



Model Friends' Cooperative Network

Sally Gardener Reed, Executive Director, United for Libraries

© 2012 by 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 November 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Library Director	1
General Administrative	1
Policy	1
Planning	1
Marketing	2
Fiscal.....	2
Legislative/Advocacy.....	2
Meetings.....	3
Networking	3
Trustees	4
General Administrative	4
Policy	4
Planning	4
Marketing	4
Fiscal.....	5
Legislative/Advocacy.....	5
Meetings.....	5
Networking	6
Friends.....	7
General Administrative	7
Policy	7
Planning	7
Marketing	7
Fiscal.....	8
Legislative/Advocacy.....	8
Meetings.....	8
Networking	9

LIBRARY DIRECTOR

General Administrative

If the Library Director is hired by the Trustees, he or she is directly under their governance and is ultimately answerable to them. If, however, the Library Director is hired by the city or town and the library is a municipal department, the Library Director will be answerable to city officials and the board may well be advisory only. In either case, however, the Director is responsible for the day to day management and decision making at the library within the library's policy framework. When the Library Director is hired by the municipality, his or her evaluation will be made by city administrators. When the Library Director is hired by the Trustees, he or she will be evaluated by the board and will serve at their pleasure.

The Library Director in both cases (above) meets with the Trustees on a regular basis and reports on the state of the library including budget, programs, services, and library use. It is also important for the Library Director to share with the Trustees the outlook for the library's needs and resources as well as other issues that currently do or may ultimately affect library services. Keeping the Trustees fully informed about challenges and opportunities on the horizon, will allow the Trustees (whether advisory or governing) to be well informed advocates for the library.

Policy

Though it is ultimately the Trustees who officially adopt library policy (this is often true for advisory boards as well depending on State laws governing library policy), the Trustees will depend heavily on the Library Director for the formulation of policy. Because the Library Director is in the best position to understand the issues that impact and will be impacted by library policy – legal, financial, service quality, e.g. – he or she should work with appropriate staff to draft policy statements to present to the Trustees. In addition, the Library Director should prepare background papers or “white papers” to share with the Trustees so that they will understand the context for the policy, the issues the policy will effectively address, and the pros and cons of the proposed policy. With this background information, the Trustees will be in a better position to ask insightful questions, make useful modifications, and ultimately adopt the policy which they now fully understand and can stand behind.

Planning

One of the most important jobs for the Library Director is to manage the planning process. The Library Director is in the best position to coordinate the process and should have the best insight about the emerging environment within which the library operates. The planning process should include the staff and the Trustees, as well as the Friends who can provide wonderful insight and ideas for serving the “end users.” It may be the Trustees who initiate the planning process but because this process will involve so many and take appreciable time, the Library Director will most likely be the lead individual. This does not mean, of course, that the Library Director will be involved in all stages or ultimately decide what the plan will look like, but he or she will and should be in charge of the process.

Marketing

Effective marketing requires a clear understanding of what services the library offers and why it matters. Optimally, the entire library support system – Director, staff, Trustees, and Friends should be involved in library marketing and promotion. Some libraries have public relations staff in house and this staff, under the direction of the Library Director, develops marketing campaigns. The Trustees should be well aware of the marketing strategy, give input into its development, and should help implement the campaign through speaking engagements, letters to the editor, and whatever support is possible. The Friends, too, can and should participate in the campaign. They might wish to develop compatible materials to promote both the library and Friends membership. In addition, they may well help finance the campaign and, of course, they can be excellent ambassadors of the campaign. When there is no public relations staff available, the Library Director should involve the Trustees and Friends members even more heavily in the development and implementation of the campaign.

Fiscal

The library's budget is the best tool the Library Director has to implement services and forward the library's long (and short) range plans. Nobody knows better than the Director what staff positions, equipment, collection enhancements, programs, etc. are needed to provide quality service and what each element of service costs. The development of the library's budget is a chief responsibility of the Director and because the Director will be evaluated on performance that is inextricably linked to the resources available to implement services, he or she should have the most responsibility for the budget that the Board of Trustees either adopts themselves (governing) or delivers to the fiscal authorities for its adoption. As part of fiscal planning, the Library Director should also consider what resources may be available from the Friends in the coming year for items that are not normally a standard part of the operating budget, and present a wish list to the Friends for possible funding.

