



## Friends of the Library and Other Benefactors and Donors

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WHERE THERE ARE FRIENDS, there is wealth. If these words, written by the great master of Roman comedy, Plautus, more than two thousand years ago still hold true, libraries today must be wealthier than they were about forty years ago when they first acquired "Friends."

We have come a long way since 1922, when the first "Friends of the Library" group connected with a public library was started, and since 1925, when Harvard University organized the first university group. There are no statistics available as to the number of Friends organizations in the period from 1925 to 1935.

The Friends of the Library movement was formally acknowledged in 1934 when the American Library Association established a committee to "encourage the formation of Friends of the Library groups."<sup>1</sup>

By 1938 about one hundred Friends groups had reported to the A.L.A.; by 1950 the number of public library friends had tripled, college and university groups had doubled. No statistics for the latter groups have been available since that time, but public library groups had once more doubled by 1955. If we assume that college and university groups both follow the same trend, there should have been a total of about 650 Friends groups by 1955. In 1959, L. S. Thompson in the *American Library Annual*<sup>2</sup> stated that there were over four hundred Friends organizations in North America. We believe his estimate to be too conservative. Within the last two years we have witnessed the establishment of about half a dozen Friends organizations in the Detroit metropolitan area alone, and we are sure that Friends groups in other areas have followed the same trend. Libraries everywhere have realized with Plautus that Friends contribute to their wealth.

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The possibilities of receiving donations of money and books for libraries are practically unlimited. They become reality by applying good public relations policies. The question is how to solicit effectively, how to make use of the gifts once they have been received, and how to show proper appreciation. Two outstanding examples indicate the extent to which Friends groups can operate: Brandeis University Library<sup>3</sup> is supported and maintained completely by a Friends of the Library movement; the public library of Tacoma Park, Maryland,<sup>4</sup> was organized, built, furnished, and run by Friends for twenty-five years, after which time city tax support was provided for the library through the efforts of the group.

Potentially every literate person in a given community is a library user, and every library user is a potential donor or friend of the library. It is imperative, however, that libraries know exactly what they want before they solicit contributions. R. E. Mahoney in an article entitled "It Pays to Give," said: "The library that has determined how corporate contributions can be effectively used, and approximately how much money will be needed for each project, has taken the first step in securing a contribution."<sup>5</sup>

The history, organization, and structure, as well as the accomplishments of Friends organizations have been adequately described in publications issued in cooperation with, or by the A.L.A.'s Committee on Friends of Library<sup>6, 7, 8</sup> and at this time there is in the proofreading stage a *Friends of Libraries Handbook* edited by Sarah L. Wallace of the Minneapolis Public Library.<sup>9</sup> There is also the concise and informative statement on Friends groups by Thompson<sup>10</sup> in the *American Library Annual* for 1959 (A revised statement appears in each annual issue). Suffice to say then that formal Friends groups came into existence in North America in the 1920's and became extremely popular during and after the depression, between 1930 and 1940, when lack of public funds prompted library administrators to use every possible means to supplement their deflated budgets.

Some Friends groups were formed with only one particular project in mind and dissolved when their mission was accomplished or had failed. Some groups fade out for lack of stimulation and enthusiasm, because the initial interest is not fostered and maintained. In his survey of *The Public Library in the United States*, R. D. Leigh comments: "Created . . . specifically to secure financial support, the (Friends) groups observed in our sample tended to fall apart for lack of an incentive after their single objective had been accomplished."<sup>11</sup>

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In this connection we cannot help but think of Noah Webster's comment on the saying: "It will do for the present,"<sup>12</sup> which, according to Webster "does as much mischief in society as rum or pestilence." Considering all the effort and work which goes into assembling a group of Friends, it seems extremely wasteful to let an established organization dissolve because we think "it will do for the present."

The A.L.A. Friends Committee has, so far, chosen to survey Friends organizations in two separate groupings: 1) college and university libraries, and 2) public libraries. The ideology behind the formation of such societies is the same. The library needs support from outside sources, to be given without demanding or assuming the right to interfere with the administration of the institution.

Generally speaking, university libraries aim primarily to improve their collections. They want material which will give strength and distinction to the institution, and will draw teachers, scholars, and students to the campus. Once a Friends group has been established in connection with a college or university library, the faculty usually supports it with a good deal of enthusiasm, often stimulating gifts of book collections in a special field of learning.

