



FRIENDS OF THE KIRKWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Chapter & Verse



SPECIAL EDITION — AUGUST 2008

Member Survey Results

As most of you are aware, the Strategic Planning Committee conducted a survey of the Friends' members. Our motivation was the many unknowns facing both the library and the Friends over the next year or so as the total renovation is planned, designed, and construction is undertaken.

With all that in mind, we wanted to undertake a review of the Friends' mission and how the mission can be implemented. To do that, we needed input from the membership.

And input we got! We mailed 438 surveys and received 151 responses — an amazing 34.47% return. In the opinion of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board, that level of responses is testimony to how much our membership cares about the Friends and the wonderful library we support.

This special issue of *Chapter & Verse* is an attempt to share the survey results. We have done our best to present the information about a question in quantita-

tive terms where possible and to condense and summarize comments and questions on non-quantifiable survey questions.

By reading comments and questions on the survey, we also learned there are some topics that need clarification. So, you'll find a part of this issue titled "Clarifications" which we hope will provide information to clear up some misconceptions.

If, after reading this issue you still have some concerns, questions, or lack of understanding about anything the Friends group is involved with or trying to accomplish, please do not hesitate to call the Friends' office at (314) 821-5770, Extension 23. Leave your name and number and ask to speak to someone about the survey or about the strategic planning effort and you will receive a call back very shortly.

*Jackie Carpenter and Virginia Kramer
Co-chairs, Strategic Planning Committee*

Question-By-Question Responses

Below, you will find the results of our recent member survey. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any member of the Strategic Planning Committee if you have any questions. Call (314) 821-5770, Extension 23. Leave a message and we'll be happy to call back.

1. Why did you join the Friends? How long (approximately) have you been a member?

Out of 151 surveys that were returned, 103 members (68.2%) identified themselves, which meant that we could confirm the length of their membership in our member database. The average of that number was 7.7 years. For the other 48 surveys, we used the self-reported length of membership, which averaged 7.5 years. Typical explanations about why the member joined the Friends was general support for — and a love of — the library; a love of reading and books; and appreciation of the Friends' activities such as programs, book sales, and Greentree Books Shop.

2. In your opinion, what should be the main purpose/objective of the Friends of KPL?

Generally the answers to this question support the purpose of the Friends as stated in our By-laws; i.e., raise funds and provide volunteers. Those two answers totaled 44.6% of the responses. "General support" accounted for 27.5%. PR, advocacy and outreach totaled 23.9%. The balance of the responses favored promoting literacy and sponsoring programs.

3. With which Friends' volunteer activities (if any) have you been involved?

Fifty respondents said they have not participated in volunteer activities. Of the 101 who have, those who

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have worked on the Book Fair was the highest at 86, followed by the Shop at 44. The balance of activities cited included Board membership, Homebound delivery, programs, special events, the library campaign, hospitality, crafts, and Greentree Festival. The highest number of activities any one respondent was involved with was nine. The average was two.

4. Would you please prioritize the following Friends' activities, by indicating a '1' in front of the activity which you think is the most important and continuing to number from there to the least important, in your opinion.

- Book Sales
- Other fundraising
- Greentree Books Shop
- Programming (e.g., the English Tea, etc.)
- Library Advocacy
- Community outreach & awareness
- Delivery of library materials to the homebound

Responses to this question were perhaps the most difficult to analyze. But when combining the numeric priorities with comments, a consensus appeared. We decided to look at which activities received the most answers of #1 and #2 priorities. When combining those two top numbers, Book Sales received 99 votes, followed by Outreach & Awareness at 52, Library Advocacy at 47, and Greentree Books Shop with 46 votes. Though not statisticians, we also looked at the mode of the answers, which is the most frequently occurring priority. Book Sales and Library Advocacy received a "1" more often than any other number and Greentree Books Shop and Outreach & Awareness received a "2" more often than any other number. When we averaged the numbers (remember, the lowest number means the highest priority), Book Sales received the highest priority average at 2.0; followed by Outreach & Awareness with 3.3; Library Advocacy at 3.4 and Greentree Books Shop at 3.7. So, no matter how we looked at the numbers, those four activities came out on top. Then, when we analyzed the comments, it became apparent that our members see those four activities as all intertwined. The book sales and the Shop *are* community outreach and library advocacy. Comments included "All are important and build on each other," "The sales, the Shop, and Homebound contribute to community outreach and awareness," and "Regarding outreach — all the other activities fall under this."

