

**FOLA**  
*Anniversary*

30  
**CELEBRATING**  
**30 YEARS**

**1994–2024**



**FRIENDS OF  
LIBRARIES  
AUSTRALIA**

# FRIENDS OF LIBRARIES AUSTRALIA

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*“The Friends movement is growing, developing and continually adapting to the challenges of our society.”*

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*FOLA 20th Anniversary, State Library of Victoria 2014*

# Genesis

Friends of Libraries Australia started in 1987 with the formation of a Friends sub-committee of the Library Promotion Committee of Victoria (LPCV). Daniel Ferguson became the convenor of this committee, along with members - Eric Flynn (President of the Friends of Kew Library), Helen Hayes (then Deputy University Librarian, University of Melbourne), Brian Southwell (former University Librarian, Monash University and President of the Friends of Nunawading Library) and Jellie Wyckelsma (Secretary of the Friends of Doveton Library).

During the late 1980s, work was being undertaken in South Australia by the Public Libraries Branch, under the leadership of Dr Christine Henderson to further the development of Friends of Library groups in every public library in the State. Further liaison took place between LPCV in Victoria and Liz McCrackan and Pam O'Donnell of the Public Libraries Branch, to explore opportunities of mutual interest that would assist in Friends of Library group development.



South Australia was developing a wide network of Friends groups throughout the State, by 1987 it had 15 FOL groups operating. A few years later the number had risen to 37.

In March 1988, Daniel Ferguson as Organiser of the Library Promotion Committee of Victoria wrote in *Incite* (Vol 9 (5) newsletter of the Library Association of Australia) ... "An obvious need exists for a co-ordinated approach to the formation, support and promotion of FOL groups throughout Australia." This was in part, in response to a recent comment on Friends of the Library groups by the president of the Australian

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*"An obvious need exists for a co-ordinated approach to the formation, support and promotion of FOL groups throughout Australia."*

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Library and Information Association, Dr Alan Bundy, who would later become FOLA's third national president.

In 1990, Daniel Ferguson visited the United States, and following a meeting with Sandy Dolnick, the Executive Director of Friends of Libraries USA (FOLUSA) and other Friends groups, concluded that a national body should be established in Australia.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1994, Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA) was officially launched by the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby AC, CMG, at a function in Queen's Hall, State Library of Victoria. Michael Kirby, a Judge of the High Court of Australia, became FOLA foundation patron.

At the official launch of the new organisation, Daniel Ferguson outlined the aims of FOLA as follows:

- (i) To encourage and assist the formation and development of Friends of Library groups in Australia.
- (ii) To Promote the development of excellent library services for all Australians.
- (iii) To provide a representative voice for Friends of Library groups, and
- (iv) To promote public awareness of the existence of Friends of Library groups and the services and support they provide.

The members of the new executive of FOLA were: the Hon. Margaret Lusink AM, Colin Watson, Margaret Broeks, the Hon. John Cain, Elly Cameron, Agnes Gregory, Helen Hayes, Jock Murphy, Brian Southwell, Philip Walshe and Daniel Ferguson, who became Executive Officer. The foundation president, the Hon. Margaret Lusink was a retired Family Court Judge, and president of the Friends of Euroa Library in Victoria.

The number of FOL groups in Australia at the time was around 120, the majority being in South Australia. By 2004, the number was around 168, believed to be the peak period of development of FOL groups.



## Growing Friends

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During the late 1990s Friends groups were being developed in other countries, notably, Canada and the United Kingdom. FOLA was contacted and asked for our experience, and with a view to establishing some liaison that may further assist the Friends cause internationally.

Daniel Ferguson established close contact with those in Canada, who had now an organisation similar in purpose to that of FOLA. Its name was FOCAL – Friends of Canadian Libraries, established in 1997. FOLA corresponded with representatives of FOCAL, and a partnership of mutual understanding developed. Canada felt it had more in common with the Australian body than with FOLUSA in America.