Public libraries naturally tend more towards the improvement of facilities and the acquisition of additional popular reading materials. With certain notable exceptions, the maintenance of rare books and special collections is usually not regarded as part of the function of the average public library. However, in the last few years a distinctive change in policy has become noticeable. Although the servicing of popular collections is still regarded as the primary function, the value of research and source materials is being recognized increasingly by the community and the library administration. More and more people have had the benefit of higher education and they desire to continue their research and reading habits even after leaving the campus. Since the budgets of public libraries are not set up to allow for costly out-of-print and valuable research and reference collections, it is only natural that the administration strives to find additional means of revenue to satisfy new demands which are coming from a sizable portion of the library's patrons. Besides, these readers usually consist of people holding influential positions in the community and they can stimulate support of the library, which they often do when they realize that their wishes are given consideration.

In many of the large public libraries rare books and special collections have originated from gifts of individual donors. The generous

gifts of Astor and Lenox, for instance, after their consolidation in 1895, became the basis for the internationally known and respected reference collections of the New York Public Library. These collections contributed greatly to the prestige of the library, and once their adequate maintenance and usefulness were recognized by the people, other gifts of collections and endowments, like the Spencer, the Berg, and the Arents collections followed, thus making the New York Public Library one of the greatest research and rare book collections in the country. To this day these reference collections remain without tax support and they rely on the income derived from their Associates. This demonstrates beyond doubt that once the usefulness of rare books and special collections to a given library is established and proven, other benefactors follow suit in selecting the same institution as the favored repository for their own treasures.

Yet, when scanning the list of Accomplishments of Friends of Public Libraries in the *PLD Reporter*<sup>8</sup> (remembering that Friends of Public Libraries outnumber Friends' groups of colleges and universities three to one), we notice with amazement and consternation that the term "rare books" only occurs one single time (Detroit Public Library) among 113 groups reporting. Special collections are mentioned only twice, once in the case of a group devoted entirely to supporting a Music Division (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh), and another time in Friends promoting a California Room—a reference collection of California (Oakland, California Public Library). When examining a chart table of "Original Purpose"<sup>13</sup> we find that only six of the libraries reporting try to stimulate gifts, endowments, etc. Of course, we must remember that the survey was conducted five years ago, and we hope and trust that by this time the Friends of Public Libraries include gifts, rare books, and special collections in their statements of purpose.

L. B. Wright, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, recalled in a talk before the Friends of the University of North Carolina Library in 1949<sup>14</sup> the words of the Reverend Samuel Osgood of New York "who gloomily remarked in 1853 that not a single library in America 'affords the requisite means for the thorough study of any one topic of recondite learning, even if of practical science. Any scholar who tries to investigate any ancient or historical subject will find, to his regret, that no library in the country has a plummet that can sound its depths.' Even the national library—the Library of Congress—though it had received one of Thomas Jefferson's collections as

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a nucleus, for generations thereafter did not become an adequate research library." We have come a long way since the times of Reverend Sam Osgood. Public libraries everywhere in the United States are recognizing their responsibility to research and scholarship and are doing their very best to further this cause.

The question is often asked whether smaller institutions should house and acquire unique, rare, and specialized material. There are at least three good reasons justifying the establishment of such collections. Common to all libraries should be the desire to gather material depicting the history and the art of the book. Such a collection will make the library patron aware of the tremendous impact of the invention of printing, without which none of the books on the shelves would be available. A local history collection, including books, manuscripts and related materials, will enhance the importance of any library. The local newspaper, civic organizations, and research scholars will use historical material and most likely will add their own collections to the library's holdings. In addition, collections pertaining to the history of local industry are always useful, never out of place. Most of the time this industry will gladly support and contribute to the collection.

Just as important as proving to the community the usefulness of rare books, of historical material and special collections, is the devotion and enthusiasm for such material on the part of the library staff. Without it we cannot expect much success. Love for books is not quite sufficient, however. Some preparation is needed. Knowledge of the history of the book and book collecting, of processing and archival practices, book buying, etc., are essential and important in trying to convince a prospective benefactor that his books will be useful and properly placed and cared for. The library assumes a grave responsibility towards donor and community in accepting valuable rare book and research materials. If the library administration cannot see its way to provide the means for suitable processing and maintenance of these donations, the donor might be willing to assume this responsibility by providing the necessary funds. This is a difficult task to accomplish, but it has been done successfully.