5. Of our current activities, what do you think the Friends are doing well? Please explain.

The most frequent response was the Book Fair (70) followed by Greentree Books Shop (37). Advocacy and outreach was the next most frequent at 21 followed by programs and special events at 19. Thirty nine responses mentioned the newsletter, raising money, everything/most things, and volunteer involvement. Twenty six people either didn't answer or indicated they didn't feel as though they knew enough to reply.

6. Of our current activities, what do you think the Friends could do better? Please explain.

Many of the responses to this question are covered in "Clarifications" beginning on page 4 of this issue. Specific suggestions regarding the Shop included: make it larger, promote it and its offerings better, and try to get the word out about its existence more effectively. Some respondents would like to see us do a better job of promoting the Friends and getting more publicity for our activities, as well as more coverage in the media. Others would like to see us do a better job of taking the library story to the community and countering the opinion in our community that the library is a waste of money. It was suggested that we do better programs, author programs, and evening programs. (See #7 below.) On the topic of membership, it was suggested that we attract younger members, and do more outreach to current members to get them more involved and to share the efforts and responsibilities among more people.

7. What kind of volunteer opportunities would you like to see the Friends offer that we are not currently offering?

We received lots and lots of ideas about new activities on the 60 surveys that had a response to this question. In fact, this topic has taken on a life of its own, as it well should. Lois Bliss gave a presentation to the Board of Trustees on July 16 addressing new services and activities which the Friends might undertake during and after the completion of the library renovation. She also presented a list of criteria that will be used in evaluating activities. In order to cover this topic more completely, we will report on it in the September issue of *Chapter & Verse*, listing the criteria and the activities being considered.

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Survey Results (cont'd from previous page)

8. Greentree Books Shop contributes approximately \$14,000 per year to help support the library. Do you think continuing to do so is important?

Yes 129 No 3 Maybe 13

Out of 145 responses to this question, "Yes" appeared on 89.0% of the surveys. Comments on those surveys included the fact that the respondent didn't realize the Shop made so much money; quite a few praised the "community" and social aspects of the Shop; some felt it was a "drawing card" for the library; and many were exclamatory, such as "Absolutely!" and "Definitely!" On the surveys with a "No" answer (2.0%), two respondents made no comments and the third commented "Space needed for library materials." Typical comments on surveys with a "Maybe" answer (9.0%) included the fact that the respondent didn't know if space was an issue or not; one wondered about the return on investment; others said they would miss it if it were gone; and still others thought the Shop should be expanded.

9. Do you shop in Greentree Books Shop? If so, please tell us about the frequency, your experiences there, the kinds of things you buy, etc.

Whether you shop there or not, we would like feedback from you about the Friends sponsoring the Shop.

Out of 134 responses to this question, 114 people said "yes" and 20 said "no." On surveys where a frequency was indicated, 8 respondents said they visit weekly, 24 visit either monthly or bimonthly, 7 visit "several times a year" and 25 indicated occasional or rare or infrequent visits. Experiences were generally favorable, with one comment that checkout can be slow. The most frequent type of purchase reported was gifts (51), followed by books (42), cards (38), and toys (6). Respondents who support the shop generally think it is a very nice feature that brings people into the library and contributes to a good cause. On the negative side, one respondent commented that the library needs the space, and another feels the Shop needs to offer more variety and also a coffee shop.

10. The Friends' Annual Book Fair and additional book sales contribute approximately \$40,000 per year to help support the library. Do you think continuing to do so is important?

