Timely Information

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**HERE’S OUR NEW WEB ADDRESS:**  
<http://www.friendstnlibraries.org>
In a strategic planning session September 19, FOTL’s board agreed that its desired destination has not changed. Consistent with its mission statement, FOTL continues to support Friends and libraries in Tennessee and in the nation. What has changed are the challenges posed by those goals and the tactics for achieving them.

David A. Patterson, professor emeritus at the University of Tennessee and former director of the Tennessee Technology Foundation, posed the following thought-provoking questions:

■ What is the mission of the organization?
■ How would you describe the environment in which FOTL operates?
■ How has that environment changed?
■ How might these changes affect FOTL’s effectiveness?
■ Are there new opportunities for the organization?
■ Are there new threats to the organization and its mission?
■ Given the mission and the environment in which FOTL operates, now and in the future, what are the strategies and tactics the organization needs to pursue to best accomplish the mission?

Making state legislators aware of libraries’ needs and making Tennesseans aware of what libraries can do for them were cited as compelling strategies for achieving FOTL’s goals.

Problems stand in the way, however. Statewide, there are increasing demands for services but declining financial support; libraries and their staffs are being asked to do more for less. Libraries contend with rapid change and the need to cultivate life-long users. Escalating costs for energy, inflation, and declining tax revenues as well as wide-spread opposition to increasing taxes threaten budgets. As a result of these financial pressures, fewer professionals are being hired to meet clients’ needs, and in some communities, hours of operation are being cut, and fewer and fewer resources can be purchased. Hence the maintenance of effort is in danger.

FOTL also faces obstacles. Attendance at its quarterly meetings, when its planning occurs, and at its annual meeting is threatened by rising costs of travel. Declining membership arises from the lack of public awareness of how FOTL can help local groups. An aging pool of active volunteers makes the need for younger members urgent. Different levels of libraries—small, rural, metro—require different kinds of help. Clarifying FOTL’s role as consultant in such matters as establishing a new Friends’ group and understanding how Friends, trustees, and library staffs work together is essential.

In addressing these problems, FOTL needs to step up its public relations by making better use of technology—the internet, its website, DVDs, the media. Specific methods of spreading awareness of FOTL require representatives to visit Friends’ groups in their region; FOTL veterans to take workshops to the state’s regions; and FOTL members to be a vivid and active presence at gatherings of regional library directors, the Tennessee Library Association (TLA), and Library Legislative Day. Tactics for increasing memberships include offering one-year complimentary memberships and encouraging Friends’ groups to appoint or elect a liaison with FOTL. Becoming more fully aware of and working with other groups with common goals will also strengthen FOTL. Adding a lawyer to the FOTL board would enhance the organization’s awareness of issues of concern to local Friends’ groups like the state sales tax, the requirements for establishing 501(c)3 tax status, and the creation of foundations. Communication within the organization also needs to be improved through packets of information for all members of the board and the use of technology.
Yet Libraries Do a Great Deal with Little, Nashville Newspaper Says

State’s Underfunded Libraries Struggle

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By JENNIFER BROOKS
Staff Writer

Tennessee has some of the worst-funded, least-visited libraries in the nation.

The average public library in this state is housed in a building that's far too small for the community it's supposed to serve, has far fewer materials in circulation than other libraries around the country and is understaffed by underpaid librarians and dogged community volunteers. Many libraries aren't able to meet the minimum state standards they set for themselves.

In short, Tennessee has gotten what it paid for. This state ranks almost dead last in the nation for local spending on public libraries, according to a new analysis by Gannett News Service. The average U.S. community spends $31.65 per resident on the local library. The average Tennessee community spends $16.32 — the fourth-lowest funding level in the nation.

So it should also come as no surprise that Tennessee also trails the nation in library attendance — 32 percent below the national average. It ranks 48th in the nation for the average number of books and materials in circulation. And only Arkansas, Mississippi and West Virginia spend less on their libraries than Tennessee.

The surprise in these numbers is not that Tennessee ranks near the bottom of yet another national list. The surprise is how much state libraries manage to do with the limited resources they have.

"The little libraries may not ever be able to meet the minimum standards, for reasons beyond their control," State Librarian Jeanne Sugg said, "but these little libraries are also accomplishing great things."

