



**Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries
PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT
June 2021 – May 2022**

The Friends

The Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries (FODL) raises funds for and works to benefit the Library and the Dartmouth 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.” FODL’s purpose is charitable, and its mission is accomplished entirely through the efforts of volunteers.

Year in Review- Better Together

Strategic Objectives

After finding ways to add value throughout the worst of the pandemic last year, the Board identified three strategic objectives that we wanted to focus on for this past year and going forward:

- 1) **A NEW NORMAL:** As we mounted our return to a relative normalcy, the Board wanted to maintain the new approaches acquired while adjusting to the pandemic.
- 2) **GO NORTH:** Recognizing that the new North branch had opened just two months prior to the pandemic’s start, the Board wanted to help re-build lost momentum by increasing the public’s use and leverage of this beautiful new facility.
- 3) **ENGAGE, ENLIST, & EXPAND:** Recognizing our *own* role in helping to maintain and further a valued sense of community, the Board wanted to expand public awareness of FODL’s role, and increase public support for and participation in our mission.

Accomplishments Summary

Each of the above objectives is embedded in all the activities you will read about in this report. A few notable accomplishments are summarized here:

- We held our first Book Sale since 2019. With clear safety measures to reduce risk, each of the two sales raised over \$5,000 for Dartmouth’s Libraries – remarkable, given room capacity limits.
- In addition to continuing to offer virtual events, we held our first in-person events since early 2020. Four of the six in-person events took place at the North Branch, where polling revealed it was often the attendees’ first branch visit!

- We expanded our Museum Pass program to the North Branch, providing residents there with easy access to free and discounted admissions to local attractions. We also expanded the North Branch Continuing Book Sale, purchasing shelving to increase capacity and improve aesthetics.
- Our increased focus on community outreach resulted in a 40% membership increase this year! While the pandemic caused a small decline in renewals the year prior, we now exceed pre-pandemic 2019 membership by 30%. This growth can be attributed to activities like increased outreach at book sales and reaching a larger audience through virtual events. The recent publication of a new Friends' brochure has already begun bringing in new members as well.

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 FODL Board meetings to discuss Library activities and needs, share future plans, and identify specific support requests from FODL.

This year, the FODL Board provided funding for many regular Library programs and resources:

- ***Children and Teen Programs*** - This year, FODL funded both virtual and in-person programs that attracted significant levels of participation.
 - The Summer Reading Program ("Tails and Tales") included two outdoor programs: a *Pumpernickel Puppet Show* attended by 46 children and 16 adults, and *Magic with Scott Jameson*, attended by 65 children and 30 adults! Several virtual events were also offered this summer, including programs on bugs, lizards, ocean life, music and movement. In all, summer program participants numbered nearly 200, accompanied by just under 100 adults.
 - The Pumpkin Carving and Decorating contest in October drew 25 entries. And in December, the North Branch was the place to be for 19 children who came in for a Season's Reading and Crafts event, and 13 who entered the Library's cupcake decorating contest!
 - FODL also supported School Vacation Programs in February and April, with attendance averaging around 25 children each day, keeping kids busy with craft kits, puppet performances and more.
- ***Museum and Park Passes*** – FODL's regular annual funding of free or discounted admission passes was enhanced this year to include the availability of passes at the North Branch, in addition to Southworth. Library patrons used a total of 389 passes this year.
- ***Patron Select Program*** – This funding allows the Library to acquire additional copies of popular book titles to meet patron demand.
- ***Movie Licenses*** – Each year, FODL provides the funding to renew the Library's movie licenses which allows public showing of popular movies for children and adults.
- ***Staff Appreciation*** – On behalf of the public, every year FODL expresses appreciation for the staff's cooperation, enthusiasm, and support with a luncheon and/or gift certificates.

In addition to our regularly funded programs and resources, special FODL funding was allocated for the following purchases this year:

- Library shelving was purchased for the North Branch. This will be used to upgrade the bins currently housing the Continuing Book Sale. The shelving matches the overall aesthetic of the new branch and expands capacity, providing library patrons with a greater selection of low-cost, good-condition donated books.
- The FODL Board approved a one-year pilot test for an entirely new library service which will begin rolling out in July. This service allows Dartmouth residents to access and participate in a series of live, online talks with best-selling authors.

