



Peter Pearson discusses “How to Improve Your Library’s Fundraising” on Library Leadership Podcast

United for Libraries President-Elect Peter Pearson is featured on the Library Leadership Podcast, discussing “How to Improve Your Library’s Fundraising.” Below are some highlights; listen to the complete podcast at <http://libraryleadershippodcast.com/how-to-improve-your-librarys-fundraising-with-peter-pearson>.

Fundraising in advance

In this day and age, it’s not uncommon for libraries to run into financial hardship. Many libraries turn to private fundraising when facing budget cuts. In order to continue providing the services that they love providing to their communities, they often need additional funding.

But even well-funded libraries need to consider the future when thinking about their financial needs. There is no guarantee that funding will last forever. Thus, a great time to start fundraising is when things are going really well — when there’s no desperation. “This will prove beneficial later down the line when things get tough, because you’ll be prepared,” says Pearson.

Another option is to consider developing an endowment fund. An endowment fund is when you keep a certain amount of money invested, and withdraw a small amount each year to help support programs and services. “One of the best ways to create future stability in any library system is to have endowments in place.”

What isn’t good for fundraising?

“This is a question that every library should ask before even beginning their fundraising methods.” Most libraries have come to the correct conclusion that private funding should never be used to support the hours of operation of a library system, or to pay the staff. “These are basic responsibilities of the city and county. You never want to let the city off the hook by stepping in and funding necessities with private funds.”

How private funding should be used

A great way to use private funds is by purchasing books, materials, and supplies with them; outreach efforts and children’s programs are also great ways to put private funding to use.

“Building renovations and additions are often funded by what’s called a capital campaign — where a percentage of the costs are paid for by public funds, with the opportunity for private donors to contribute.” This also presents naming opportunities (where a donor gets the privilege of naming, for example, a children’s room in the building). Naming opportunities are an incentive that encourages donors to participate. For these reasons, capital campaigns are extremely popular and effective.

Assign higher-level fundraising to one organization

Today, many libraries have two support organizations: a Friends group, and a Foundation. When thinking about fundraising for your library, it’s important not to confuse your donors. “A problem some donors run into when deciding to give, is where to give. Most of the time, if people don’t know where to give, they won’t give it all,” Pearson says. If your library has more than one support organization, have them come to an agreement about which one will be the primary fund-raiser. Pearson recommends leaving the higher-level fundraising efforts to your library’s Foundation, while allowing Friends to orchestrate book sales, newsletters, and other volunteer efforts.

What types of fundraising activities are easiest to start with?

An **annual fund** — a solicitation by mail that talks about the great things the library has done during the year, and encourages people to contribute — usually gets distributed between November and December, when potential donors are considering their tax deductions.

“There’s a difference between

membership appeals and annual funds. When we think of the word *membership*, it doesn’t necessarily conjure the idea of *charitable giving* — membership just provides an opportunity for affiliation with an organization.”

This is why the annual fund is distinct and important. Its purpose is to appeal to a person’s interest in making a tax-deductible, charitable donation. “An annual fund mailing should boast the library’s great services and programs, and then ask for the donation to help keep those programs running.”

Specifically for libraries that only have one support organization, it would be most beneficial to hold both a membership campaign and an annual fund. “The membership campaign should run sometime in the middle of the year, and then the annual fund at the end of the year in December.”

Another simple way to raise funds is to ask library vendors to make a contribution. “Since vendors have a vested interest in the library purchasing their services, the success of the library is also in their direct interest.” It’s a great idea to include vendors at the end of the year when reaching out for charitable donations.

Yet another simple but effective method is implementing a **book plate program**, where donors are able to pay a certain amount of money (normally around \$25 — the typical cost of a book), and for every \$25 said donor contributes, the library will place a book plate inside of a newly purchased book dedicating it in honor or memory of a designated individual. Like naming opportunities, book plate programs offer an incentive that encourages donors



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to help members locate articles on topics that are important to their groups: legal issues for NYS nonprofits, fundraising ideas, program offerings at current and past conferences, promotional ideas for National Friends of Libraries Week, and more.

FLS strives to keep both personal and organizational members informed of the issues of concern to Friends groups across the state. Each newsletter highlights successful events sponsored by Friends in NYS. FLS takes pride in featuring current, relevant content with many replicable ideas for libraries of all sizes. Members are encouraged to send submissions about their Friends projects and activities to be highlighted.

In addition to the newsletter archives, the board's entire "Leadership Manual" is online, where access is provided to the FLS by-laws, long-range plan, Board members' job descriptions, and operating procedures. Web page content is updated regularly highlighting upcoming training sessions, meet-ups, and reminders about application deadlines for FLS awards.

Networking and Meet-Ups

Because the FLS Board's annual in-person meeting is held in various regions around the state, the Board members agreed to try a new approach in 2014 to hold a "meet-up" in combination with the Board meeting. The first Friends Meet-Up was so successful, it has become an annual tradition. A Friends group and library director in the location where the Board wishes to meet are approached to host the Board

and an informal afternoon gathering of Friends which follows the Board's business meeting. The focus is on local Friends being introduced to the Board members, learning about FLS, and sharing best practices for Friends groups.

Over the past four years, the board has found this event is an excellent way to create an awareness of a statewide membership organization and support system ("Friends helping Friends"). The Board members are energized as they encourage dialogue among the assembled Friends, many of whom have not met one another, even if they are from neighboring libraries. The conversation is casual, as participants offer their experiences with fund-raising, strategies for volunteer engagement, and other topics of interest to volunteers and staff. This past year, the first-ever "Friendly Café Meet-Up" was offered in conjunction with the Association's statewide conference. The session was well attended and may become a staple in the line-up for Friends Day in the future.

Advocacy Efforts

The section's long-range plan has led to the establishment of a task force that is working to develop a toolkit for local Friends to sign up their members and residents as "Library Champions" on NYLA's Online Advocacy Center. The goal is to expand the network of the general public participating in this effective lobbying mechanism while also receiving information about the Friends group and their library's funding. Pilot locations will be field testing materials in early 2019, with a planned rollout to

all interested groups in late 2019.

FLS gives an annual award to honor a single volunteer or a group of supporters in the library community whose efforts have contributed to the growth of libraries or Friends organizations. The Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award was named posthumously to recognize a NYS library champion known as "Mr. Library" for his tireless advocacy on behalf of libraries at international, national, state, county, and local levels. Dan Casey was one of the delegates to the 1991 White House Conference. Presidents Richard M. Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush later named him to the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Informational Services. Today's Casey Award recipients emulate Dan's commitment to their libraries and each are recognized with a plaque.

The FLS leadership participates in NYLA's annual Advocacy Day, reaching out to elected officials with the Association's message and requests for support. In honor of National Friends of Libraries Week, the Section works with elected representatives to secure a state legislative resolution each year to recognize the contributions of library Friends groups. Groups are encouraged to pursue their own resolutions on the local level and to offer special events at their libraries. Several FLS officers have staffed the library association's booth at the State Fair held annually in late summer in Syracuse meeting families from around the state.

Please visit Friends of Libraries Section webpage, www.nyla.org/friends, for more details on our projects.

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to contribute. "This could be a great way to start your endowment fund — saving the funds accrued from the book plate program instead of immediately spending them."

The Library Leadership Podcast can be found at <http://libraryleadershippodcast.com>.

For more information about library Foundations, visit www.ala.org/united/foundations.