The first duty of the librarian is to convince the governing body of his institution not only of the research and public relations value of including rare books and special collections in his program, but also of the responsibilities and costs connected with accepting such donations. Once the decision is made, it is most helpful to show the

prospective donors at least the beginning of a well maintained special collection. There is no library, large or small, which cannot find among its holdings a certain number of books which deserve to be exhibited or shelved in a separate place. There are always some modern press books, illustrated books, art books, first editions, association copies, and the like, which can be brought together to form the nucleus of a rare book collection.

Faculty members of colleges and universities are known to have donated their private libraries to their institutions. We hardly ever hear that patrons of public libraries, who are using the collections for years, leave their private collections to these institutions. There is, however, the chance that they would do so if their attention were drawn to instances of special collections having been donated to the library by other individuals. A well organized rare book collection in suitable surroundings, accompanied by an enthusiastic and well informed staff is one of the greatest assets in stimulating donations. The stage must be properly set and there is no reason why a Friends group could not be organized for the purpose of raising the necessary funds.

Most of the formalities needed for organizing a Friends group are described in previously cited publications. The librarian has to get the consent of his governing body, and if he initiates the project, has to have a limited amount of money to provide for mailing invitations to the first meeting, for refreshments, and literature to be distributed, explaining the purpose of the new organization. The Free Library of Philadelphia, in its first report to the Friends states that "the Board of Trustees . . . approved the formation of a Friends group . . . (and) authorized a grant of \$2,000 and approved a committee. Through the gracious aid of many civic-minded organizations, a very effective mailing list was compiled."<sup>15</sup>

The question arises as to the persons who should be asked to participate in a first meeting. Most publications suggest the following: members of literary clubs, book clubs, civic clubs, church clubs, women's clubs (American Association of University Women), industrial organizations, and individuals such as lawyers (they will be helpful in formulating the constitution), authors, publishers, teachers, physicians, editors of newspapers, industrialists, and last, but not least, book collectors and dealers. In a university community, alumni and faculty would be the first to be approached. The founding of the Friends of the Princeton University Library is described in an informative and amusing paper by Willard Thorp<sup>16</sup> who questioned

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the effectiveness of the organizational dinner meeting held in New York in a swank restaurant, attended by a select group of well-to-do alumni. He soon learned, that contrary to his impression, such extravagant beginnings do bear fruit.

It is advisable to stress during the very first meeting the fact that it is and remains the role of the library administration to formulate policies, and the role of the Friends to interpret these policies and aid in their successful execution. The purpose of the organization should be presented and discussed at the first meeting and the following examples may help to outline the aims of existing groups:

- 1) To provide a medium for bringing together all people interested in books and the development of resources for the community. To encourage gifts of private libraries, individual books, and funds or bequests for the purchase of books. To assemble, through the collection of annual membership dues, a fund for the acquisition of rare, fine, or unique materials which otherwise could not be made available to the people of the community (Friends of the Detroit Public Library).
- 2) To assist all agencies of the library, and to acquire desirable items for its special collections which it could not otherwise obtain—and to provide various occasions, such as lectures, authors' teas, receptions, and exhibit previews, at which all those who enjoy books could meet and enjoy mutual interests (Friends of the Free Library of Philadelphia).
- 3) To encourage and draw together all organized groups interested in library development and the preservation of archives (Friends of Kentucky Libraries).
- 4) To stimulate and unite effort so that the library may receive desirable collections and material not otherwise available and to acquaint the taxpayer with the problems of library administration (Friends of the Denver Public Library).
- 5) To assume the responsibility of acquainting its members with the resources and needs of the university library and to create from dues income, a fund for the purchase of those materials most likely to enhance the lasting value of the library. (Friends of the Johns Hopkins University Library).
- 6) To promote expansion in library resources (Syracuse University Library Associates).
- 7) The Friends are interested in books—and in the growing strength of the Library (Friends of the Princeton Library).
- 8) Maintain an organization of persons interested in books, to assist in bringing to the library funds for special needs beyond the command of the library budget, to encourage gifts of books and manuscripts, and to cooperate with the librarian and the library advisory board in the development of resources of the library

under the direction of the library committee of the Board of Trustees (The Associated Friends of the Library of Rutgers University).

