

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

“THE FRIENDS” ARE A DEDICATED GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS WHO FREELY GIVE THEIR TIME AND LABOR TO ADVANCE THE LIBRARY’S MISSION.¹

GOVERNANCE

The *Friends of the Library* (aka *The Friends*) is a group of individuals who value public library services to the community and are willing to volunteer their time, talents, and efforts to promote and support the library’s goals and objectives in whatever way will be helpful. *The Friends* are organized to help **support** the work of the library, not to engage in the work and responsibilities of library board members or library staff. *The Friends* cooperate with both, but do not interfere with either.

The *Friends of the Library* should adopt a constitution and bylaws that include clear statements of the supportive role of *The Friends* group. They should also arrange to have a representative from *The Friends* group attend library board meetings to promote mutual understanding and work in collaboration to further the mission of the library. *The Friends* should support the policies of the library as adopted by the library board and offer assistance in communicating policies to the residents of the community. The *Friends of the Library* must always conduct all activities ethically and strive for the highest level of accountability.

The Friends should include in their bylaws a *Statement of Ethics* that outlines the acceptable behaviors and decision-making processes for the group. *Although The Friends of the Library* group is not an “agency” of the city or county like the Library Board, it is a good practice to review the Utah Public Officers’ and Employees’ Ethics Act ([Utah Code Title 67 Chapter 16](#)) as it covers prominent areas of concern. For an example, see [The Ethical Dozen for Friends of the Library](#) from the Friends of Tennessee Libraries.

¹ The information presented in this section “Friends of the Library” was extracted from the publication *A Comparison of Responsibilities: Local Library Board of Trustees, Local Library Director, Regional Library, and Friends of the Library* created by a committee of Tennessee Regional Library System Directors in 1994 and updated through 2013. Online copy available at: <http://www.friendstnlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/Comparison-of-Responsibilities-Tennessee-2013.pdf>. Used with permission of the Tennessee State Library and Archives, August 2016.

ADMINISTRATION

To help with the assessment of needs in the community and to help guide the strategic planning process, the *Friends of the Library* keep informed of the library's plans, progress, and problems. *The Friends* are willing to assist in carrying out the objectives and implementing community analysis surveys and questionnaires. They guard against infringement of trustee's or director's role in connection with the operation of the library and they make continuous effort to maintain good communication with the library board and the library director.

ADVOCACY

The Friends of the Library serve as advocates for local, state, and national library issues. They represent the library before city councils, county commissions, and state legislators. *The Friends* serve as an additional "connecting link" in interpreting the library and community to each other. They conduct fundraising and events endorsed by the library director and the library board.

FUNDING & FINANCES

The Friends of the Library conduct fundraising activities that complement the library's mission and provide funding for special library projects approved by the library director or the library board. *The Friends* may contribute funds for books, materials, services, equipment, staff training, etc., to supplement the budget. Also, at the request of the library director, *The Friends* use their individual and collective influence to help the library board and director get the desired financial support from local, state, and national sources. In addition, *The Friends* make the most of their unique position to influence public opinion on government action that affects public libraries at the local, state, and national levels.

PERSONNEL

The Friends of the Library provide reliable volunteer help for special projects when requested by the library director. For example, *The Friends* may help with coordinating the sale of books weeded (discarded) from the library collection or may help with conducting a Summer Reading kick-off event.

ACCESS & SERVICES

Regarding services, the *Friends of the Library* assist in ways compatible with the scope of *The Friends* role and as requested by the director or library board. *The Friends* should be proactive in identifying ways they can be helpful to the library and receptive to suggestions from the director and the board. *The Friends* should be enthusiastic and resourceful in carrying out all projects.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Friends of the Library should offer suggestions for the library's marketing and public relations program. *The Friends* can help promote the library to the public, following the direction of the library's marketing plan. Finally, they can help provide access to groups and individuals whose resources or influence can help the library achieve its goals and objectives.

STARTING A *FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY* GROUP

Starting *The Friends* group may seem like a daunting task and it does involve quite a bit of work, to be sure. The good news is: You are not alone! There are several public libraries in the State of Utah with successful *Friends of the Library* organizations and these folks are always willing to share their experience and ideas for best practices as you strive to develop your own.

Here are some useful resources:

- Call your State Library consultant and ask for help identifying some libraries in your area that have good *Friends* groups in operation.
- Check out the [Tool Kit for Building a Library Friends Group](#) from the Friends of Tennessee Libraries with awesome, down-to-earth tips for getting started.
- Check out the "Free Toolkits" from [United for Libraries Resources for Friends Groups](#) and consider joining **United for Libraries, the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations**.