

# Everybody Needs a Friend: the Value of Friends Groups to Libraries

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FRIENDS OF USU  
MERRILL - CAZIER LIBRARY

# Two Friends Groups



## Friends of Merrill-Cazier Library

- ▶ Academic library group
- ▶ Started in 1995
- ▶ 365 members
- ▶ 6 member board
- ▶ Primary activities – fundraising through membership and donations and purchasing materials for the library, and hosting biannual speakers

## Friends of Logan Library

- ▶ Public library group
- ▶ Started in 2014
- ▶ About 100 members
- ▶ 4 member board
- ▶ Primary activities – fundraising through book sales and purchasing materials for the library with the money earned, and hosting quarterly speakers

# What is a Friends Group?

Wikipedia: **Friends of Libraries** are non-profit, charitable groups formed to support libraries in their communities.

There are Friends groups  
in all kinds of libraries (public, academic, school)  
all over the country

ALA has an Association of Library Trustees, Advocates,  
Friends and Foundations - United for Libraries



# Why Have Friends groups?

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- ▶ **fundraise**
- ▶ **speak in support**
- ▶ **support professional development and involvement**
- ▶ **network**
- ▶ **market and promote**
- ▶ **collaborate and cooperate**
- ▶ **for volunteers**
- ▶ **provide a boost**
- ▶ **celebrate, promote pride and accomplishment**
  - ▶ (part of a list from Sally Gardner Reed's *The Good the Great and the Unfriendly* pp. 20-21)



# The shorter version of why

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- ▶ Fundraising
- ▶ Advocacy



# How to Start a Friends Group

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- ▶ **What you should know:**
  - ▶ Requires a significant time commitment upfront
  - ▶ Strong foundation leads to better results
  - ▶ Library director plus a trustee and a few committed patrons are best to start with



# How to Start a Friends Group

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- ▶ **The elements:**
  - ▶ Develop a core group of members
  - ▶ Develop a written agreement between the Friends and the library
  - ▶ Develop bylaws and establish 501(c)(3) status
  - ▶ Develop group structure: leadership, committees, dues, etc.
  - ▶ Develop purpose, goals, priorities, etc.



# How to Grow a Friends Group

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- ▶ **Ideas**
  - ▶ Public awareness campaigns
  - ▶ Social networking
  - ▶ Letters to the editor
  - ▶ Higher visibility within the library
  - ▶ Friends of Libraries Week activities
  - ▶ Recruiting campaigns
  - ▶ Direct mail
  - ▶ Online membership applications
  - ▶ Brochure blitz at community events
  - ▶ Etc.

(part of a list from Sally Gardner Reed's *The Good the Great and the Unfriendly*, p. 29)

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# How to Grow a Friends Group

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- ▶ Make service more attractive to retirees and millennials by breaking up large projects into smaller tasks
- ▶ Keep an accurate list of anyone interested in the group for future contact, especially those who have volunteered to help in some way



# This sounds great! What can go wrong?!

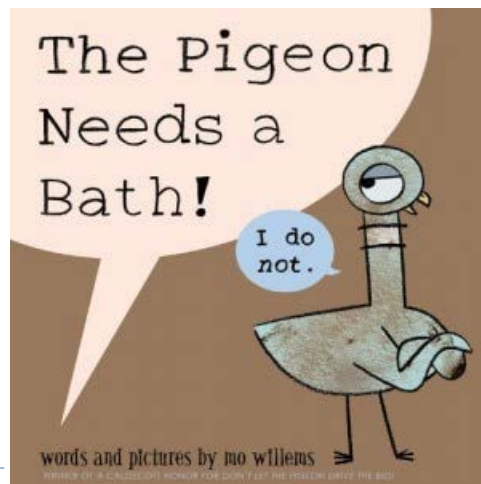
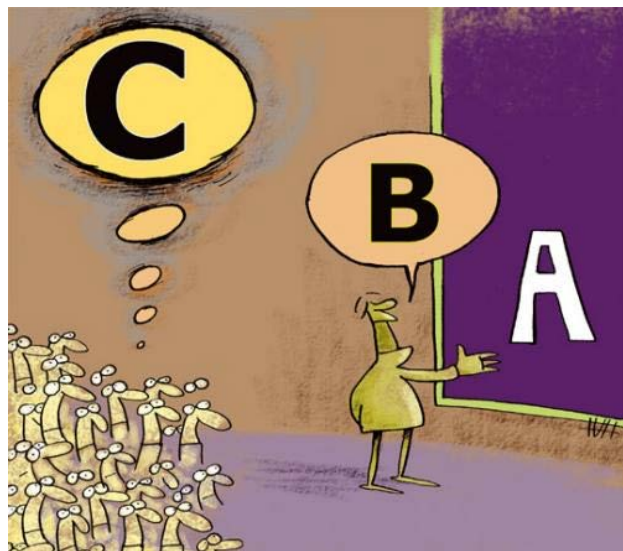
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- ▶ Separating the group from the library
  - ▶ Not sharing information
  - ▶ Not inviting someone from the library to meetings
- ▶ “Opposing library policy and/or direction” (Reed p.60)
- ▶ Withholding money from the library
  - ▶ Not providing it for a legitimate library need
  - ▶ Claiming ownership over money raised – so they should decide what it can be spent on
  - ▶ Giving it to other groups
- ▶ Stagnation



