

New Webpage Resource for Friends Groups

The Friends of Libraries Section (FLS) of the New York Library Association has a new segment of their webpage, "[Resources for Friends Groups Supporting Small and Rural Libraries.](#)" The resource page is the culmination of an FLS project undertaken to learn more about volunteers who support under-resourced libraries and how FLS could better meet the needs of its members.

But there is much here to help all Friends organizations, regardless of their size. Each division of the page has resource sheets for topic areas which address the challenges raised in the FLS 2021 survey of Friends groups supporting small and rural libraries. There are handouts developed by FLS members which relate to each subject, along with links to pertinent resources, templates, and work sheets.

Whether your library is thinking about starting a Friends group or working to sustain a current group long-term by planning succession strategies, the resources here will help staff and library civic volunteers reach their goals. Help guide new volunteers as they step into important roles for your group by carefully reviewing job descriptions or writing them for the first time using the examples and templates on the resource page.

We know that representation matters. The resources on diversity may encourage people to get involved in an organization where they can see themselves. It is vital to the ongoing viability of Friends groups to recruit diverse members who can share their experience and expertise. The tips from the popular "Membership in a Minute" subscription offered in 2021 were compiled into a handout on membership-raising.

And the ever-present need for fundraising is addressed with many suggestions of fundraisers, online resources, and archived articles from [FLS newsletters](#). Included is a handout to encourage Friends groups to draft guidelines for using the funds they raise on behalf of the library. There is a section on programming and tips for becoming a "Library Champion" to support NYLA's important funding initiatives and legislative goals.

A white paper explores the needs of Friends organizations that assist small and rural libraries and provides recommendations to sustain these volunteer groups. The report, "Beyond Younger Volunteers: White Paper on What Rural Friends Groups Need to Thrive," is the result of the 2021 survey of libraries in New York and outlines the services offered by FLS in response to the challenges identified in the study. The [white paper](#) can be accessed for free, along with the original 40-question survey and a summary of the data.

Over the past year, FLS has developed a variety of support materials to assist Friends by highlighting a set of best practices to not just survive but thrive in the areas of diversity and attracting younger members, leadership and succession planning, membership growth and involvement, fundraising, raising public awareness of the Friends mission and purpose, and encouraging current members to actively participate in a variety of roles.

Authors Lisa C. Wemett and Erica Freudenberger first shared the survey results at a virtual session presented at the 2021 conference of the Association for Rural & Small Libraries in October. “We hope this white paper encourages discussion among staff and library civic leaders and advances their important work to support the needs of their local communities,” said Kerstin Cruger, FLS President.

The Friends of Libraries Section’s Executive Board wants to thank the FLS Task Force on Friends and Rural Libraries, chaired by FLS Secretary Lynne Madden, for their work over the past two years to develop the resource sheets and bring these materials together under one banner. Members included Erica Freudenberger, Outreach and Engagement Consultant at the Southern Adirondack Library System; Carole Kupelian, Friends of the Osceola Public Library; Karen Sperrazza, FLS Immediate Past President; Vince Sperrazza, Member At Large, NYLA’s Rural Library Roundtable; Betsy Sywetz, Friends of the Richfield Springs Public Library; and Lisa Wemett, FLS Coordinator for Professional Development. The Board also wants to acknowledge Web Editor Terry Mulee who made it all come together by designing the masthead for the resource sheets and publishing all the content on the FLS webpage, www.nyla.org/friends.