Legislative / Advocacy

The Library Director's role in advocacy and legislative initiatives on behalf of the library can be a little tricky. If the Director serves at the pleasure of the city or county authorities (and the library is a department of that entity), he or she will most likely be extremely limited in how visible he or she can be in advocacy efforts at the *local* level – especially as it relates to budget increases. The Director, however, must be involved in all advocacy efforts (at least behind the scenes) to ensure that others such as the Trustees and Friends are well aware of what is at stake in getting the resources the library needs. An effective advocacy campaign is dependent on a well articulated and consistent message about what the library needs and why it matters. No one can answer these questions better than the Director. When the Library Director cannot *actively* participate in a campaign, he or she should be sure that the Trustees and Friends are the visible advocates and that they have all the information they need to be effective.

When the library is a separate agency governed by the Trustees, the Library Director can be much more visible in promoting the library's legislative and fiscal agenda. Even though the Director should be the lead person with providing information for Trustees and Friends, he or she will be much more effective by empowering the Trustees and Friends to be the visible

leaders of any campaign so that there won't be the appearance of self-interest. This is also true for state and national advocacy and legislative initiatives since library supporters and volunteers (Friends and Trustees) have weightier voices and, of course, they have the sheer numbers to make the case at all levels of government.

Meetings

The Library Director facilitates regular Trustee meetings (typically once a month). In this role, the Director supports the Trustees in developing the agenda, providing background information for substantive discussion on each of the agenda items whether "action" items or "discussion" items. The Director should ensure that each Trustee gets a "Board Packet" that includes year-to-date use statistics, background on any action or discussion items, a budget report, and a report on library programs and services for the month. The packet is important information for the on-going education of the Trustees about the library, its services and utilization, and the effectiveness of its resources. The board packet should be made available to the Trustees at least one week in advance of meetings so they have time to go over it and formulate questions and comments ahead of the meeting.

In addition to attending every meeting of the Trustees, the Library Director or his or her designee should also attend every meeting of the Friends. The best way for the Director to ensure that the Friends can effectively help support the library's goals, is to ensure a library presence at each meeting. In the best case scenario, the Library Director will be the one to attend the meetings (an important element of development which is an important role for the Director). If the Director cannot attend these meetings, he or she should appoint a high ranking member of the library's administration. The Director should ask the Friends to include time for the library administrator to report out at each meeting and to include the Friends in discussions about the library's goals. The Library Director or staff should never be a voting member of the Friends' board in order to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest.

Networking

Sometimes the old adage is really true – it's not what you know but who you know! The Library Director can garner significant political clout for the library by networking with local community leaders, as well as state and national legislators. Attending and meeting with government leaders at state and national legislative days is a good way to begin making inroads with those who can effect library finances and policies. In addition, meeting and corresponding with state and national leaders throughout the year can help raise the profile of both the Director and the library.

In addition to political clout, one of the best ways for a Library Director to keep up with library trends and best practices is to be actively involved in library associations at all levels and attend library workshops and conferences. If funding for the attendance at state and national meetings is not included in the budget, the Friends should be prevailed upon to support this important avenue for continuing education.

Trustees

General Administration

The Board of Trustees does not manage the library or become involved in daily operational issues. If the Board is a governing board, however, they *do* hire and then evaluate the Library Director based on the effectiveness of the programs and services of the library. Because the Library Director is ultimately responsible for the design and implementation of services as well as oversight and evaluation of staff, he or she must have full responsibility and accountability for them. The governing board should be very knowledgeable about the library's mission and goals so that it can evaluate the Library Director appropriately in meeting them. As a part of the Library Director's evaluation, the Board should work with him or her in developing a yearly performance plan for each succeeding year.

An advisory Board of Trustees (one without the authority to hire or fire the director) may not have input into the evaluation of the Library Director because typically, if the library is a city or county department, that evaluation will be made by the city or county administrator. The advisory Board, however, can be extremely useful in providing both ideas and feedback on how the library and Library Director is doing in fulfilling its mission.

Policy

Library policy provides the framework within which the library operates. It gives guidance to the Library Director in making decisions about programs, services, and staff management and development. Working with the Library Director to develop and then adopt library policy is one of the Trustees' most important roles. While it is likely that the Library Director and his or her staff will initially draft needed policy statements (or recommend specific modifications to existing policies), the Trustees should thoroughly understand each policy, understand why it is important and necessary, and stand ready to support it.

