



Consider the Annual Report

By Barbara Zurl

Former Fort Loudoun Regional Representative

Reprinted from FOTL Newsletter (Summer 2008), pp. 5-6.

In times of dwindling resources, maintaining, much less increasing a Friends' membership is difficult; and yet it is at this precise moment that the need becomes more urgent than ever. What to do? Have you ever considered preparing and distributing a Friends of the Library Annual Report? Perhaps after reading this you might wish to do so.

More than likely your library, regardless of how large or small it may be, prepares one. Obtain a copy from your librarian. On looking it over you will see that it informs the public of a number of things, including how much it has provided the community and how many members of the community have taken part in what was offered. Generally, the Annual Report is a one-page document designed to be picked up at the circulation desk or in the reference department which validates the importance of the library's existence.

Where to Begin?

Certainly, that would have to be at the beginning.

Why does your group exist? Most groups exist to provide volunteer support for day to day library activities **PLUS** provide substantial financial aid to bring patrons programs, logistics and other support **not available through city, town or county budgeting.**

CONCISELY DESCRIBE YOUR MISSION

What Are Your Goals?

Give some examples:

Raise money	to enhance library
Provide volunteers	to perform a variety of tasks
Develop	ways in which the talents of your volunteers can be utilized
Initiate	an on-going relationship with the community

What Have You Done Over the Past Year?

Here is where keeping records pays off.

Time after time I have been told "we really don't do all that much." Rarely do I believe that. The problem here is simply that records have not been kept. Just think about it:

1. How many times has the Friends' board met?
2. How much money has been given to the library?
3. How many book sales, bake sales, yard sales or other fund raisers have taken place?
4. How many volunteer hours were donated last year?
5. Do you have a newsletter? Do you have a website? Did you put out press releases or articles in local papers?

6. Does your Friends' group make the Children's Summer Reading Program possible? If so:
 - How many children attended?
 - How many books were read?(These statistics are available from your librarian.)
7. What specific items (book carts, shelves, decorations, landscaping) were funded by the Friends?
8. Has your group created any outreach programs to the community? How many members of the community benefited from these?
9. What interesting programs were made possible because of you? How many people attended? (Again, check with your librarian as these statistics are maintained and reported each year.)
10. Do you have a book discussion group?
11. Have you built a new facility? Added on? Improved the existing building?
12. What are your membership numbers? Compare this number to the number of library card holders at your library. (Stats are available from your librarian or in the State of Tennessee Public Library Statistics document at your library.) This particular fact is very interesting as it can be used to point out:
 - a. How much has been done by how many?
 - b. You can point out how much more COULD be done, with more Friends.

So Why Are Friends Needed?

By now you can see that there is a wealth of information of which the public needs to be made aware. If you do not tell them, they will simply never know. Tell them that if it were not for the efforts of your group, many of things they have come to depend upon might well disappear. You know this is true. Ask your intended audience to join with you by becoming a Friend. Friends stick together to accomplish goals.

Think of your annual report as a hand outstretched to the residents of your town, city, county, welcoming them to become part of the solution in these times of limited resources.

If You've Got it, Tell Folks About It !

Once you have an annual report, get it out there! If you have a website, post it; if you send out a newsletter, include it; if you have access to your local Chamber of Commerce, place copies of the report. Make sure (after checking with your librarian) that copies are available at the circulation desk. Distribute it at book sales or other programs.

An annual report can serve you in two vital ways:

1. It can serve as your means to make your group known. Think of it as a resume or as a photo "glamour shot" showing you off to your best.
2. It can be a vehicle which allows your group to validate its importance to the library and the community.

I cannot say it loudly enough - have you ever considered the annual report?