Yes 146 No 0 Maybe 3

Out of 149 responses to this question, 98.0% of the respondents answered "Yes." Comments on those surveys that addressed funds raised by the book sales were all positive; i.e., "Nice chunk of change," "A substantial amount of money," and "The money sounds real good." Many respondents also addressed the "community" aspect of the sales by talking about the "spirit" of the book fair for both volunteers and buyers, the "positive PR for the library" and the chance to involve many people in the event. Of the three surveys with a "Maybe" answer (2.0%), only two respondents made a comment. One was "Lots of labor and good community service" and the other thought there had to be a ". . . less onerous, less time consuming way to make money." (Editor's note: Please let us know if you can identify one!)

11. The Book Fair Committee processes over 80,000 donated books per year. These books are provided to the community at a low cost at the Annual Book Fair and at additional sales, thus diverting them from shredders and landfills. Do you think continuing to do so is important?

Yes 149 No 0 Maybe 1

Out of 150 responses to this question, 99.3% of the respondents answered "Yes." Some comments on those surveys addressed the topic from the viewpoint of the book donors, indicating that the donors are glad to have a place to give their books knowing that others will read them. Some comments also touched on the financial and social aspects of our book sales. Additional comments specifically addressed the "green" aspect of this question, expressing concern that if there isn't an easy place to donate books, they'd end up in shredders and landfills. One indicated that anything that "helps make a green world helps" and one equated shredding books to something Hitler would do! The respondent who answered "Maybe" made no comment.

Officers

Jinny Gender *President*
Jane Bond *Vice President*
Judy Arnold *Secretary*
Verlaine Hinson *Treasurer*

To reach the Friends

Telephone: (314) 821-5770, Ext. 23

Send e-mail

KPLfriends140@yahoo.com

Visit us on the Web

kpl.lib.mo.us/fkpl/friends.htm

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Virginia Kramer, *Editor*

Clarifications

In reading comments and suggestions in the recent survey responses, it became apparent that there are misconceptions among our members about some activities and responsibilities at the library. We present the following in an effort to clarify a few points. You'll see below that we have organized the questions and comments by topic. When a number of respondents asked similar questions, we grouped them together and paraphrased the question. So, you may not see your exact question, but we hope the topic is covered and your question is answered. If you asked a question on your survey or made a comment that you think should be addressed here and it isn't, please know that it wasn't intentional on our part. We had a lot of input (which is good news) and a comment could have been over looked. Please contact us so we can try to address your concern.

BOOK SALES

Would it be possible to store and sort books off-site and hold book sales three or four times a year?

The first part of this question covers the topic that Jane Bond presented to the Board of Trustees in June. We are glad the question was brought up in the survey, because it gives us the opportunity to share the same information with all the Friends members.

Storing books: We currently store books off-site, thanks to the generosity of A-Mrazek Moving Systems. They come to our sorting room at the library several times a year to pick up books, ultimately storing several large truck loads for us.

Sorting books: Sorting off-site, however, presents many problems. First, the book donation bins are located at the library for the convenience of library patrons. We receive over 1,000 books each week, and these books would all have to be transported to the off-site location. Second, if there were rental charges associated with this location, it would decrease the net income derived from the book sales, and thus our contribution to the library. Third, donated books are the source of the books for Greentree Books Shop, so these books would need to be sent off-site for sorting, returned to the Shop at the library, and if not sold, sent off-site again. Fourth, there are concerns with the convenience, accessibility, safety, liability, and security of an off-site location. There are other factors involved as well, but you can see that we've given this a lot of thought over the past few years and continue to find that it is not really feasible to try to continue our book sales using an off-site location for sorting.