Once the constitution is drawn up—it can be very simple and examples can be found in the Public Library Edition of *Friends of the Library Groups*<sup>7</sup> or by writing to any Friends organization or the A.L.A. Committee on Friends—membership dues should be determined. In most cases there are four different categories of dues, including individual, industrial, institutional, life memberships, etc. Individual membership dues range from \$1.00 to \$10.00. In some (few) cases no membership dues are required, but contributions are welcomed. One library asks for a book a year which entitles individuals to membership, in some libraries donors automatically become members of the Friends group for the current year.

The possible benefits which the library can derive from an active Friends organization are practically unlimited. However, work has to be done, and it is best divided about equally between the library staff and the members of the organization. Donors, individual and corporate, ask something in return for their work, their gifts, and their good will. It is well known that Andrew Carnegie, the greatest friend of libraries ever to have lived, established during his lifetime a very large number of libraries (2,505, to be exact). His method was to build and equip libraries on the condition that the local authority provides the site and maintenance.<sup>17</sup> He wanted to be sure of the lasting interest of the community.

It is a wise move on the part of the library administration to acquaint the members of the Friends' organization by means of tours, lectures, and publications of the resources and services of the institution. The scope of the rare book and special collections can be printed and distributed to members, independent donors, and to general users. Such an example can be found in a broadside issued by the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room of the Syracuse University Library, entitled: "Collecting Canons." It is important to convince the donors of special collections that the library will work on their steady growth, and if the donor is living, it is a good idea to notify him of books available in the market which will add to the importance of the collection. An active interest in his gift is thus established, and many a time he will even foot the bill for the desired material.

A list of desiderata published separately or included in a Friends or library publication, shows the wish to enlarge and better the collections and fill the gaps. Very often it brings results. Sometimes



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money is received to pay for a particular item on the list, other times a particular item might be in the possession of one of the members, and consequently finds its way to the library shelves. The Princeton University Library from time to time publishes a pamphlet entitled "Needs, Needs." Included in the *Report to the Friends* of the Free Library of Philadelphia is a list of titles "urgently needed by the Library." The librarian in charge or the curator should keep in close contact with rare and antiquarian book dealers, not only in his own locality, but in all of the United States and abroad. These people make it their business to study the library's collections and desiderata and bring to the attention of the curator material which can be purchased or suggested for purchase to Friends or individual donors. In many cases one of the committees established by a Friends organization deals with the acquisition of books. In isolated instances, the Friends even have a bibliography committee to study library resources.

There are many ways to show appreciation for gifts. Proper acknowledgment is a necessity and one of the most effective ways to secure further donations. Whether a gift is large or small in value or importance, the first step is to acknowledge receipt and express the thanks of the institution. A personal letter by the librarian or the person in charge of the department receiving the gift is always effective. A form letter may be used, depending on the value of the material. The tribute to the donor can be as large or as small as his gift. In some cases a wing has been added to a library or a separate building constructed to pay tribute to the benefactor. Rooms housing the collections have been named in honor of the donor. Sometimes the original library room of the donor is reproduced to perpetuate the collection in its original environment. A section of the rare book room or even a shelf, can bear a plaque with the donor's name. Special bookplates are sometimes designed, bearing the name of the donor.

Some Friends organizations design and print their own bookplates, others depend on the library for providing suitable plates or labels. Individual names of donors are either printed or typed on a special bookplate on which space is left for the donor's name. In one instance the donors are asked to sign their own names at the occasion of a special tea given once a year for this purpose.

Most Friends groups and libraries provide facilities for accepting donations in memory or honor of a friend or relative. In case funds for the purchase of books are received, the wishes of the donor as to the books most appropriately memorializing the person to whom he

wishes to pay tribute are of course respected. Suggestions for suitable material are submitted. Special bookplates designed to contain the names of the memorialized person and the donor are put into the book and the family of the deceased or the person to be honored is notified of the gift. Many libraries and Friends have so successfully publicized memorial gifts, that families announce their preference for donations to the library in local newspapers. One library has gone so far as to advocate this practice by distributing literature to funeral homes. Personally, this author finds this slightly morbid.

Descriptions of gifts in the Friends or library's publications, presented in a scholarly fashion, are a good way to express appreciation for a gift.