During the later part of the 1990s FOLA established Best of Friends Awards, recognizing outstanding Friends groups around the country. These awards were sponsored by Baker & Taylor, Bolinda and Auslib Press. It was during this period that FOLA president, Peter McInnes took an active role in the development of these awards along with visitations to many libraries around the country.

Another aspect of development during Peter's presidency were the biennial conferences of FOLA, culminating with a two-day event in Canberra at the National Library of Australia on 20-22 October 2000. Peter's experience and success while president of the Friends of the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, established him as a knowledgeable and loyal supporter in the development of FOLA, in what were very exciting years.

Around the same time, public libraries in the United Kingdom were under savage funding cuts and closures. A group in England, in particular, with links to the library profession and the union representing library staff, began campaigning on issues related to library closures. FOLA was contacted for information and insights into, particularly the changes which had taken place in Victoria as a consequence of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and the amalgamation of Local Government Councils. At the invitation of a number of library bodies, Daniel



Ferguson visited the UK in 2001 and conducted a number of Friends workshops and consultations with agencies, including the Friends of the British Library and the Library Association (CLIP). FOLA's *Friends of Libraries Resource Book* was also sold throughout the UK, more than 150 copies.

In April 2004, the Chief Librarians Council of New Zealand invited Daniel Ferguson to visit and undertake a series of workshops on Friends. He delivered 8 workshops, covering the length of both islands, from Auckland to Dunedin. The interest was most encouraging and the success of the venture was in part due to the library manager at Dunedin Public Library, Bernie Hawke. Dunedin has a significant place in the history of the Friends movement, in that it established the first group associated with a Friends of the Library body, back in 1890, forty-two years before the first group was established in Australia, at the State Library of South Australia. Once again, FOLA's presence was identified with its *Friends of Libraries Resource Book*, selling at every venue on the tour.

After numerous editions, both under the auspicious of LPCV and FOLA, the definitive edition of *Friends of Libraries Resource Book*, edited by Daniel Ferguson, was published in 2005. It has become the authoritative guide and source book for Friends groups in Australasia.

During this period, Friends expanded around Australia, and became established in every State and Territory. Reaching a peak in 2005 with almost 170 groups. Much of the reason was that during this period, economic, political and structural changes were taking place in most local government areas of Australia, and the public became involved in a 'grassroots' level of activity around the issues of the community, in particular, the importance of the local public library.



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*“During this period,  
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During this time, FOLA president Dr Alan Bundy AM, was spreading the word around Australia, visiting numerous local councils, public libraries, professional organisations and delivering conference papers on Friends. Another important





opportunity came in 2006 when Daniel Ferguson was invited to travel to Western Australia at the invitation of the State Librarian, Margaret Allen to conduct a series of workshops.

Dr Bundy was publishing and delivering a wide range of conference papers, and drawing attention to the need for adequate funding of public libraries. As a former president of the Library Association of Australia, Alan had extensive knowledge and connections across a wide field of the profession which greatly contributed to the FOLA cause.

Providing adequate resources for Friends to develop has always been important for FOLA. **FOLA Keys to Success** was documentation on: Friends and Library Management; Working with Volunteers; Membership; Moving into the Community; Incorporation; and Growing Friends in the next decade.

While the Friends scene was developing in Australia and other western countries, a most unlikely invitation came in 2014, from the Library Association in South Korea. Professor Young-seok Kim from Myongji University, arranged for Daniel Ferguson to undertake a week tour during November, visiting different parts of the country, along with presenting two conference papers for

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*“Delivering a message to future generations has always been a key issue for FOLA”*

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professional library bodies. One of the key features of the tour was conducting workshops for library students at Myongji University. Delivering a message to future generations has always been a key issue for FOLA. Inspiring new leaders in the mission of Friends development.

In 2018, Jack Goodman became FOLA president. Jack was a successful businessman working in the library and education sector. As a person born in the United States, he understood the value of Friends of Library groups in the public sphere.

FOLA celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 5 December 2019 at a function in the Institute Building, State Library of South Australia. The location being significant, in that the State Library of South Australia was home to the first Friends of Library group in Australia in 1932.