Frequency of sales: On the question of book sale frequency, each sale entails expenses for publicity, postage and in the case of the Annual Book Fair, which must be held off-site, table rental. Again, expenses reduce the amount of money we can give to

the library. That being said, we find that we need to be as flexible as possible with the changing times. So, we are now holding monthly sales on the last Saturday of each month in the sorting room, on the lower level of the library. The purpose is to reduce the number of books that will need to be stored when we have to vacate the building for the renovation. Also, because of the uncertainty of future opportunities for large book sales, we thought we'd try to sell as many books as possible prior to the temporary relocation of the library. The monthly sales will offer the same wide variety of books and great bargain prices that you find at all our sales.

I worked one time at the book fair and was never asked again. Why is this?

The Book Fair Volunteer Calling Committee works from a list of people who have worked at previous sales, or have indicated an interest in working at upcoming sales. There are at least three people making the phone calls, and they call everyone on the list. If the phone isn't answered, they don't leave a message. Often by the time the call is returned, the list has moved on to another committee member. Perhaps you weren't at home when a committee member called. Your question, however, will cause us to review our practices in calling volunteers. But in any event, we would encourage anyone who wants to work on the sale and hasn't received a call from the Calling Committee to call the Friends' office (821-5770, Extension 23). A member of the Calling Committee will get in touch with you. We are grateful to have a dedicated and enthusiastic group of volunteers and welcome any and all volunteers.

GREENTREE BOOKS SHOP

Could the Shop stay open more hours?

The Shop opens one hour after the library opens
(continued on next page)

One of the most important considerations for accepting and sorting books is logistics.

and closes one hour before the library closes. This has worked well for many years. Occasionally the Shop may be closed during normal hours if a volunteer is unable to take his or her shift and can not find a substitute. However, we work hard to keep that occurrence to a minimum.

How many hours do people volunteer in the Shop and do they enjoy it?

We have approximately sixty volunteers that contribute about 2,400 hours in the Shop per year. The volunteers love working there and look forward to their shifts each week. After all, they are *volunteers!* Why don't you stop in some day and chat with one of them and see what you learn about his or her feelings about working in the Shop.

Does the number of volunteer hours it takes to purchase, stock, and manage the Greentree Books Shop justify the \$14,000 the Shop earns?

We certainly think so. The Shop also supports the Friends mission (see the first question in the Finance topic on page 7). It not only provides money for the library, but is also a place where people stop by to chat with our volunteers and find out what is going on in the library. Our volunteers love working in the Shop and they know it is a great contribution to the library they love, and a way for them to contribute to the mission of the Friends and the library. Remember there are no paid employees in the Shop — everyone volunteers their time and effort.

The Shop should expand its merchandising and range of materials, perhaps include a coffee bar, and advertise more to the public at large.

We are glad so many members like the Shop so much and we certainly appreciate your suggestions to grow it into an even bigger resource for the library. However, space is always an issue in any library. As Wicky Sleight, Library Director, and the Board of Trustees weigh the many needs for the renovated library, we will eventually learn about space that may become available to us and will make decisions about the future of the Shop based on those facts and on input such as we received through this survey.

CHAPTER & VERSE AND COMMUNICATION

I wish they would include all activities at KPL in Chapter & Verse.

The library has not had its own printed newsletter since it stopped publishing *The Source* due to budget constraints. At that time, responding to library staff requests, the Friends offered to expand *Chapter & Verse* by including information about some library activities, such as the Children's Department programs and clubs. That grew into also publishing computer class schedules occasionally, and *C&V* has recently begun to list the teen and adult program schedule. Unfortunately, space constraints and limited resources prevent us from publishing everything about the library. *C&V* maintains its main goal of informing its members about all Friends' activities.

The Director communicates library information to patrons using the library's very informative website (www.kpl.lib.mo.us) which includes a calendar of upcoming events. Additionally, posters are placed in the library announcing activities.

How do we know which programs are Friends and which are other entities?

Chapter & Verse announces all programs sponsored by the Friends, but it also has information about some library activities. We started doing that when publication of *The Source* was discontinued (see previous question) by the library. Posters in the library that announce Friends' programs will always

have a statement to the effect of "Sponsored by Friends of the Kirkwood Public Library." All other programs advertised in the library are sponsored by the library. However, regardless of who sponsors an event, they are all open to the entire community.