Planning

Though it is likely that the Library Director will coordinate the planning process, the Trustees should ensure that it happens. The Trustees can initiate the process, work with the Library Director to design an overview of the process, and then participate as needed as the planning takes place. The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible that the library's mission is carried out and should ensure that the programs and services the Library Director develops respond to and forward the library's mission. As citizen representatives to the library and (in the case of a governing board) answerable to the public for the good stewardship of it as a community resource, the Trustees should support library service that is responsive to community needs by overseeing the process.

Marketing

Trustees can and should be front-line ambassadors for the library. They should be well aware of the library's marketing plan and be an important component of its implementation. Members of the Board of Trustees can play an invaluable role in giving input into the

library's marketing campaign making sure that it resonates with the general public. Trustees who are well educated about the library's marketing plan are well armed to go out to other civic and cultural groups and to public officials to discuss the importance and value of the library and to encourage greater use and support. Each Trustee should consider such outreach services part of his or her job description.

Fiscal

Governing Boards (those who have the authority to hire/fire and evaluate the Director) are responsible for adopting the budget that is submitted for authorization. They are responsible for understanding its components as well as the impact that the budget has on the overall delivery of library services. Both governing and advisory Boards of Trustees should be the most visible advocates of the budget ensuring that it passes and that the resources the library needs to deliver effective services are secured. This may include visits with city or county administrators, making the case for the library's budget publicly, and possibly even generating grassroots support for the library's budget. While this work is generally most intense at budget time, the Trustees should be visible proponents of good library funding throughout the year (see "Marketing" above).

Though the Library Director takes the lead, the Trustees must be involved as the budget is developed and educated about what it takes to provide services. This is especially important if it is a governing board as these members have legal fiduciary responsibilities to ensure that public monies are being well spent in support of library services. In addition, if the Trustees are not well informed, consulted, and in agreement with the final product, they cannot be the effective advocates they must be for its final adoption.

Legislative/Advocacy

Advocacy is an important role for all Trustees because ensuring that the library has the funding it needs to effectively serve the community is paramount. While engaging in good public relations on behalf of the library should be an ongoing effort, advocacy campaigns are geared to achieving a specific goal – avoiding budget cuts or securing budget increases, passing a bond referendum, encouraging support for a building initiative, e.g. Trustees as the citizen leaders of the library should be the leaders in advocacy as well. Working with guidance from the Library Director and with the support and assistance of the Friends, Trustees can and should work to make the library a high priority for funding.

In addition to advocacy at the local level, Trustees should be aware of state and national issues that can and will affect their library. State and national legislative leaders should hear from library Trustees on these issues when they arise. Always, a personal visit is best, but participation in letter writing campaigns, phone call campaigns, and other advocacy campaigns is also critically important.

Meetings

Attending regular meetings with the library administration is the best opportunity library Trustees have to keep up to date and be fully educated on library services, programs, concerns and issues. Trustees should require that they receive "board packets" from their Library Director at least one week in advance. The job of the Trustee is to read the information in the packet and come to the meeting ready to discuss the items therein. For the

benefit of the library, Trustees who find that they must miss more than two meetings each year or who are unable to read materials ahead of the meeting should resign so that someone who has the time can be appointed in his or her place.

Working with the Library Director, the Board president is responsible for developing an agenda and presiding over the meeting ensuring that each item gets the attention it needs while also making sure that all members present have a chance to participate. For effective communication and relations between the Friends and the Trustees, it is a good idea to include a “Friends Update” on each agenda and ask that the Friends appoint a liaison who can come and give a brief report. To keep the meetings productive, the president should ensure that no one person dominates the meeting and that meetings end on time.

Networking

A great way to ensure that advocacy and public awareness campaigns succeed, is to build connections with those who make a difference for the library all year round. Set a goal to be on a first name basis with the mayor by attending city events and introducing yourself. Send letters and emails to local VIPs to thank them for specific efforts they’ve made on behalf of the city – even those efforts that have nothing to do with the library. Same goes for your state representatives. Trustees should recognize that their important position in the community provides a level of entre to other civic leaders that they should exploit. To learn more about library issues and best practices for advocacy and governance, Trustees should stay active in United for Libraries and read the newsletter.

Friends

General Administrative

Friends can and should play an important role in helping the library attain its goals. The Library Director or his/her designee should attend every Friends' board meeting and have a place on the agenda to report out about how the library is doing in achieving its goals and how the Friends can help. While library staff should never have a voting role on the board, the Friends should always be made aware of the library's overall direction and the role they can play in support.

