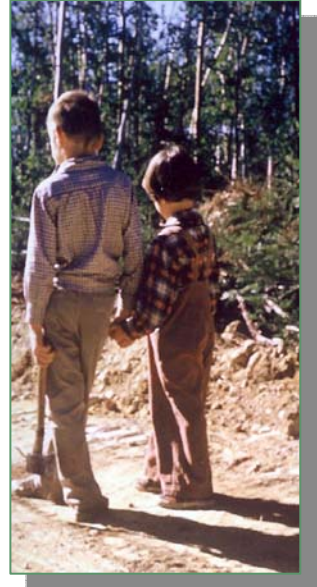


It's about building relationships

The opportunity to attend the ALA annual conference is truly a privilege and a reminder of why being a librarian is the best job in the world. For me, the highlight of this year's conference was speaking on a panel about Trends in Library Fundraising with the effervescent Peter Pearson from the Friends of the St. Paul PL, Laurel Best from Huntsville Madison County PL, plus Larra Clark and Chris Watkins from ALA. I learned from them that if you want fundraising or grant writing to be successful, it has to be a priority; it can't just be in that "other duties as assigned" category. Don't do it occasionally or pawn it off on the board. It's all about building relationships. You must make it an ongoing priority!



- You have to develop a simple and realistic plan of attack! For example:
 - Year 1 - Brainstorm with the board and staff to create a list of five people to send a "general ask letter;" follow up with a phone call and maybe even lunch. Select people you already know; the best time to ask is in the fall.
 - Year 2 - Talk to the same five people again, plus brainstorm with the board and staff for an additional 5-8 people to contact.
 - Year 3 – Talk to your 10-15 people again, do the same brainstorming, and write a "specific ask letter" (e.g. \$250 to purchase audio books for seniors or picture books for preschoolers).
- This plan works from the very smallest to the largest of libraries. In three years, you will have a database of people who annually support your library. Then, add a fundraising event, and finally, a sustained giving project (i.e. a bequest from an estate).

The workshop audience asked some tough questions, such as:

- *Should staff be asked to donate to the library?* The panel's unanimous answer was, "**Yes.**" If, like St. Paul, you can establish a voluntary staff paycheck deduction plan, that \$5 per month can really add up.
- *How can I get started?* Our best advice was to recruit at least two new board members who really **like** to fundraise. They will start opening doors (and pockets) and attract new like-minded board members. However, the panel was clear that it is the library staff's job to write the letters and do the follow up.
- *What are your secrets to success?* Make it personal and be sure to thank your donors whenever possible. It's all about building relationships.

The ALA Development Office did a great job of pulling together a panel that was very different, but able to energize the 80+ folks who attended. In this new world in which we find ourselves, sourcing alternate revenue streams is a way of life, so we might as well learn how to do it well. It's all about building relationships!

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P.S. And yes, that is my brother (age 6) and I (age 3) at the cottage!!!