I would like to see sketches of volunteers and articles on trends in library work in Missouri and nationwide in C&V.

The *Chapter & Verse* editor agrees that sketches of volunteers would be good to publish. In the past we have occasionally written articles about volunteers and also about library staff members, and in the future we will try to do more of that, as space permits.

However, because *C&V* is the Friends' newsletter, the editor (who is not a librarian) does not have sources of information about library work and trends — only about the efforts and trends of friends' groups. We have passed this suggestion on to the library Director.

Shop volunteers play an important role in fund raising and also in developing a sense of community.

Can C&V be put on the Friends' web site?

Chapter & Verse can be found on the Friends' page of the library's website at kpl.lib.mo.us/friends-home.asp. The current issue is posted shortly after it is sent through the U.S. mail and back copies can also be accessed from a link on this page.

One of the benefits we have derived from having C&V on the website is the fact that we have sold some of our special books when someone has done a Google search for a particular title and our web page turned up in their search.

The Friends should provide a quiet work area, with access to a printer and copier.

Providing space in the library is not a function that can be performed by the Friends nor a decision we can make. Identifying how space will be used in the newly renovated library is the big challenge facing the Director and the Board of Trustees, as they begin to plan for a total renovation of the building. They will need to balance the needs and wants of many stakeholders.

THE HOMEBOUND PROGRAM

Can more volunteers be motivated to help with Homebound program?

We always have more volunteers for the Homebound program than we have patrons requesting this service. We have tried several ways to increase the number of patrons who use the service. For example, we currently have a volunteer who is visiting various retirement homes and churches in Kirkwood to make sure they are aware of our Homebound service. One reason we may not have as many patrons using the service as we have volunteers, was testified to by survey respondents who told us they have relatives and neighbors who provide that service for them.

If you know of anyone who could benefit from our Homebound delivery service, please have them contact us at 821-5770, Extension 23. We have volunteers waiting to serve KPL patrons in Kirkwood.

LIBRARY

Does KPL have a mission statement?

Yes, it is "The Kirkwood Public Library is dedicated to providing information services and resources which enrich and enlighten the community."

Describe the relationship between the Friends and the director, the staff, the Trustees, and the Foundation.

The Friends organization has a good relationship with the Director, the library staff, the Library Board of Trustees, and the Foundation. A representative of

each of these entities attends Board meetings for each of the other entities, to report on the activities of the group he or she represents. Additionally, the Director is an ex-officio member of the Friends' Board and attends our Board meetings. Those are only a few of the ways we keep our lines of communication open.

Opportunities to volunteer are plentiful; are volunteers appreciated at KPL?

Our library Director and the Board of Trustees often express their gratitude for all that our volunteers do for the library. The Friends organization appreciates its volunteers like no other perhaps — volunteers are our backbone and life blood.

FINANCE

Why do we need the Friends and a Foundation?

The two organizations offer very different types of support to the library, as you'll see in the two following paragraphs.

The Friends' purpose, as stated in Article II of our By-laws is: "Friends of the Kirkwood Public Library shall be a non-profit organization whose purpose shall be to provide volunteers and funds to assist the library in serving the community." The library uses the funds provided by the Friends to purchase resources it would otherwise be unable to afford. We also provide volunteers in a myriad of ways to support the Friends' efforts and to help the library.

The Foundation's mission statement is: "The Kirkwood Public Library Foundation is dedicated to building an endowment fund that enriches traditional tax-based support to ensure that Kirkwood Public Library continues to meet the rapidly changing needs of library patrons by providing quality library services, facilities, and access."

It might be an idea to set up an endowment fund so that monies generated could be placed in the fund so that it could be used in the future.

As explained above, the library Foundation has established an Endowment Fund. The Friends contribute annually to the fund. Typically, we give an amount equal to 10% of our donation to the library. In recent years, when we have given \$60,000 to the library annually, we have also donated \$6,000 each year to the Foundation's endowment fund.

