



## 2021 Survey of Friends Groups Associated with Rural and Small Libraries Friends of Libraries Section/New York Library Association

The Friends of Libraries Section (FLS) of the New York Library Association (NYLA) wants to hear from Friends groups in New York State that support rural and small public libraries. The goal is to gather information that will help FLS/NYLA better assist these volunteer support organizations in their growth, development, and long-term success.

All Friends groups that respond will be entered into a drawing for a free one-year organizational membership, a \$50 value. (If the winning group is already an FLS/NYLA member, their organizational membership will be extended by one year.) In the event of multiple survey responses from a group, only a single entry will be placed in the drawing.

This online survey can be completed by either a representative of the library or a representative of the library's Friends group. We welcome your personal opinions about your group. You do not need to confer with other members in your organization. Multiple replies from various group members are acceptable and would be appreciated.

The survey asks for details on the group including contact information, nonprofit status, financial support to the library, number of members, and typical activities. FLS is also interested to learn about specific challenges faced by Friends organizations that support rural and small libraries.

Rather than "small" referring to Friends groups with a small number of members on their roster, FLS defines "small" in relation to the population of the library's potential service area. FLS wants to gather information from groups that are distant from an urbanized area. However, FLS welcomes any library or Friends group that identifies their library as rural and/or small to complete the survey, whatever the population of the library's service area.

FLS's mission is to create a network to connect and inspire Friends groups in all types of libraries to support the New York library community. Thank you for assisting us in our work by taking time to participate in this survey!

Responses are being accepted through Wednesday, March 31, 2021. ***If taking this survey online, be sure to click DONE at the end of the survey to submit your responses.***

### Contact Information

Q1. Name of Friends Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Q2. Is this Friends group a member of the Friends of Libraries Section of the New York Library Association?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q3. Name of library the Friends group supports: \_\_\_\_\_

Q4. Type of Public Library (**Please select one.**)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Association                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Special District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal                    | <input type="checkbox"/> School District  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure                       |   |

**Contact Information for Person Completing This Survey:**

Q5. Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Q6. Your Preferred Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Q7. Your E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Q8. What is your primary library role? (**Select any that apply.**)

- Library director or library staff member
- Volunteer for the Friends (including Friends officer, Friends board member)
- Member of the library's or System's Board of Trustees
- Paid staff of a Friends organization or library foundation
- System Personnel
- Other: (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q9. The population served by this library is: (**Please select one.**)

- Less than 10,000 residents
- Greater than 10,000 residents
- I am unsure of the number of residents we serve.

**Friends Group Information and Activities**

Q10. Year this Friends group was founded (estimate if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

***For the following questions about your Friends group's membership numbers, estimates are fine.***

Q11. What defines a "member" of this Friends group? (**Select any that apply.**)

- Anyone who pays annual membership dues
- Anyone who makes a donation to the Friends and/or library
- Anyone who expresses interest to support the library
- Anyone who actively volunteers to carry out Friends projects
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q12. If membership is defined based on a monetary donation, what is the amount of that donation? (**Please select one.**)

- \$5 and above
- \$25 and above
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q13. Given the definition of “member” you have indicated, what is the estimated **total membership** of your Friends organization (supporters, donors, and active members)?  
**(Please select one.)**

- Fewer than 10 members
- 11 – 19 members
- 20 – 39 members
- 40 – 65 members
- 66 – 100 members
- 101 – 150 members
- 151 – 299 members
- 300 – 600 members
- More than 600 members
- Unknown

Q14. Estimated total number of active members on the core team of the Friends (e.g., officers, committee chairs, special events coordinators, team leaders): \_\_\_\_\_

Q15. Is this Friends group formally organized (i.e., has by-laws and elected officers)?

- Yes
- No

Q16. How often does the Friends group meet? **(Please select one.)**

- Monthly
- Every other month
- Quarterly/4 times per year
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q17. What day of the week do the Friends typically meet? **(Please select one.)**

- Sunday
- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- No set day/varies

Q18. What time of day are the meetings held? \_\_\_\_\_

***For the following questions, “Friends group” may be broadly interpreted as any of the following: Friends officers, Friends Board of Directors, general Friends membership, or working committees (e.g., book sale).***

Q19. Between March through December 2020, did your Friends group meet virtually (via Zoom or some similar videoconferencing software)?