Policy

In fulfilling its mission to support the Library, the Friends should always publicly support the Library's policies. There may be times when the Friends' board or individual members of the Friends' board object to certain library policies and decisions but when "wearing the Friends hat," those objections should never be made public. As with any citizen, individuals (Friend or not) can and should let their feelings be known to the Library Director and/or the Board of Trustees using proper channels for complaint. It is wrong, however, for the Friends' to take a public stand against the library. In those cases where the disagreement is severe, the Friends' board member or members should resign and speak out as citizens, not as Friends.

Planning

In addition to their own planning, Friends can be an invaluable asset to the library's planning process. As library supporters and "insiders," they can provide important input about the types of services they most enjoy, the feedback they are hearing from their members about the library, and be a friendly focus group for the library. The more Friends are engaged in the planning process, the better they will understand the environment within which the library operates, the issues facing the library (financially, politically, etc.), and how they can maximize their value to the library. Friends who are engaged in the library's planning process will be best able to ensure that their own planning and goals are in alignment with those of the library.

Marketing

The Friends of the Library can and should be visible spokespeople for the library's programs and services. In some cases, the Friends might give input for the library's marketing plan (this is especially common in smaller libraries). The Friends marketing efforts for the library should match the plan that the library has developed and they should work closely with library administration to develop "talking points," logos, slogans, and content. In addition to helping market the library, the Friends can provide additional boost to the campaign by tying their own membership marketing into the library's plan. This keeps the message and look of the campaign the same and provides two avenues for its dissemination in the community or on campus.

Fiscal

Friends can and do make an appreciable difference in the quality of services the library offers because of substantial fundraising efforts and their generosity to the library. Friends should work closely with the Library Director to make sure that their gifts are meeting the most important needs of the library. Typically, Friends support does not provide for general operating expenses that are normally included in the library's budget, however, they can provide funding for special needs that the budget doesn't address –these might include programming (for children and adults), special projects such as capital improvements, and start up projects such as a new young adult collection for a new "Teens Zone." The best way to ensure that Friends money is well spent, is to ask the library director to submit a wish-list in priority order and support the items on the list.

In order to encourage a high level of volunteer support for Friends and continued contributions by the community at large, the Friends should give as much as they can each year leaving money left over only to cover the costs of operation and for special "high ticket" items that they expect to fund in the near future.

Note: It's important for Friends to become incorporated and get their 501(c)(3) designation so they are official non-profit organizations in the eyes of their state and the IRS. This exempts the Friends from most taxes and enables donors to deduct their contribution to the Friends from their taxes. It also allows Friends to apply for grants – most of which require official non-profit status. For more information on getting a 501(c)(3) designation see the United for Libraries toolkit on "Incorporating and Tax Exempting Procedures for Friends."

Legislative / Advocacy

Friends can make a true and lasting difference for their libraries by engaging in advocacy for the library. As important as fundraising is, advocacy can be even more so. As one savvy Friends said, "we can raise \$25,000 through a book sale or \$2,500,000 through a bond issue and they're both about the same amount of work!" Actually, a well run advocacy campaign will take significant effort from a number of people but winning strong budgets, new buildings, or favorable legislation for the library can have an enduring effect on the quality of library services. Working closely with the Library Director and the Trustees, the Friends executive board or an advocacy task force can raise a strong citizen voice for the library. For more information on how and why to wage an advocacy campaign, order *Making Our Voices Heard: Citizens Speak Out for Libraries* available from United for Libraries.

Meetings

The number one responsibility of all executive board members is to attend meetings! You can't make a difference if you don't participate. Friends should hold their meetings routinely but certainly no less than four times per year. It is imperative that the Board president establishes an agenda and ensures that all Board members receive the agenda in advance of the meeting. The agenda should include reports from all committee and task force chairs to share the progress of their various activities. The Library Director or his/her designee should be asked to attend each meeting and should be accorded the opportunity to report out on library activities, services, and needs. To further ensure that the Friends are up-to-date on all library related issues, they should appoint a member to attend the library Trustee meetings and report back to the Friends.

Networking

Friends can further the mission of library promotion and advocacy by strengthening informal networks with community leaders. In addition, networking with other civic groups and other area Friends groups is a great way to share best practices and keep morale high. An annual area Friends get-together can be a great way to discuss new ideas, think about more effective membership drives, and just enjoy the company of others who love libraries. Friends can dramatically increase their knowledge, skills and ability to serve the library by joining their state Friends and/or library association. In addition, Friends should stay active in United for Libraries to learn about best practices from experts and other Friends groups across the country via the United for Libraries' website, electronic discussion group, and newsletter.