

Branching out - multi-branch libraries and their Friends

Speakers: Colin Plows, President, Friends of the Ottawa Public Library
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Session Description:

How do Friends of the Library groups operate in a multi-branch library system? Do they operate system-wide, only at certain branches or as a hybrid? How are issues of communication, conflict resolution and respect for local diversity addressed? Our panel from urban library and county library systems offer their unique perspectives.

- Learn how Friends function in library systems with more than one branch
- Consider differences between centralized and decentralized models
- Hear about successful working relationships

	Ottawa Public Library	Haldimand Country Public Library
Number of Library Branches	33	6
Population served *2011 census	883,391	44,876
Friends Groups	1	3 (2 active, 1 inactive)
Model	Centralized Formal	Decentralized Informal
Incorporated	Yes	No
Registered Charity	Yes	No
Amalgamation	2003	2001
Friends formed	1981 (<i>original association at Ottawa Public Library prior to amalgamation</i>)	Jarvis - 1975 Dunnville - 1996
Membership	300 volunteers (at bookstores in 20 library branches) + 250 members who pay an annual fee	Jarvis – 7 Dunnville – 16 Selkirk – currently inactive
Governance Structure	14 member Friends Board 2 part time employees 3 sub-committees (Operations, Communications and Trust Fund)	3 member Executive
Liaison	A library liaison officer is essential	Library staff liaison at each meeting – either Community Outreach/Inreach Coordinator, Deputy CEO or CEO
Budget 2014	\$365,000	Dunnville \$12,000 (\$5,000 of which is an annual budgeted donation from the book sale to the library operating budget)
Friends' Financial Decision making	Local and system wide expenditures Money raised by volunteers reinvested in local library but not all of it.	All monies are available for use by the Dunnville branch, with some support for system wide initiatives.
Activities	Bookstore sales and sales through Better World Books website Literacy – Publish pot-pourri, an annual bilingual anthology of children's poetry and short stories, to inspire our youth. Advocacy	Jarvis – Christmas craft workshops; Bus trip; support for children's summer programming, and other programmes Dunnville – Annual book sale; annual garage sale; annual Christmas sale and support for other programmes (Also work with Better World Books)

Policies	By-laws Memorandum of Understanding with library Cash handling and accountability Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Safety and welfare Trust Fund Investment Policy Travel Reimbursement Wish List Formula Policy	Constitution and by-laws Friends' procedure for lottery license
Volunteer training	Friends volunteers trained by Friends Bookstore Manager at local branch - library orientation and bookstore operation	Library provides health & safety training Friends provide vocational training for roles within group
Library Staff is unionized	Yes	No
Vital relations	Support of the CEO chief Librarian is essential. (catalyst not controller) Board – Library - Volunteer committees and connections Encourage a personal relationship with their librarian so stuff gets worked out at that level. (Note: the few volunteers I have that are so shy or not gifted in working problems with people are the branches that consume 90% of my intervention time.)	Library staff treat the Friends of the Library like family; special relationship with special privileges resulting in good communication and effective services Importance of “open door” nature of DFOTL: not a “closed club” or “clique”, individual members are valued for their strengths and allowed opportunities to showcase those strengths in various roles that coincided with abilities and preferences. INCLUSIVE!
Success	Lead People, manage things Minimal policies, Wise oversight of revenues and gifting Provide the “what” and the “why” and then let the bookstore manager figure out the “how” to run their respective stores.	Minimal policies, flexible and responsive issue resolution by executive with buy-in from members very important to success Informal structure allows individuals to give as much time to the organization as they like, find more commitment to work when able to make own schedules etc.
Challenges	Declining book sales Internal and external communications	Ageing out of volunteers/recruitment of new volunteers Pushback regarding any systems wide initiatives/expenditures
Lessons learned	Build a solid financial checks system Recruit a solid treasurer with accounting experience Screen board members carefully for skills, availability and commitment to work Unleash the younger members and allow them to pursue their ideas	Being adaptable, responsive, and flexible is integral to the sustainability of the group Building social capital through interpersonal relationships with other local and regional organizations

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