- Yes
- No
- We tried, but were not successful

Q20. If yes, how frequently did your group meet virtually?

- 1-3 times
- 4-5 times
- 6 times or more

Q21. What are your Friends group's significant activities in a typical year? **(Select any that apply.)**

- Book Sales
- Sell materials online (e.g., eBay, Amazon)
- Operate a bookstore outside of the library
- Manage an ongoing book sale area or bookstore within the library
- Bake Sale
- Chicken BBQ or other commercial food vendor fundraiser
- Annual fund drive
- Product sale (e.g., calendars, coupon books, tote bags)
- Support for summer reading/summer learning program
- Volunteer appreciation event
- Sales event other than book sales (e.g., craft show, flowers/plants sale, costume jewelry, rummage sale)
- Programs for various ages organized by the Friends (e.g., book reviews; book discussion group)
- Holiday event
- Underwriting library programs
- Provide delivery service to homebound patrons
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q22. Approximately how much financial support do the Friends provide the library on an annual basis? (Please give a round dollar figure.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Q23. Please indicate some examples of recent support to library. **(Select any that apply.)**

- Underwriting programs and performers
- Purchases of furniture and/or fixtures (i.e., shelving, display units)
- Technology (e.g., Wi-Fi hotspots, in-library computers)
- Magazine subscriptions
- Digital subscriptions and/or e-books
- Donation toward a renovation, expansion, or new building
- Printer, photocopier, or other equipment purchases
- General monetary support to library's operating budget
- Refreshments for programs
- Volunteer support
- Health and safety equipment and/or supplies (e.g., AED, security cameras)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q24. How does your Friends group recruit members? **(Select any that apply.)**

- Word of mouth
- Talk to other community groups about the Friends
- Ask for volunteer assistance on membership form
- Enroll members at "members only" night of book sale

- Talk to community members at outreach events (e.g., farmers' market, parades, bazaars, job fairs)
- Give "membership pitch" to audiences at programs and events
- Membership drives within the library
- Annual membership mailing and/or renewal notices for existing memberships
- Encourage people to join via messages on social media
- Offer a wide variety of membership perks and benefits
- Membership forms (e.g., online; printed brochure)
- Potential members or volunteers send e-mail message to the Friends general mailbox
- Regular column or articles in library's newsletter
- Articles and notices in local newspaper or advertising circular

Q25. Of these recruitment efforts, which single method have you found to be most effective in attracting new members? **(Select only one.)**

- Word of mouth
- Talk to other community groups about the Friends
- Ask for volunteer assistance on membership form
- Enroll members at "members only" night of book sale
- Talk to community members at outreach events (e.g., farmers' market, parades, bazaars, job fairs)
- Give "membership pitch" to audiences at programs and events
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### **Friends Challenges and Assistance Needed**

*Friends groups face many challenges and concerns. The following questions deal with broad topics: Membership; Leadership; Diversity; Volunteer Engagement; Fundraising; Mission and Community Engagement; Legal Issues. Under each category, **please select your three top concerns**. You will be limited to three responses within each challenge area. **If you feel your group does not face the challenge outlined, please select that response and go on to the next question.***

**Q26. Challenge #1: Membership (Select up to three choices.)**

- Increasing membership
- Lack of active members to do the work
- Offering unique benefits for joining
- Enlarging the membership and donor base
- Enlisting help of willing volunteers
- Retention of members
- Offering activities in which members can become involved
- We do not face this challenge

**Q27. Challenge #2: Leadership (Select up to three choices.)**

- An aging board
- Finding people to serve as officers
- Keeping up with changes in technology
- Poor attendance at meetings
- No term limits for officers
- A succession plan for Board positions
- We do not face this challenge

**Q28. Challenge #3: Diversity and Younger Volunteers (Select up to three choices.)**

- Attracting younger members
- Creating a welcoming atmosphere for volunteers of all ages
- Locating younger volunteers in our community
- Recruiting a more diverse membership
- Having an inclusive membership base in the Friends group that resembles the community which the library serves (e.g., multi-generational, ethnically diverse)
- We do not face this challenge

**Q29. Challenge #4: Active Participation and Volunteer Engagement (Select up to three choices.)**

- Encouraging active participation of current members
- Persuading members to participate in a variety of roles
- Engaging members in decision making
- Lack of consistent practices and procedures
- Being committed to recruiting new volunteers
- Maintaining positive relationships between Friends, Board of Trustees, and Director
- Recognizing volunteers, showing appreciation for their efforts
- We do not face this challenge