Libraries that can't afford to buy every book their patrons want to read, borrow books from libraries that can. Inter-library loans increased more than 28 percent between 2005 and 2006.

Tennessee librarians are expert community workers. Don't have the budget to put on a children's program? Find a community volunteer. Don't have enough meeting space in the library? Get a local business to volunteer a room. Don't have enough money to build a new library? Form a community partnership and raise private funds.

"Our librarians are wonderful people," said Jane Pinkston, assistant state librarian for planning and development. "They work long hours for next to nothing, and they try to do the best with what they have."

Standards unmet

In 2002, Pinkston led a statewide committee of librarians who drew up new minimum standards for the sort of facilities and services libraries should be expected to provide their communities. The standards, which were tailored to the size of the community, covered things like how much square footage of space a library should have, how many books and materials it should have in circulation, how much funding it should receive from its community.

"These were not unreasonable standards," she said. "We have been amazed and shocked that many have not been able to meet even these minimal requirements."

Among the libraries that consistently fell short was Hendersonville, one of the wealthier communities in Middle Tennessee. In 2006, the last year for which data is available, the community was funding its library to the tune of less than $4 per person, the stingiest library budget in the entire metro region.

"We ranked eighth in personal income and 67th in funding," library director Virginia Duffett said. "The library was old, crowded, had inadequate meeting space and could only afford to stay open five days a week.

For a recent children's program, "we fit 150-plus parents and children into a space you wouldn't want to tell the fire marshal about," Duffett joked.

But thanks to an innovative public-private fundraising effort, Hendersonville is about to pull itself out of the library basement rankings. Its brand-new $10 million library opens in August, with twice the space,

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Lean Times Loom (cont. from page 4)
plenty of parking and lots of room for new collections and community gatherings.

It's part of a library-building boom going on throughout Middle Tennessee. Gallatin is set to unveil a new library, four times the size of its current facility, a month after Hendersonville. Nashville is set to build two new annexes in Bellevue and Goodlettsville. White House is scouting new library locations.

But projects approved during flush budget times may not get all the funds they were promised. Hendersonville and Gallatin may not get the operating funds expected to allow them to expand their hours.

Sumner County commissioners are balking at the $3 million price tag to expand the libraries' services, but leery of raising taxes to meet the cost.

"I'm for the libraries, but if you're not willing to support a tax increase, you're just talking out of both sides of your face," Commissioner Anthony Holt of Gallatin said earlier this month. "The residents are either going to get a cut in services or they are going to get a tax increase."

If the funding falls through, the libraries will probably find a way to make do. That's what Tennessee librarians have been doing for decades.

Contact Jennifer Brooks at 259-8892 or jabrooks@tennessean.com.

Foundation, Friends Enrich Cosby
Cosby Community Library is 64 books richer today thanks to a shipment received recently from The Libri Foundation. According to a report in the Newport Plain Talk, the foundation's Books for Children program awarded Cosby Community Library the 2-to-1 matching grant.

The Cocke County Library Friends voted unanimously to provide the necessary $350 in local funds.

The Libri Foundation is a nationwide non-profit organization that donates new, quality children's books to small, rural public libraries. The Foundation supports the concept that children who learn to enjoy reading at an early age continue to read throughout their lives.

According to the Foundation's website, "For many children in rural communities, the local public library is their primary source of books. Unfortunately, rural libraries face increasing financial hardships as budgets are cut while book prices continue to rise."

Don Reynolds, Nolichucky regional representative, cites the report from Cosby as an example of the great work that Friends can do.

FOTL President Answers Questions
So what's new with FOTL?
Capitalizing on the speed and accessibility of our new website is an important aspect of FOTL's long-range plan. Online FOTL can post timely news about events relevant to Tennessee libraries, many pictures of Friends who are showing us how to support our beleaguered libraries, links to other organizations that support libraries, and documents that may be of help to Friends across the state. Check it out at <http://www.friendstnlibraries.org>

FOTL will continue to publish its newsletter quarterly, but its focus will shift to longer articles about issues and problems facing Friends and libraries.

My Friends’ group is planning a big book sale in December. Is it possible to post that event on the FOTL website?
Indeed it is not only possible; we want to post news from Friends’ groups that have FOTL memberships. Get in touch with your regional representative (see the FOTL directory on page 2), and give him or her the pertinent details. The rep will see that your news makes it to the Calendar of Events on our website. Photos of book-and-author galas or other events should be routed in the same way. If your Friends’ group is has its own website, FOTL will establish a link to it so that your influence will grow. You can strengthen your connection to FOTL by adding an FOTL liaison to your board.

