



**Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries
PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT
June 2020 – May 2021**

The Friends

The Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries - "FODL" - raises funds and works to benefit the Library and community by sponsoring and coordinating a wide range of educational, cultural, social, health and well-being programs for all demographics – from infants to seniors.

FODL continues to fulfill its mission to "focus attention on Library resources, services, facilities and needs, and to provide community support of the Library." The FODL purpose is charitable, and its mission is accomplished through the efforts of volunteers.

Year in Review Summary – Going Virtual

During a year in which Library buildings were physically closed for most of the time, the Friends had to find new ways to conceive of and achieve our mission of "focusing attention" on and galvanizing "community support" for the Library.

We did this by regularly communicating with our member base about Library services available during the pandemic (e.g., online offerings, curbside pickup) and took care to reach out and support FODL members who were not "online." We also reinvented how we delivered our own services (e.g., guest speakers, Book Sales, Molly Little Art Film Series.)

- Instead of holding events at the Library, we delivered 16 events virtually using Zoom. This allowed us to maintain - and expand - the sense of community we share with FODL members and the public, and reach a much greater audience, especially during the winter months.
- Instead of holding in-person book sales, we expanded our Continuing Book Sale. When the Library re-opened by appointment in March, patrons had access to a greatly increased number of books in Southworth and a newly available Continuing Book Sale at the North Branch.
- Instead of showing selected Great Courses videos onsite for our annual Molly Little Art Film Series, a professional art historian and lecturer, Dr. Memory Holloway, delivered an exceptional 6-part program live via Zoom.
- The challenges of the past year also led to focus more on how we communicate with current and potential members, resulting in the development of our own website, www.fodl.org. We also invested in storage capability allowing the public to access videos of our events.

While we certainly look forward to returning to normal soon, we will be able to do so with an expanded view of how we can achieve our mission.

Library Funding Support

The Friends provide financial support for select library programs and resources.

The Director of Libraries, Lynne Antunes, the Chairman of the Library Board of Trustees, Stanley Bielusiak, and the Children's Services Librarian, Christie Phillips, attend the monthly meetings of the FODL Board to provide insight to Library activities and needs, future planning, and to identify specific support requests from FODL.

This year, the FODL Board approved funding for several Library programs and resources:

- *Presentation Lectern* – a solid wood podium was purchased for the Community Room of the North Branch. This gift to the Library was made in honor of departing president, Barbara Scotti.
- *Artwork* – FODL funding, along with generous donations of time and materials by local artist Elizabeth Nichols and Gatlin's Framing Inc., allowed us to provide 2 pieces of original artwork to hang in Southworth Library. This gift to the Library was made in honor of Molly Little presenter, Dr. Memory Holloway.
- *Children and Teen Programs* - This year, FODL funded virtual programs with activity kits and virtual performers. Over 50 children signed up for the Summer Reading Program, "Imagine Your Story." In October, a Pumpkin Carving and Decorating contest drew 19 entries. In December, FODL sponsored a Gingerbread House Ornament craft program. Thirty kits went out and 15 children joined Zoom to hear a holiday story and make a gingerbread house ornament with Miss Christie. A Cupcake Decorating Competition for ages 8–12 took place with 7 delicious entries submitted. FODL also sponsored School Vacation Programs with attendance averaging around 25 attendees each day, keeping kids busy with craft kits, puppet performances and more.
- *Patron Select Program* – this funding allows the Library to acquire additional copies of popular book titles to meet patron demand.
- *Staff Appreciation Day Luncheon* – on behalf of the public, FODL expresses appreciation every year for the cooperation, enthusiasm, and support for FODL activities by the Library Director and the entire Library staff.

Due to pandemic-related closures, annual funding for the following was suspended, although it is expected to resume this summer:

- *Museum and Park Passes* – FODL's annual funding of approximately 20 free or discounted admission passes was suspended for the past year.
- *Movie licenses* – FODL's annual funding giving the Library rights to schedule public performances of popular movies was suspended for the past year.

FODL Sponsored Events

After the cancellation of in-person events, FODL began offering virtual events via Zoom in October. We produced at least one event per month and more during the winter months of January and February. Attendance averaged around 60 people at each event and post-event surveys yielded an average score of 4.5 out of 5 (midway between “Good” and “Excellent.”)

