These notes are the remarks presented by Peg Glisson, President, Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library (FFRPL), during the “Engage Your Community by Communicating Your Impact” double-session workshop on Saturday, November 10, 2018, at the NYLA Annual Conference in Rochester NY, sponsored by the Friends of Libraries Section.

See the PowerPoint from Megan Mack, “# Your Library Story NYLA November 2018 FINAL.” Peg’s portion of the presentation were slides #20 to 34. Her notes are transcribed here.

In conjunction with these remarks, see two handouts:
   (1) Draft FFRPL Annual Appeal Letter 2018
   (2) FFRPL Annual Appeal 2018

slide #20 - FFRPL Strategic Plan 2016-2020
**Sustainable Funding** donating to FFRPL is critical & best way to support Rochester Public Library (RPL)
**Library Partnership** Plan, promote, present, & support broad range of relevant, diverse, timely programs at Central and branches
**Community Support** -- mission and engagement of FFRPL, board, staff, volunteers
   mindful of our diverse communities

Worked on Strategic Plan at same time as RPL, with same consultant, knew two [entities and] mesh[ed] well

slide #21 - What are we saying? Who are we saying it to?
Funding & Communication
Clear we needed to work on our messaging—what do we emphasize? How do get out the word? To who? How?
Causewave, in conjunction with RPL—Communication Plan, but no budget

slide #22 - RRLC, April 2017
2 Board members, 1 staff attended
Help us DIY w/o communications staff
Valuable pointers, like 5 W's, social media, headlines

slide #23 - Competing nonprofit logos
Value of impact story in our messaging—how is FFRPL’s impact different from all the many Rochester organizations competing for donor dollars?
   Monthly e-newsletter to donors
   Program mailings
   Donor opportunities-mail, special events like ROC the day

slide #24 - The Pitch
Monthly reports from RPL Director gave us plenty of fodder, but how best to craft what we had to celebrate?
Who to pitch to?
What format?

slide #25 - Storytelling
Impact Stories: beneficiaries or participants, bottom of pyramid—proof of good
Cause Stories: service or product addressing social problem
Product Stories: new product, service or place
Personal Stories: learning, inspiration, result

slide #26 - Direct Mail Annual Campaign
Annual appeal: 3 mailings
Donors, lapsed donors, and patrons
Successful in terms of dollars—but were our letters causing excitement or conversation? Were they going to the right people? Were people telling people about the great things RPL does?

slide #27 - Then...
Largely operated under “tell all” while we have their attention
Bulleted list

slide #28 - Stand out
Libraries have changed, are changing—but many still think of them in traditional way
Focus on the new, without throwing the baby out with the bathwater

slide #29 - Draft, paragraph 1
Staff composed a draft, build on what we hoped people had heard about in the last couple months in press stories about the Library, emailed to me for comments (handout: Draft FFRPL Annual Appeal Letter 2018)

Attention grabbing opening sentence—LIFESAVER??
Personal—David, age 30, and Nurse Barb—two people from Rochester Community
Innovative-Consumer Health Information Center

I know the Library is “more than you think,” but the letter doesn’t make clear FFRPL’s connection to their current health initiative. Could that connection be made clearer—and could FFRPL be mentioned earlier in the letter? Currently, it is only mentioned in the last paragraph and there’s no direct correlation to all the information included in the previous paragraphs. I also wonder if the listing of types of testing done by the nurse needs to then be repeated in the paragraph starting, “While David’s numbers are good...”. It’s redundant and makes the letter longer than it needs to be.

slide #30 - Final – opening paragraph
Version 2 arrived in my email—content looked good; had been some editing.
from Ned: “Thanks for the suggestions. We had mentioned the FFRPL grant that helped create Health Central early in the letter, but it messed up the flow — I will reinstate it and look at trimming the other section. Peg, your suggestions were good and we used them to make the letter better: thanks!”

Collaboration, team approach between Executive Director and Board Chair

slide #31 - Final closing paragraph
Screenshot doesn’t show what one donor called the Clincher—on your handout, see the P.S. Frivolity—but actually serious. This matters!

Talk through minor text changes from draft to final

slide #32 - final appeal letter [refer to handout]
Received the “final”
I like the content better, but the new formatting and font size makes it seem longer; get back to one page. I played with reducing font to 12 and reducing margins all around; that got it to a page and a half. As someone opening this kind of solicitation, I would be more inclined to read all of it if it didn't appear to be a two-page document. Crazy, but psychologically true for me!

Do what you think best...
Ned’s respectful reply:” I, like you, get weekly solicitations from places I support, and I admit our usual AnnCamp letters (for which I am responsible) have often been very text-dense and a little hard to read because we have always tried to cram a LOT of info into that front page ONLY and never even considered enlarging the font and using the back of the letter.

But our printer liaison who works with lots of nonprofits, as well as Rebecca’s own research with other cohort groups, suggests we should give this formatting a try, so I’m excited to try it and I know this will easily fit on the front and back of our single legal-sized letter. (Plus, I’m excited that the cost of adding the photo is an insignificant addition since we’re printing 1/3 fewer letters using our ‘previous donors only’ plan this FY.)”
And they were right! Easier to read then when squeezed on one page.

slide #33 - Return on investment chart
It worked! Lots to analyze here
More targeted audience
20% more dollars raised, average gift higher—less mailed, less cost.
Hard to measure impact of format? font?

slide #34 - Spotlight on FFRPL logo
Fall 2018 focus: Raise a Reader
December focus: Intellectual Freedom
Spring 2019: too soon to tell. Keep relevant, timely.