What’s going to make news in 2009?
Already a committee is planning something exciting for the annual meeting. Stay tuned.
Regions Buzz with Activity

Blue Grass
Jack Vicary, Representative

Brentwood Friends sent several crates of books left over from their sale to Rowanda, and Williamson County Friends shipped boxes of books to Iraq. Williamson County's retired library director Elizabeth Miller celebrated her 100th birthday this year. Giles County's budget increased by 26 percent, quite an accomplishment in these difficult times.

Caney Fork
Lucy Szelengiewicz, Representative

Jeanne Sugg (right) was welcomed by Ginny Rogers, president of the Friends of the Art Circle Library, and Joyce Baur, former FOTL representative from Caney Fork.

Crossville needs to brag about building the library of the future, Jeanne Sugg, state librarian and archivist, told the Friends of the Art Circle Library on August 7 when she was guest speaker. After years of fundraising and study, construction of the new facility has begun.

Chattanooga/Hamilton County
Pat Hilling, Representative

The third annual ClubLib, scheduled for October 18 at the downtown library, will raise funds to expand senior adult offerings—like audio-visual materials and equipment.

The well-attended fall book sale at Northgate Mall brought in an estimated $23,000. Tables of mysteries and fiction, sorted alphabetically for the first time, were especially well stocked. A special edition of the newsletter Volumes, which focused on membership and the role of Friends as volunteers in the library, was distributed at the book sale. UPC coded forms to be used at Bi-Lo stores in their booster-plus program were also available; last year that program enabled the Friends to earn $1,500.

Clinch-Powell
Theresa Venable, Representative

The prestigious May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture will be given by renowned author Walter Dean Meyers on April 18, 2009, at the Children’s Defense Fund Haley Farm in Clinton, TN. This event draws participants from across the country.

Fort Loudoun Region
Barbara Zurl, Representative

In September the Maryville Daily Times published an interview with Barbara Zurl about the Ex Libris project, which brings readers to nursing homes in the area. Details are available on FOTL’s website.

Barbara visited the E. G. Fisher Library in Athens in July, when she met with librarian Beth Mercer to discuss matters of concern like sales tax and the value of Friends' groups. The Meigs-Decatur area is also interested in rebuilding a Friends' organization.

Knox County
Suzanne Freeman, Representative

October 1 marked the kick-off of the area’s Big Read of John Steinbeck’s memorable novel The Grapes of Wrath. The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. Knox County Library and YMCA-Knoxville also support the program; Friends will sponsor a related essay contest.

During National Friends of the Library Week October 19-25, volunteers from the Friends of Knox County Public Library plan to express their appreciation of the staffs of each of the system’s libraries by delivering box lunches to them. Volunteer Friends are scheduled to set up and serve the meal.

Shiloh
Diane Vernon, Representative

The Everett Horn Library in Lexington reaches out to several age groups and varied interests. Every Tuesday morning when school is in session, pre-schoolers meet for story time. On August 16 teens in grades 7-12 were invited to the library, and on August 21 the Library Book Club welcomed author Michael Freeland to discuss his book Blood River to Berlin. Taxpayers received assistance from an IRS representative on September 3, and Friends hosted a booth at the Henderson County Fair.

Congratulations go to Dinah Harris, director of the Everett Horn Library, for earning the master’s degree in library and information science from the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa.

Members of the Parsons Library Friends had a busy summer. They served refreshments during the summer reading program, and their informative booth at the Decatur County Fair won a blue ribbon. After a successful book sale they attended the open house at the new Shiloh Regional Office in Jackson on September 24. Now they are compiling a memorial scrapbook to honor past members of the Friends.

Upper Cumberland
Wanda Jared, Representative

The Putnam County Friends hosted a dinner with Alan Gratz, author of three books for young adults, on September 23. Samurai Shortstop was named one of the top ten books for young adults by the American Library Association in 2007. Something Rotten, based on Shakespeare’s Hamlet, and Something Wicked, a spin-off of Macbeth, quickly followed.

