

Sharing of Ideas workshop

Part I

Date: Saturday, April 26/03, 10:15 a.m.

Place: Board Room at VPL's Central Library, Vancouver

Friends Of Libraries Attending:

Mission:	Mel Hundert, Ted Sawasy
North Van. District:	Brian Casidy, Wayne MacCallum, David Potter
Richmond:	Alison Cormack, Margaret Ikegami, Debby Newton
Sechelt:	Al Livsey, Sue Thomson, Bob Tween, Chris Tween
Squamish:	Marjorie Buchanan, Morgan
Vancouver:	Howard Greaves, Lucca Hallex, Donna Hossack, Jocelyn MacNiel, Sonja Marchlewitz, Cherry Sullivan
West Van. Memorial:	Sophia Weremchuk

Regrets:

Delta: Lillah Martin

Chair: Jocelyn MacNiel, BC Representative FOCAL

Secretary: Cherry Sullivan, Friends of the VPL

Discussion Items:

Community Involvement – an organized Friends group is living proof of the library's value to the community.

Public Relations – each Friend is a walking public relations vehicle for the library.

Money – Friends groups have traditionally raised funds for project or acquisitions in excess of the general library budget.

Services – assisting with library programs such as Summer Reading Clubs and Author Readings.

Advocacy – an informed, active citizens lobby can be the strongest advocate a library has.

Friends groups may be constituted in different ways:

- West Vancouver Friends founded the Library but it is now operated by a Foundation, the Friends now involved with fund raising and library events.
- At Vancouver Public Library (VPL), Friends is a registered society and operates under a Letter of Understanding with the Library;
- One Friends organization is a community formed group that fund raises and helps with services at the library

The role of Friends differs among libraries:

- Friends shelve books in libraries without unionized staff
- In some libraries, all Friends are volunteers; in other ‘Silent Supporters’ (non-volunteers) are welcome.
- A discussion about fees showed varying rates from \$3 (single) to \$20 (Family), with discounts for seniors and students.
- Membership fees – are they necessary? Do they need to cover the cost of benefits such as newsletters and mailings?
- emailing to members is worth trying.

Relationship with the Library:

- Can vary; one group said they felt that the Friends group was resented by the library. Communication with library director and staff needs to be addressed.
- Others felt appreciated – VPL Board gives its Friends 5 minutes at monthly Board meetings to promote Friends’ activities. VPL Library Board has an appointed Liaison member; also one from Administration Staff, who attend the Friends monthly Board meetings which helps to keep communication lines open.

Membership Recruiting:

It can be difficult to recruit new members but continuing public exposure seems to help.

Methods tried to attract new members include:

- Going to the branch libraries; sending information letters out annually
- Having tables at events at libraries and elsewhere displaying and giving out Friends’ information
- discount for members at Friends’ shops
- Walking through one’s own neighborhood and soliciting members
- The big question often asked is ‘why join Friends?’ Friends’ groups needs to create Friends’ information for the public.

Membership Retention:

- Most groups have a solid core of faithful members.
- Try to get new members to be active because active members seem more likely to stay.
- Some enjoy volunteering at particular activities such as author readings.
- Benefits for Friends’ members may help:
 1. Members have the chance to preview the annual/major book sale (huge in the U.S.A.)
 2. In some libraries people join just to get into the preview book sale
 3. One library charges \$5 to get into the book sale preview
- A newsletter can bridge the gap between members, both active and silent. It is often an untapped resource. Articles should talk about what is coming up, not just what has been done. Use photographs.
- Sometimes the Library has a newsletter but the Friends don’t. Can a Friends’ column be added to the library newsletter?

Part II of Jocelyn’s report will be included in our Fall FOCAL Point.

A full copy of the report is also on our website at <http://www.friendsoflibraries.ca/sharing-ideas.htm>.