, and Foundations).” Forrest Gump is my favorite movie, so I was excited to see Sally Field discuss her new autobiography, In Pieces. She used acting exercises to “enter old rooms” and past emotional scenes in her life. I was happy to get a chapter excerpt. Later, I caught the Q&A with actor Emilio Estevez after the premiere of his film, The Public, about homeless people in the Cincinnati Public Library.

That evening, my family and I drove to the EveryLibrary Beer and Boil fundraiser, where we heard jazz while eating shrimp and crab legs. EveryLibrary is the legislative advocate for libraries. Then we made it to the last show of the night (10 p.m.) at Preservation Hall. It was a treat to hear this famous jazz band.

On Sunday, I attended marketing programs to get ideas to promote our library. That is part of what I do in my regular job. I learned to communicate your higher purpose; don’t skip strategies before you go to tactics; use the right words in your message, and if it’s not helping the mission, it’s hurting it. Write down five words to describe your library, and build your brand from there.

At the ALA Annual Conference, there is always something to do, and the hard part is deciding. I saw a 17-minute film, The Exceptionally Extraordinary Emporium, about Mardi Gras, in the ALA Theatre. At a book club class, presenters said book selection is paramount, and people choose books based on comfort or discovery. You can pair food, drink or an art project, or even go to a location, related to the book.

That evening’s entertainment was truly that — “The Laugh’s on Us” sponsored by Ingram Content Group, with four comedians/writers speaking and signing books. I recognized Tom Papa and Paula Poundstone from listening to NPR. I was directed to a table in the front row, and Paula asked me during her routine what programs I attended that day! It was nerve-wracking, but I did remember two of them.

Monday morning included “Leveraging Your Community Ambassadors: Transforming Your Friends of the Library” and “Are You Ready for Fundraising Success? A Step-by-Step Guide for Any Library,” where I wrote down several ideas. After getting a catfish po boy and chatting with a librarian who sat across from me, I stepped into the exhibit hall. I got my badge scanned at a few booths and tried to peruse as much as possible before the United for Libraries Gala Author Toast sponsored by ReferenceUSA. There, I enjoyed veggies, fruit, cheese, crackers and wine while seeing six authors present their latest books. At this point after a few days of walking and escalators — and weight lifting with books in my tote bag — I returned to the hotel for my first dip in the pool!

At Tuesday’s Closing General Session, ALA President James Neal said diversity is a primary goal. I couldn’t help but notice the conference was bookended by three African American women, Michelle Obama and Carla Hayden at the Opening General Session, and Viola Davis at the Closing, who unveiled her new Corduroy children’s book. New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, also an African American woman, said in her welcoming address, “Libraries aren’t just books — they are community,” and who praised ALA for being their first conference after Hurricane Katrina.

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How to find library supporters in the business world

The 2018 winner of the United for Libraries/SAGE Academic Friend Conference Grant, Dyanna Black, is vice president of the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Friends of the Library board, as well as chair of its fundraising committee. Drawing from 16 years of experience in finance, legal, and consumer services, Dyanna has shared some tips for libraries seeking support from people in the business world. Check them out below.

What inspired you to begin your work in support of the UMKC library?

My son was getting ready to attend UMKC and I wanted to find a way to be involved and give back. When the nominating committee approached me, it was perfect timing!

How have you taken what you have learned in the business world and applied it to your work at UMKC?

I’ve been able to bring data analytics and strategic planning skills to our nominating process and our branding efforts. There are several key areas we look for such as diversity, experience in the sciences and technology, as well as traditional humanities. Our data analysis allowed us to assess the strengths and gaps of our current board and help us find new board members who could add to the areas in which there were gaps.

Also my finance background is helping with our new fundraising initiatives.

What tips would you give to libraries who are looking for supporters from people in the business world?

Be open to thinking as businesspeople: return on investment, measure track and report on results, set a strategic direction and ensure that programs, events and new collections purchases align to this strategy, think long-term, not just about next year’s budget. Businesspeople have to prove the value of their programs and teams and must deliver against strategic priorities. Nonprofit entities can learn a lot from this “results-oriented” approach.

What are your top tips on leading a Friends of the Library group? In what ways do you keep your Friends of the Library group active and engaged?

