

## Friends, Trustees and the Library Director - "A Marriage Made in Heaven"

Our room filled to capacity a second time. Val Marshall (FOCAL President), Gary Archibald (CLTA President) and Don Mills (CEO, Mississauga Library System) shared the speakers' podium.

Val opened with an analogy to marital relations by offering two pieces of advice: "Start as you mean to go on and keep communication going".

Trust, openness, commitment and a sharing of ideas are signs of a strong and healthy relationship. She offered factors leading to failed relationships, including lack of commitment, poor communication, money and staff time.

Gary polled the audience and learned we were split evenly among Friends, Trustees and Librarians. He noted all have to work as partners in the development of public library service in their communities. Each has their own role and specific responsibilities within that role.

He explained library board governance varies in every province. Some are advisory boards, some function as corporate bodies, some set policy and others are administrative in nature. Trustees generally set goals and objectives, discuss policy issues and monitor funding.

Don Mills explained the role the CEO can play in offering support in the development of a Friends group. He listed needs such as seed funding, Friends' training and orientation, recognition & appreciation, a meeting place, copying services and postage.

It was thought to be a radical idea to begin a Friends group in Mississauga in the beginning. Ten years later, the group has established credibility, and is a creative and energetic organization, independent in terms of organization and financing.

Some bits of advice offered by speakers included

- Let staff and Friends get to know each other
- Ask trustees for advice
- Be clear to CEO - seek endorsement
- Evaluate and ask "What has been learned?"
- Be very realistic. Choose with regard to your situation
- Be sensitive to allocation of staff time
- Have modest expectations
- Work from your strengths and be flexible