Putnam County Friends (from left) Judy Titsworth; Diane Duncan, library director for the Putnam County system; and Connie Albrecht welcomed Alan Gratz.
Knox County Receives Some Word on Sales Tax

In response to his inquiries, Clyde Letsinger, treasurer of the Knox County Friends, has received the following communication about Friends’ liability for paying sales tax from John Harvey, Tennessee’s Taxpayer and Vehicle Services Division:


“The change in the statute allows nonprofit organizations whose primary activity is fund-raising in support of a public library system to elect to make annual sales exempt from tax on an ongoing basis rather than the two semi-annual sales periods as long as the annual sales do not exceed $100,000. The entity must make the election with the Department of Revenue and, once made, the election must remain in effect for at least four years.

“However, the change in the statute is not effective until January 1, 2009, so public library support systems cannot change from the two semi-annual sales periods before that effective date. The Department of Revenue is in the process of approving an election form that qualifying entities will have to complete and provide to the department, and that form should be available on our web site at some point before January 1, 2009.”

The communication concludes, “Any opinion expressed herein is believed to be correct in accordance with current tax law and regulations. However, such opinion(s) cannot constitute a revenue or letter ruling pursuant to the provisions of Tenn. Code Ann. Sect. 67-1-109.”

FOTL advises all Friends’ groups to operate lawfully while continuing to ask for clarification of the new law from Judy Bond-McKissack at <judy.bond-mckissack@state.tn.us>.

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Newsletter Notes

**Among Friends** from Friends of the Art Circle Public Library in Crossville reports that River Jordan, “storyteller of the Southern variety” and author of *The Messenger of Magnolia Street*, was featured speaker at the group’s luncheon at Cumberland Mountain State Park September 16.

**The Bookmark** from Lawrence County Public Library reports that the Friends’ fall book sale benefiting the library ran successfully from September 5-20. The newsletter also promoted sign-up month for the library card, “the smartest card of all.”

**Book reMarks** from Putnam County Friends reports that the proposed expansion of the library will add about 15,000 square feet to the facility. Friends’ book sales averaging a little over $1,000 each month will help to support the $4.2 million project.

**FOLA** from Cleveland Bradley County Library gave top billing to two momentous events: the official ground-breaking for the library’s addition and renovation and the appearance of Catherine Landis, author of *Some Days There’s Pie* and *Harvest*, as guest speaker at the fall luncheon in October.

**Friends and Library News** from Friends of Tellico Village reports a record-breaking total of over $10,000 from the 14th annual book sale. Memberships in the Friends have recently increased over 33 percent.

**FOKL Point**, the on-line newsletter of Friends of the Kodak Library, reports that representatives of the Sevier County Public Library System and FOKL recently met with John Rice Irwin, founder of the Museum of Appalachia, to obtain advice about what essential items need to be included in the Kodak Heritage Handcrafted Collection. Mr. Irwin also advised the group about how to further develop Kodak Heritage Day, the annual event vigorously supported by the Friends.

**Volumes** from the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library lists a number of opportunities for volunteers; these include activities in the Teen Center in the downtown library and assistance with the five-part event “Let’s Talk About It,” a national book discussion program. Only 250 libraries nationwide were chosen to host the series, which this year focuses on “Neighbors: The World Next Door” by examining Jewish literature and culture.

**The White County Public Library newsletter** reports that the Friends will partner with Amazin’ Acres this year to share scary stories in the dark with customers waiting to enter the Haunted Maze—Trail of Terror. More details are available at <www.amazinacres.com>. On September 16, Helen Lavinia Underwood, author of a new historical novel *Under Cedar-Shakes*, spoke about her book at the library. Members of the author’s family lived and worked in and around White County during the nineteenth century, and some of them appear in her fiction.

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**GUIDELINES** “In our democratic society, the library stands for hope, for learning, for progress, for literacy, for self-improvement and for civic engagement. The library is a symbol of opportunity, citizenship, equality, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, and hence, is a symbol for democracy itself.”—Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York
Please Stay in Touch
Before you toss that recent letter from FOTL’s membership chair, please respond to Connie Albrecht’s appeal to renew your membership. Your dues are FOTL’s life line. FOTL needs you, and libraries across Tennessee need the support of FOTL.

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**Membership Application**

**Remain a Friend of Tennessee Libraries**

(Membership year is January to December)

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