



Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries
PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT
June 2024

The Friends

The Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries (FODL) raises funds to benefit the Library and Dartmouth community, sponsoring a wide range of Library programs and services for all demographics – from toddlers 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

The theme this past year was Change and Strengthening.

Change was first introduced with the onboarding of our new Library Director, Dina St. Pierre. Members of the Friends welcomed Dina at a special event in July, with attendees echoing our excitement about her enthusiasm and vision for the future.

Dina’s arrival spurred opportunities for the Friends to re-examine long-held practices and update expectations related to our support for and interaction with Dartmouth Public Libraries. Working with Dina and the Trustees, we developed and agreed to a clear Memorandum of Understanding which we’ll review annually to continually improve our partnership.

Strengthening continued as the Friends examined, revised, and documented other areas as well. We developed a policy document to clarify specific guidelines for FODL spending. We also detailed responsibilities and key processes for each of the major roles played by board officers and functional leads (e.g., publicity, membership, book sorting, book sales, etc.) Existing documents, such as our Event Organizer Guidelines, were also reviewed and updated. Together, these documents form the basis for a new Operations Manual designed to strengthen FODL’s effectiveness and efficiency, help new board members come up to speed, and provide a more structured way for us to institute ongoing improvements.

Another area we strengthened this past year was membership, significantly increasing our roster of lifetime members and reaching a total of 327 active members as of May.

Most importantly, we strengthened our support for the Library with several *new* FODL-funded services this year. After reviewing the AuthorsLive pilot test results and hearing positive feedback from end-users, Dina requested funding from FODL to add this online service to the Library’s standard offerings. As detailed in subsequent sections, FODL also funded other new programs (Much-Loved Books and Incentive Programs) and brought in several exciting new performance events.

That brings us to the culminating change for this year – a change of leadership for FODL. In June, Marcy Wintrub completes her final term as FODL Board President. Succeeding her will be Margaret Hollister, who joined the board toward the end of 2022 and immediately became an active and valued member. Within months, Margaret brought the Molly Little Winter Film Series back to life after it’s pandemic-induced hiatus *and* the retirement of its former coordinators. This year, she is doing the very same for our Bus Trip, happening in June. Margaret steps into this role at an exciting time, and the Board extends its appreciation to her and to all those whose efforts, commitment, and support make our work possible.

Library Funding Support

The Friends provide financial support for many library programs and resources. The Director of Libraries and Chairman of the Library Board of Trustees 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 Library programs and resources such as:

- **Children and Teen Programs**

- The 2023 Summer Reading Program (“Find Your Voice”) was a celebration of imagination, creativity, community, cultural traditions, and fun. Participants practiced finding their creative voice with a new reading challenge, exciting performers, crafts, movies, and more. Summer program participants numbered over 500 children for the second year.
- The Friends funded several holiday programs, including: the highly popular Halloween Fun program that included pumpkin decorating, crafts, and a fun Halloween inspired bowling game with paper cups; the Cupcake Decorating Competition; and our annual Deck Our Halls with Holiday Fun program where the children listened to a story, made a winter themed ornament craft, and decorated our tree.
- FODL funding for school vacation programs was significantly increased again this year due to the generosity of a Friends supporter.



- For February vacation, funded programs allowed children to: enjoy a master storyteller’s folktales about Superheroes; craft robots using common supplies (see photo); participate in a Buildwave Workshop - a STEM enrichment program designed to feel like a gameshow.

- For April vacation, children welcomed Spring with games and activities, enjoyed a magic show that also taught them tricks, and had fun experimenting with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) in a program given by the Children’s Museum of Easton.

- **Museum and Park Passes** – At both branches, FODL funds allow library patrons to reserve and use free or discounted admission passes to area attractions. This year, usage hit record levels. 939 passes were borrowed - nearly double last year’s usage!
- **AuthorsLive** – After completion of the two-year pilot of this online service, funding was provided to renew the service as a standard library offering.
- **Patron Select Program** – This funding allows the Library to acquire *additional* copies of popular book titles to meet patron demand. This year, 50 Patron Select titles were checked out 654 times!
- **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.
- **Much Loved Books** – This new program allows the Library to replace dog-eared “old favorites” that are no longer available through approved vendors, but can be purchased elsewhere (e.g., Amazon.)

- **Incentive Programs** – This year, the Library piloted several fun, new incentive-based programs for adults, with FODL providing funding for participant incentives such as gift cards. In February, Library staff members selected and wrapped books for “Blind Date with a Book” where participating patrons wrote reviews, with one randomly selected to win a prize. With FODL funding, the Library will also be offering a new adult and teen summer reading program this year.
- **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.