In 2021 the LBW Trust approached FOLA because it was implementing National Backyard Cricket Day, and wanted to provide funds in support of a worthy educational cause. FOLA suggested country public libraries as a worthy recipient of donations. In the first year close to \$70,000 was raised, and 54 country public libraries received grants ranging from \$500 to \$1500 upon a grant application process arranged by FOLA. This initiative has continued with a further \$100,000 being distributed each year since. In the first three years of the program, retailer Harvey Norman provided matching funding also.

Among the projects funded were computers, tablets, access to technology, workshops for children and employment workshops for adults along with STEM programs. Every state and territory have benefited from this partnership between FOLA and the LBW Trust.

In 2023 FOLA commissioned Robert McEntyre from Future Creation Australia Pty Ltd to undertake research into country public libraries in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. The final report was published in 2024. The report, titled ***Overlooked Underfunded Outsized Social and Economic Impact: Why Australia Needs to Invest in Country Libraries***, provided irrefutable evidence of the under-funding of country public libraries.

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*“The report provided irrefutable evidence of the under-funding of country public libraries”*

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A large proportion of Friends groups are in country-regional Australia. The report provides them with further empirical evidence to take to funding authorities. But it also displays the unevenness of public library services in Australia, between the well-funded and the marginalised.

The future for Friends groups rests upon our visionaries, just as in the past. Friends at Alexandra (Vic) and Balmain (NSW) understand just how critical this is for the future of our libraries, evidenced in the support they give to young people and involving them in the Friends movement. And for FOLA, how new and developing partnerships can provide new opportunities for growth and development of our library infrastructure.

Changing times for FOLA and the Friends movement.



*Sustaining  
Friends*

# Successful Friends

## *A Culture of Enhancement*

**Daniel Ferguson Founder &  
Executive Director of FOLA**

To have friends can be hard work. As in personal life, friends require nurturing and understanding. The relationship is not a one-way process. The same can be identified with Friends associated with libraries. Some clear messages remain timeless.

The most successful Friends groups worldwide approach the relationship as a partnership. Key to the successful partnership are some characteristics that can be stated by:

- A basic understanding of goals and objectives
- An appreciation of each other's individual potential for achievement
- The shared enjoyment of ultimate success.

Apart from the United States, home to the Friends movement, one country from which Australia can learn is New Zealand. They appear to have found a successful model for sustainable Friends development, and no place more so than at Dunedin Public Library. Another clear winner has been Christchurch City Libraries, who this year celebrates 150 years of library services. Christchurch Friends are relatively new, formed in 1988. Dunedin has longevity, having its origins dating back to 1890, making it one of the oldest 'modern' day Friends of Library groups worldwide. Both these groups have individual memberships of over 300.

Key to the success of these two groups, and many groups, both in Australia and worldwide are some guiding principles.

All parties must clearly understand their respective roles in order to work together towards common goals. The primary responsibility for bringing about this favourable state of affairs rests, in large measure with the library manager. And, although Friends can exist without the strong support and direction the of the library administration, it will not sustain a *culture of enhancement*.

*To bring about this 'culture of enhancement' nine guiding principles must be nurtured and sustained. They are:*

1. The library manager's desire for a Friends group and a belief in the benefits of having such a group. Unless the library administration really wants a Friends group, it is less than fair to encourage citizens to form one. Well intentioned motives may lead to the formation of a group and successful goals achieved in the short term. But sustainable development of a *culture of enhancement* is unlikely to be evident for the long term benefit of the library service.
2. Availability of time to work with Friends. Continuous communication, information, and encouragement are needed to sustain interest on the part of volunteers; the library manager must be available for such leadership.
3. Willingness to assist Friends in understanding the legal and organisational structure of the library. If Friends are not told how they fit into the organisation, chaos can result. Effectively, not a path for sustainable growth.
4. Necessary staff leadership in helping the Friends formulate long-term goals and short-term objectives. The Friends program is most valuable when it moves the total library program forward. The Friends group should be challenged to think and plan on a broad scale, beyond the facilitation of regular events ie. Book sales, author visits, assistance with programmes and funding provision. They need to be incorporated into a culture of improvement.