Exhibits of special gifts, accompanied by a catalog if possible (the donor might even pay for the catalog), are another sign of recognizing the importance of a gift. Many libraries exhibit gifts of the Friends and of individual donors once a year, the opening of the exhibit to coincide with the annual meeting of the Friends Organization or at the occasion of a lecture or tea.

Local newspapers are informed of important donations and sometimes a well publicized ceremony celebrating the receipt of a gift by the library, is a much appreciated gesture.

A list of donors and gifts should be published in the annual report and/or in a section of a bulletin or magazine.

Finally the donor should be informed—if he is not aware of it already—that his contribution to an educational institution in the form of money or books, is income tax deductible according to federal laws. A former president of the Friends of the Detroit Public Library, Inc. has explained and described most clearly the application of this law in a brochure.<sup>18</sup> A booklet published by the Dartmouth College entitled *Philanthropic Estate Planning*<sup>19</sup> may also be consulted to advantage. Some libraries assume the responsibility of appraising collections or individual books for income tax deduction purposes, others refer the donors to professional appraisers (sometimes three different ones at a time). They have to be paid for their experienced services by the donor or the library, of course. A statement as to the legality of income tax deductions should appear in the literature distributed to members of the Friends.

Although all libraries are most grateful for donations, some unreasonable requests are encountered to which the library can not and should not submit. Some collectors are known to have "peddled"

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gifts to several libraries, trying to force the highest possible appraisal. A request to appraise books for an unreasonably high amount should be denied, even at the risk that the gift is lost to the institution. The donor may insist that his collection of books be kept together in one place, although the books would be much more useful if distributed according to their subjects. An intelligent explanation is usually all that is required to change the donor's mind in such cases. We also receive requests to include materials in the rare book collection which do not fit its scope or are otherwise not worthy of inclusion. At all times we should at least try to receive the gifts with "no strings attached." These are, of course, the most desirable ones. They can even be traded or sold, wholly or in part, for material more valuable in strengthening the existing collections. And this is another time when the curator's personal acquaintance with antiquarian and rare book dealers comes in most handy.

Publications contribute greatly to the effectiveness of a Friends' organization. Many Friends publish a bulletin or magazine at more or less regular intervals. These publications are usually paid for from membership dues. Papers accepted for inclusion are mostly the work of the staff, of faculty members, less frequently of members of the organization, or transcripts of lectures delivered to the membership. In checking about a dozen different Friends' publications<sup>20</sup> it was determined that they contain the following information: articles of bibliographic interest, papers on book collecting, descriptions of library resources; lists of acquisitions with separate, detailed descriptions of the most important gifts; lists of desiderata; library news; lists of members or new members; membership news; lists of donors; and the annual report of the organization.

Some societies publish their annual report separately, or publish only an annual report. Some print in booklet form separate lectures delivered to the membership, some issue keepsakes of typographic interest as the occasion arises. Many libraries make their own publications available to the Friends' membership, including the annual report of the librarian. Promotional material is another project for a publications committee, and so are membership blanks and cards and announcements of coming events and lectures.

Lectures are another important activity sponsored by Friends organizations, often in cooperation with the library. The programs may include speeches of bibliographic and book collecting interest, papers by famous authors or recitations by noted poets, or talks by staff mem-

bers describing and publicizing the resources of the library or reviewing current books. Thus the Friends provide a center of bibliophilic interest and function as a distinctive cultural stimulant in the community.

In closing it seems apt to quote A. E. Nealy who discusses the library in an issue of the *Bulletin of Educational Philanthropy*: "Any non-profit organization such as a college or a library with a public relations policy that does not invite gifts, seldom receives any. Nor do its users have the pride and interest therein that philanthropic participation engenders. . . . The techniques of philanthropic approach in the case of libraries must necessarily be more innocuous than appeals on behalf of churches, . . . health organizations, etc. But the fact that libraries are entitled to be considered as beneficiaries of philanthropy is amply proved by the unsolicited gifts and bequests that come their way. The point we make here is that, for every one such that becomes an actuality, there are probably many more that never materialize due to lack of public relations policies along philanthropic lines."<sup>21</sup> Wise and tactful public relations policies used by the library administration, alone or in cooperation with the Friends organization in approaching prospective donors, bring often desired, sometimes even unexpected results.

The cunning seldom gain their ends,  
The wise are never without friends.

*The Fox and the Hen*

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