Special Acquisitions: In addition to our regularly funded programs and resources, FODL also funded and/or arranged several other items this year:



- For the Children’s Reading Room in Southworth, we funded a new easel for the popular Baby Songs and Preschool Storytime programs, used by Miss Christie to engage the children, parents, and caregivers who attend. We also funded the purchase and framing of a series of decorative book-themed wall posters. These gifts were made in memory of long-time FODL board member Mary Ellis.

- Thanks to the generosity and expertise of Susie Humphrey, the North Branch planter now contains geraniums and ivy instead of cigarette butts!



- Thanks to the generosity and expertise of Elizabeth Wilcox, the Southworth lower-level display case was beautifully updated, allowing the more recently purchased display case to be placed in the North Branch, where its modern look is better suited.

FODL Sponsored Events

FODL offered a variety of well-attended events this year that received very positive feedback from community members. Each event is coordinated by one or two board members, who put in many hours arranging, hosting and evaluating them. Many thanks go out to these volunteers for their efforts.

- In June, about fifty attendees learned about lifestyle choices that can help keep brain and body healthy as we age. The presentation by the Alzheimer's Association covered research and provided hands-on tools supporting diet and nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity, and social engagement.
- In July, members of the Friends were invited to the North branch for an intimate, members-only conversation with new Library Director Dina St. Pierre. Dina easily engaged the crowd with stories about her long-time regard for Dartmouth’s Libraries and her plans for the future.
- In August, historian and frequent FODL presenter Christopher Daly shared the tragic story of Bonnie and Clyde, describing their complex relationship and following their trail of robberies and shoot-outs through the Central US during the Great Depression.

- In September, Delvena Theater Company's "Meet Julia Child!" performance was a big success, drawing an appreciative crowd nearing 70 people. This live performance featured actress Lynne Moulton as the popular chef and television personality on the set of *The French Chef*.

- In October, during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, local author Leslie Lawrence movingly shared her journey from breast cancer patient to survivor as captured in her inspiring photographic memoir, "I'm a Lucky Woman." In this photo, showing a unanimous response, Leslie asks audience members how many have had, or know someone who has had breast cancer.



- In November, the Friends partnered with the Library Trustees to host an Open House and Donor Wall Unveiling for the North Branch, which originally opened to the public just weeks before the pandemic shutdown. This delayed celebration honored the hard work and support of many who made the new branch possible.

- In December, another live performance drew a full-capacity crowd as members of the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra celebrated the season at the North branch. Elisa Birdseye (viola), Fabrizio Mazzetta (cello), and Caitlyn Schmidt (flute) delighted the audience with a concert featuring classic holiday music and favorite Christmas carols.

- In January, close to fifty attendees started the new year by learning about gut health from integrative health coach Sara Englis. This informative talk explained the science behind maintaining a healthy microbiome, offering insights and practices to help audience members improve control of their health.

- In February, we hosted the 33rd Annual Molly Little Winter Film Series, focused on the genius of Michelangelo. A great crowd came for this six-week series, learning about the artist and his most important works in a series of video classes produced by The Great Courses.

- In March, local author and science journalist Ann Parson inspired the audience with an illustrated talk that covered many of the lost stories and forgotten pioneers included in her first work of fiction: *The Birds of Dog: An Historical Novel Based on Mostly True Events*, a tale of love and science that spans the 1800s.

- In April, every available seat was filled for a two-hour watercolor workshop with local artist and teacher Jane Bregoli. Participants used the styles of abstract painter Sonia Delaunay as inspiration for their own watercolor compositions. Given the long waiting list, we will likely offer another session shortly.



- In May, attendees braved pouring rain and flooded roads to hear Victoria Grasele of the United Way of Greater New Bedford discuss local volunteering and demonstrate Volunteer SouthCoast (VSC), a free online database and phone app that connects volunteers with opportunities across the region. The system also offers useful tracking and reporting for volunteers as well as agencies.

- Also in May, there was standing room only when local photographer Nancy Edwards gave a talk on the 62-turbine Vineyard Wind project. Showing photographs taken since the first barge arrived in New Bedford in 2023, Ms. Edwards documented the local effort to build the largest offshore wind development in the United States. (If you missed the talk, you can watch the recording here:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=S1RmGyTw5bc>)

Financial Management

This past fiscal year (1/1/23 – 12/31/23) was smooth and successful. The continuing book sales as well as the larger Fall and Spring book sales all grew modestly, membership was up significantly, and we gratefully received several donations. Revenue totaled just over \$30,000. Spending included over \$10,000 on museum passes, \$13,000 on library programs and services, and \$6,000 on library equipment purchases. In keeping with our spending policy, administrative expenses were less than 15% of total spending.

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 finding new ways to add value in the year to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Wintrub
June 1, 2024

FODL Board of Directors:

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Anne Heller, Vice President
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