FODL Sponsored Events

FODL offered a combination of virtual and in-person events this year, maintaining good attendance levels and positive feedback from community members.

- In June, we sponsored a return online session with Kate Donovan, a popular speaker from last year, who spoke about Sustainable Gardening. Although Kate experienced connectivity issues that marred the scheduled session itself, she re-recorded the session and made that available.
- In August, we welcomed Dartmouth's Youth Advocate, Deloris Johnson, who spoke to a small group of parents about preparing their children for a return to in-person schooling in "Back To School – Dealing With Our New Normal."
- In September, Author Maureen Boyle kicked off FODL's return to in-person events with a discussion of "The Ghost" at the North Branch. Her newly published book explores the 1980 murder of Police Chief Greg Adams and the discovery of his killer's remains in Dartmouth.
- In October, research librarians Emily Brown and Susan Souza-Mort provided a primer on "Spotting Misinformation" and discussed strategies that audience members can use to better identify truth and "fake news" in traditional and social media.
- In November, author Maureen Boyle joined us for a second presentation about her book, "The Ghost." This one was held at the Southworth branch and was also very well-attended.
- In January, the Omicron surge required a last-minute cancellation of the 32nd annual Molly Little Winter Art Film Series. However, in its place, we arranged a virtual presentation by Dr. Memory Holloway, the popular host of our 2021 Molly Little Series. Dr. Holloway's "Dining with Manet" drew over 50 attendees – unusually high for a daytime program!
- In February, as the winter doldrums reached their peak, more than 60 people attended a virtual presentation on "Birdscaping." Gardener and birder Joan Butler of Enchanted Gardens gave an informative and inspiring presentation on creating gardens that attract and nurture birds.
- In March, another speaker from Enchanted Gardens, Jana Milbocker, gave a virtual tour of gardens that inspired some of New England's most beloved painters, sculptors, and authors, motivating a number of spring and summer field trips among our more than 70 attendees!

- Also in March, FODL worked with long-time Dartmouth resident, Helen DeGroot, to open an exhibit of her collection of dolls from China, Bali, Japan, and Thailand at the Southworth Library. A follow-up exhibit in May highlighted dolls from the Western hemisphere, including Canada, Mexico, Peru, Northwest Native American, and the United States.
- In April, local author and physician Dr. Kevin Gendreau discussed his years-long struggle with obesity, shared how and why he finally overcame it, and answered a roomful of questions. With honesty and humor, Dr. Gendreau, now a certified obesity specialist, inspired all of the 25 attendees lucky enough to join him at the North Branch. Though FODL speakers regularly score high on post-event surveys, Dr. Gendreau is the first to ever receive a perfect score!
- In May, as a replacement for our Bus Trip, Dr. Memory Holloway hosted a special members-only viewing of the Domingos Rebelo exhibit at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. As she always and expertly does, Dr. Holloway drew attention to aspects of the artwork we'd likely have otherwise missed, while providing historical context that deepened our understanding and appreciation of the exhibit.

Financial Management

With the continuation of the pandemic in calendar year 2021, FODL revenue was significantly lower than usual. It did, however, begin returning to normal in the latter half of the year with the library's re-opening allowing the resumption of the continuing book sales (now including one in the North Branch) and the semi-annual book sales.

Expenses increased over 2020, although they continued to be lower than usual, especially program expenses. Increases over the prior year were largely Covid-related (e.g. Zoom, protective supplies) in addition to the launch of a new FODL website. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, FODL continues to maintain a strong financial position.

In Conclusion

We are an entirely volunteer-driven organization, so our activities and accomplishments are the direct result of individuals giving their time, knowledge, and skills to benefit our libraries and community. Our members and donors provide the financial support that makes our work possible. We thank those who contribute to our work and look forward to continued accomplishments in the year to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Wintrub
June 7, 2022