- Our first virtual event in October covered “Dartmouth's Archeological History.” Holly Herbster, Senior Archaeologist with The Public Archaeology Laboratory, provided a fascinating discussion of Dartmouth’s archaeological history, which spans nearly 12,000 years of human activity.
- In November, travel journalist Peter Mandel returned for an update, encore presentation of “Going to Extremes.” Mandel presented his most extreme travel experiences – witnessing a coup in Ecuador, visiting a ‘city’ of penguins at the South Pole, fishing for piranha on Brazil’s Rio Negro, floating in the Goodyear Blimp, sailing on an Arctic icebreaker, camping in the African bush, and kayaking to the Statue of Liberty.
- In December, local historian and lecturer, Christopher Daley, presented an entertaining overview of the “Roaring 1920’s” showcasing world events, Prohibition, organized crime as well as the style, fashion, and trends of the Jazz Age. Daley was also a return presenter, having delivered the successful “Irish Need Not Apply” last year.
- Beginning in mid-January and continuing through February, Dr. Memory Holloway, art historian and UMass Dartmouth professor emerita, hosted our “31st Annual Molly Little Art Film Series” focused on the Golden Age of Dutch and Italian painting, 1600-1750. Over the course of six one-hour sessions, Dr. Holloway took the audience on a fascinating journey, diving into the work of Rembrandt, Vermeer, Reubens and Caravaggio while sharing insightful historical and social context. With the generous donation of her time, expertise, and masterful ability to engage her audience, Dr. Holloway set a new standard for us to achieve!
- Also in January and February, FODL sponsored separate sessions of “Less Is More – Declutter Your Life.” Therapist, author and public speaker, Stephanie Baird, discussed her lessons-learned using the KonMari method of simplifying and decluttering. Baird shared ways to organize one’s home more efficiently and provided resources for responsibly disposing of unwanted items.
- In February, Kate Donovan, Garden Coach from Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens, discussed “Gardening with Raised Beds.” including how to build, fill, site and plant them. Attendees learned details about constructing raised beds to reduce weed growth, pests, and erosion as well as keep plants warmer, increasing the length of time food can be grown.
- In March, Andrew Bardetti, an attorney with South Coastal Counties Legal Services’ Senior Law Project, shared important information about housing for people sixty years of age and older. Bardetti summarized tenant and homeowner rights and covered alternative housing options, such as nursing home and assisted living facilities. He provided references to additional resources and answered audience questions on related topics.

- In April, Brian Fitzgerald, Mount Washington Observatory's Director of Science & Education, discussed the Observatory's history, scientific instruments, climate data, and why the spot is known as the "Home of the World's Worst Weather." He discussed what has changed on the summit over the years, and how it reflects global climate change trends.
- In May, storyteller Anne Barrett traced baseball's evolution from 19th century "townball" to the Major Leagues and the nation's favorite pastime. Barrett also discussed the history of the Red Sox, including their change in fortune after dealing Babe Ruth to the Yankees and theories about what may have helped end their 86-year championship drought.

Additional virtual events are scheduled for 2021 and plans are being developed for a return to in-person events at both Library buildings. We are likely to continue offering virtual events going forward.

Financial Management

The Friends began and ended the year¹ in good financial condition.

Expenses were reduced by the suspension of our Museum/Park Pass program and the cancellation of in-person programs in the early months of the pandemic. However, we were also forced to cancel our Fall and Spring Book Sales. These sales typically account for nearly 40% of our annual revenue.

Fortunately, donations from generous community members made up for this revenue shortfall. This included a gracious bequest from the estate of Roberta Sawyer, a long-time FODL Board member who ran our Book Sale for many years. We are very grateful for supporters who remember us consistently each year, and for those who went out of their way to show extra support during this past, particularly difficult year.

We also had a modest increase in FODL memberships. With over 100 new, non-member contacts gained from this past year's virtual programs, we hope to further increase our membership roster when we begin our annual drive in the coming months.

In Conclusion

FODL is an entirely volunteer-driven organization – we are here to serve our Library and our community. Many members of the FODL community told us that this year's programs provided much-needed relief from the isolation and emotional burden of the pandemic. This is true for board members as well! It was truly a pleasure to serve this year. It opened our eyes to new ways of achieving our goals. With new insights and a reinvigorated spirit, we look forward to continuing to evolve and serve. We thank all those who contributed to our work this year.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcy Wintrub
June 5, 2021

¹ Our financials are reported on a calendar year basis.