We onboard new members and ask them “in what area do you most want to contribute” of our five strategic areas and make sure we plug them into ways to contribute. We assign a board mentor the first year for new members. We are careful to recruit only those with a commitment to UMKC, who will bring their best to the FOL board, and who clearly express how they’d like to contribute. We also have board socials, attend university events to support our school and the library, and our committees are very engaged. Plus we respect and value each others’ contributions.

We do have attendance requirements for board meetings, though our members are engaged and we don’t really worry about it.

This year, you’ll be attending the ALA Annual Conference for the first time. What are you most looking forward to?

Meeting like-minded board members and community leaders supporting their libraries, attending sessions on STEM, STEM+Art, technology, fundraising and re-branding. So very excited to hear Michelle Obama speak too! (See page 8 for related article “Memorable moments and enlightening takeaways: Reflections on the ALA Annual Conference from the 2018 United for Libraries/SAGE Academic Friend Conference Grant recipient” for a summary of Black’s conference experience.)


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found diversity among all attendees as far as age, race, and gender.

I’ve never been to a conference that was so big and so busy! The program was over half an inch thick. There were 30 conference hotels and four shuttles. There were many meetings and programs going on at any one time. It was all very impressive, and I would recommend it to anyone.

When I wear the “banned books” socks I bought at the ALA Store at the conference, they will bring back memories. Thinking of books and libraries reminds me that it pays to be a lifelong learner and informed citizen … and if you want to meet new people and enjoy new opportunities, it’s always good to be a “Friend.”

Engaging Book Clubs in Your Community

At the ALA Annual Conference, United for Libraries and Book Club Central teamed up to present a program titled “Book Club Central: Engaging Book Clubs in Your Community.” Donna Seaman, editor, adult books, at Booklist, moderated a panel that featured librarian and book reviewer Bill Kelly of Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library; James Mustich, author of 1,000 Books to Read Before You Die, and Amy Stewart, who is the New York Times bestselling author of the Kopp Sisters series and owns Eu- reka Books in Eureka, Calif.

Each of the panelists responded to questions from Seaman such as recommendations as to how to choose books for a book club, how to engage members, and marketing strategies to build and sustain a book club.

Attendees were asked to participate with their thoughts on areas such as how to and who chooses books for a book club as well as how to start and maintain a successful teen book club.

One attendee represented a cruise line that has libraries for passengers and asked for suggestions as to how to develop a book club for a cruise. That was a fun question with several people raising their hands to “volunteer” on the cruise to run the book club!

Free books and a signing were provided for Amy Stewart (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) and a sample of James Mustich’s (Workman) upcoming book was given out as well.

For more information, visit www.bookclubcentral.org.

Nominations for I Love My Librarian Award due Oct. 1

The American Library Association (ALA) is seeking nominations for the coveted 2018 I Love My Librarian Award, which recognizes librarians for transforming lives and communities through education and lifelong learning. The national award invites library users to nominate their favorite librarians working in public, school, college, community college or university libraries. Nominations are being accepted now through Oct. 1, 2018 at www.ilovelibraries.org/lovemylibrarian.

Last year’s award winners were honored for making a difference in their communities, schools and campuses through the work they do every day. They included an academic librarian who preserves the stories and histories of the LGBTQ community, a public librarian who helps economically disadvantaged families connect with social services and a school librarian who inspires a love of reading in students who are new to the United States or speak English as a second language.

The ALA will select up to 10 award recipients. Each winner will receive a $5,000 cash award, a plaque and a travel stipend to attend the I Love My Librarian Award ceremony and reception in New York City on Dec. 4 hosted by the award co-sponsor, the philanthropic foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Since the award was established in 2008, library users nationwide have shared more than 18,000 nominations detailing how librarians have used their expertise to connect them to information, educational opportunities and critical technology to help improve the quality of their lives.

To be eligible for the award, each nominee must hold a master’s degree in library and information studies from a program accredited by the ALA or a master’s degree with a specialty in school library media from an educational program accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Nominees must also be currently working in a public library, a library at an accredited two- or four-year college or university or at an accredited K-12 school in the United States.

Carnegie Corporation of New York provides generous support for the I Love My Librarian Award and is a co-sponsor along with the The New York Public Library and the New York Times. The ALA administers the award through the ALA’s Communications and Marketing Office, which promotes the value of libraries and librarians.
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