# This often boils down to

- ▶ A misunderstanding of the friends group's function
- ▶ Lack of information about library needs
- ▶ Personality and/or relationship issues



Relationship Status:  
**it's complicated**



# What can you do?

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- ▶ Be friendly!
- ▶ Wait it out
- ▶ Include the Friends by sharing information, plans
- ▶ Consider disbanding the group



# Ideas for Friends' Activities

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# Resources

The Good, the Great, and the Unfriendly: A Librarian's Guide to Working With Friends Groups by Sally Gardner Reed (ALA Editions, 2017)

ALA United for Libraries Resources for Friends Groups  
<http://www.ala.org/united/friends> (Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations)



- About United for Libraries
- Advocacy & Issues
- Authors for Libraries
- Awards & Grants
- Conferences & Events
- Foundations
- Friends & Foundations Zone (member login required)
- Friends Groups**
  - Academic Friends
  - Book Club Choices
  - Fact Sheets
  - Friend Your Library
  - Friends Electronic Discussion Group
  - Idea Sharing
  - Organizational Tools
  - State Friends Groups
  - State Friends Groups Electronic Discussion Group
- Membership in United for Libraries
- Statewide Group Members

## United for Libraries Resources for Friends Groups

Are you thinking of starting a Friends group, reorganizing or revitalizing the one you have, or a seasoned group looking for some fresh ideas? Look no further! United for Libraries offers a wealth of ideas and resources for Friends groups of all types, sizes, and level of activity. Explore the links in the menu to the left under "Friends Groups" and throughout the rest of the United for Libraries website.

### NEW: United for Libraries Resources

We've compiled a handy Excel file of the top resources available FREE and for members only. Please note this is a working compilation and resources may be added at any time. Also, it's not possible to list all of the wonderful links and resources we have on our site, so if you are looking for something and can't find it on this list, email Beth ([beth@unitedforlibraries.org](mailto:beth@unitedforlibraries.org)) or Jillian ([jwntaylor@ala.org](mailto:jwntaylor@ala.org)) and we'll let you know if we have the resource and if so, where to find it.

- [United for Libraries Resources](#) (Excel, 12.94 kb) Updated 1/12/17

### Power Guide for Successful Library Advocacy

United for Libraries, along with the Neal-Schuman Foundation, believe strongly that advocacy can and does work. We've seen evidence of it from coast to coast in all types of libraries at the local and the state levels. Developing an advocacy campaign, as you will soon see, is not rocket science but it does take dedication, hard work, a core group of people who are passionate about the cause and the support of many, many people in your community. This [guide](#) will take the mystery out of advocacy, provide you with an organized step-by-step approach, and allow you to develop a set of strategies that will motivate your community to pressure funders to support the library or in the case of a referendum or a bond issue – to vote "yes."

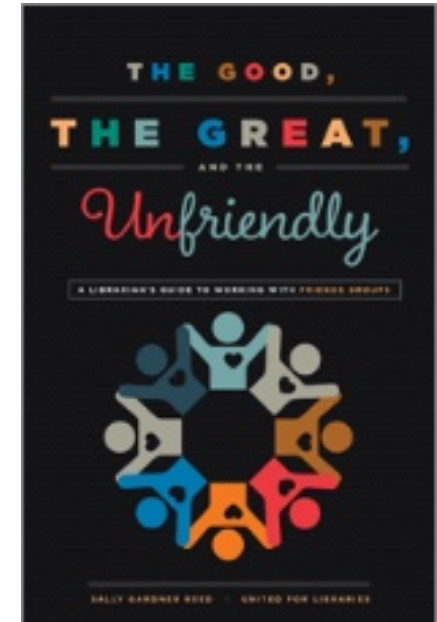


### Free Toolkits

[Libraries Need Friends: Starting a Friends Group or Revitalizing the One You Have](#) (PDF, 100 kb) by Sally Gardner Reed, Executive Director, United for Libraries, is a free toolkit geared mostly toward public library Friends groups, but with good tips on membership and outreach for Friends groups of any type.

[Academic Library Friends: A Toolkit for Getting Started – You Can Do This!](#) (PDF, 165 kb) by Charles D. Hanson, Director of Kettering Library Services, Kettering University, is a free toolkit from United for Libraries geared toward starting a Friends group at a community college or university.

[Friends Groups: Critical Support for School Libraries](#) (PDF, 66 kb), by Sally Gardner Reed, Executive Director, United for Libraries, is a free toolkit geared toward school librarians looking to create a Friends group of parents, faculty, and community



<https://www.youtube.com/user/FOLUSA>