**Q30. Challenge #5: Fundraising (Select up to three choices.)**

- Identifying unique ways to earn money other than book sales
- Fundraising that allows for social distancing
- Lack of space at library to have a book sale
- Storage of donations and disposal of books not sold
- Fundraising at a level that can offset cuts in the library's operating budget
- Lack of volunteers to efficiently run bookstore or ongoing library book sale
- We do not face this challenge

**Q31. Challenge #6: Purpose, Mission, and Community Engagement (Select up to three choices.)**

- Raising the public's awareness of what the Friends do
- Getting volunteers to understand the role of the group beyond book sales
- Supporting the library's strategic plan
- Writing policies and procedures to give structure to a growing organization
- Involvement in advocacy for library
- Outreach in the community, highlighting library services
- We do not face this challenge

**Q32. Challenge #7: Legal Issues (Select up to three choices.)**

- Starting a new group
- Outdated by-laws
- Obtaining nonprofit 501(c)(3) status with the IRS
- Maintaining nonprofit status for organization (i.e., compliance with all rules and regulations of NYS, IRS, etc.)
- Conflict of interest policy
- Merging a Friends group with the library's Foundation
- We do not face this challenge

Q33. Given these challenges, please **select up to five** types of assistance and support you believe would be helpful to your group at this time.

- Introduction to techniques to recruit more volunteers
- More consistent assistance from the members of our Friends group
- Ideas on attracting younger and more diverse volunteers
- Storage space for our sale donations
- More webinars and remote learning opportunities
- Continuing education opportunities at NYLA Annual Conference
- Networking opportunities with other Friends groups close to my home
- Virtual meetings for groups statewide in which we could participate to discuss best practices on particular topics (e.g., membership recruitment, volunteer recognition)
- Access to resources on Friends topics (e.g., bibliographies, responses to frequently asked questions, sample policies) on the FLS webpage ([www.nyla.org/friends](http://www.nyla.org/friends))
- Fundraising ideas that are separate from book sales
- One-on-one remote consultations with FLS leaders for volunteer leaders or staff
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Access to Internet Service in Your Area**

Q34. What type of Internet service does your Friends group have access to at the library?  
**(Select any that apply.)**

- cable modem (Internet via a cable TV service)
- digital subscriber line (DSL) (Internet via telephone)
- satellite/dish TV provider
- Wi-Fi in the building or adjacent to the library (e.g., parking lot)
- Unsure

Q35. What type of Internet service do you personally have access to? **(Select any that apply.)**

- I do not have Internet service at home
- I subscribe to an Internet service to use at home
- I have Internet which I can use at my workplace
- As a patron, I visit the public library to use its Internet service
- I borrow a mobile hotspot from my library to have Internet access
- I use Wi-Fi at a commercial business (e.g., McDonald's, Panera)

Q36. In terms of the type of technology available to you and the speed of that service (expressed as Mbps, Megabits per-second), which of the following do you feel best describes where you live? **(Select only one.)**

- an unserved area (Internet is not available or is “spotty” and unreliable)
- an under-served area (Internet is consistently available, but speeds are rather slow, 25-99 Mbps)
- an area served by fast, reliable Internet service at 100+ Mbps
- Unsure

Q37. Does your library provide mobile hotspots for patrons to borrow to access the Internet?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Q38. If you were to participate in an online educational session in your area, such as a webinar, what equipment do you personally have access to? **(Select any that are available)**

- nothing
- my smart phone
- my tablet/computer with an Internet connection at my house
- an Internet computer at the public library
- Internet at a commercial business or my workplace

Q39. Any additional comments you would like to share about your Friends group?

#### **Future Online Training for Friends Leaders**

***FLS is considering offering a four-week online training series with short (30-minute) presentations on topics such as membership recruitment, leadership, volunteer recognition and retention, and legal issues.***

Q40. I would like to be contacted to learn more about this e-learning series when it is scheduled in late 2021.

**Check here:**

Thank you for your time!

Learn more about the Friends of Libraries Section of the New York Library Association at [www.nyla.org/friends](http://www.nyla.org/friends).

Please submit your printed copy of this survey with your responses clearly marked to:

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