The Friends number one priority should be to purchase books.

The Friends Board does not make decisions about purchasing books (or anything else, for that matter)

Clarifications (cont'd from page 6)

for the library. The library Director annually presents the Friends with a list of items she would like to have that are not covered by the library budget. The Friends then provide the Director with funds (\$60,000 per year for each of the last several years) that the Director uses to make those purchases.

The Friends should accept renewals by PayPal and credit card.

You can currently pay for your membership renewals with a credit card by providing the information on the renewal form. You can also go into the Shop with your renewal form and charge your membership there. We are also looking into making renewals and donations available online. One consideration is the cost. We pride ourselves on keeping our costs as low as possible so our donations to the library can be as big as possible. Accepting credit card payments has a cost associated with it, and using an online service also has a cost associated with it.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Could we have a booth at Greentree Festival to encourage new memberships?

We have had a booth at the Festival for many years. We sell items from the Shop and have materials to hand out for the children's programs. We also promote membership in the Friends and have membership brochures available for anyone interested in joining. Our booth is typically located across from the entrance to the children's play area. We hope you will stop by to visit us this year.

Could we have some of our programs at night?

This is a great idea and we are giving serious consideration to adding evening programs. The Friends sponsors Readers' Circle, a book discussion series, which meets on the first Thursday of September, November, January, March, and May at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room. Information for this coming season is available at several locations around the library.

Look for bright green flyers on the wall and bright green trifold brochures. *Chapter & Verse* highlights each upcoming book two months prior to its discussion. (Check in the Shop for books that are on the Readers' Circle list.)

Could we survey other libraries for their ideas for other volunteer opportunities?

We subscribe to the newsletter and a listserv of Friends of Libraries USA, a Philadelphia-based national organization that supports library friends organizations. Through those two sources, we have access to a treasure trove of information about what other Friends groups around the country are doing. In fact, we have been featured in their newsletter on many occasions for the ideas we have as well as our fundraising and other activities.

I think the Friends do a fine job of the computer lessons.

Thank you for the compliment, but the Friends are not involved with the computer classes at the library. A professional trainer hired by the library staff provides the free training service to members of the community.

I think the Friends do a fine job of children's programs and the children's summer reading program.

Again, we cannot take credit for something we don't do. The wonderful children's programs are sponsored by the staff of the Children's Department at the library, under the supervision of Sarah Erwin, Assistant Library Director and Director of Programs and Youth Services.

Is the craft group open to new workers?

The craft group is certainly open to new workers. If you are a crafter and would like to join this group, please call the Friends' office at 821-5770, Extension 23 and indicate you are interested in joining the crafters. Please leave your name and phone number and a member of the group will call you back.

Survey Results (cont'd from page 3)

12. How do you learn about Friends' activities (please check all that apply):

123 The Friends newsletter, *Chapter & Verse*

57 Information posted in the library

24 Website

43 Other (please specify)

Our goal with this question was to determine how our members learn about our activities, and 149 respondents answered. About half the respondents indicated they use two or more of the choices. Comments about the choice of "other" include "Personal conversations," "Word of mouth," and "*Webster Kirkwood Times*." It seems clear that the printed word and personal contact is the most frequently used method of learning about the Friends' activities. That having been said, we will continue to post information on our web pages and use e-mail to augment other methods of communication.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- August 18** Friends Board Meeting at 1:00 p.m. in Large Auditorium
- August 20** Library Board of Trustees Meeting at 5:30 p.m. in Large Auditorium
- August 30** Monthly Book Sale in sorting room of library basement, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- September 4** Readers' Circle book discussion at 7:00 p.m. of *Infamous Woman: The Life of George Sand* by Joseph Amber Barry
- September 13 and 14** Friends' Booth at Greentree Festival
- September 17** Library Board of Trustees Meeting at 5:30 p.m. in Large Auditorium
- September 27** Monthly Book Sale in sorting room of library basement, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

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