*"All parties must clearly understand their respective roles in order to work together towards common goals."*

*"If Friends are not told how they fit into the organisation, chaos can result."*

*"Most importantly, the realisation that the library manager's performance can and should inspire faith in the library program and, therefore, increase and inspire the Friends' willingness to work for the program."*

5. Honest appraisals by both parties as to whether the library's program is worthy of a Friends group. If library programs do not meet community needs, a Friends group will be useless.
6. Time to attend all Friends meetings, whether they be executive committee or general membership gatherings. The Friends must be made to feel that the library manager is an important and indispensable part of its endeavours.
7. Praise and publicity for the achievements of the Friends. All appropriate governing bodies should learn of their achievements. An exemplary role model in Australia, is Chris Jones, Library Manager at Great Lakes (NSW), and Bernie Hawke (Dunedin, NZ), not only do they give time and knowledge on the subject of Friends, they are above all, passionate. Managers who are 'passionate' about Friends help create the culture in which Friends groups survive. They are helping to build more sustainable libraries.
8. Awareness of how the community views the Friends. A group that becomes elitist, overspecialised, or simply social may antagonise voters in local elections. The library manager should see that Friends activities are broad-based and varied.
9. Most importantly, the realisation that the library manager's performance can and should inspire faith in the library program and, therefore, increase and inspire the Friends' willingness to work for the program.

Cooperation is vital for creating a *culture of enhancement*. Without it, the longer term success of the Friends can be limited.

The Friends of the Christchurch City Libraries have strengthened their charter by enunciating clear strategic directions which sustain a partnership and enhance the library. *Key among the strategic goals are:*

- Making voluntary contributions through, for example: promoting activities of the Friends to other members of the community informally; and participating in any new library initiatives that will benefit from an involvement of the Friends.
- Advocating the value of libraries and exerting political influence, through: making submissions to the Christchurch City Council Annual Plan and other local government documentation requiring feedback.
- Highlighting literacy and reading
- Enhancing the library experience through: providing a social connection for people to interact and discuss the value of reading, books and libraries at meetings and other activities.
- Contributing to the financial well-being of the Friends by developing a list of potential sponsors from the local businesses and exploring opportunities for sponsorship.
- Promoting and extending membership by sharing information and strengthening relationships.
- Planning for future growth and development through: gaining feedback from members and library staff on a regular basis.

These are by no means casual goals. They are about connecting and developing a sustaining culture that shares and values the library user and non user as an asset in the development of the library. Often, the library manager is unable to undertake actions, either being restricted by council as an employee or by implication, as being seen to be involved in political decision-making. Also, managers must often abide by a code of conduct that restricts engagement with sponsors and the business community. This is where the Friends can be of value. They can perform a role as part of the community, deciding what is and is not seen to justify a 'community of interest'. The library manager cannot display a political role, and the elected

# Successful Friends

## *A Culture of Enhancement*

*(continued)*

representatives may have an agenda not favourable to the library. The Friends group can transcend these debates.

If the Friends have a purely 'partisan' objective, this may at times conflict with the library management. Conversely, the library manager needs to reflect views and aspirations of the community. The power to elect representatives, vote and provide budgets comes from the community and a library administration that undervalues this, provides no service at all.

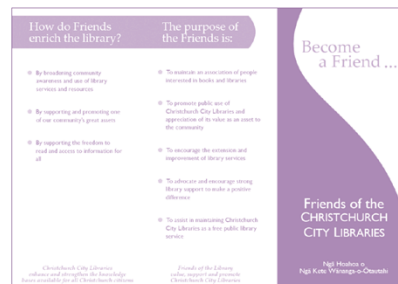
Dunedin Friends illustrious history is both witness to longevity and the creation of a culture where both parties are enhanced. The Friends are valued for their voice and library management listen. For the Friends, it is about examining issues and being a watchdog. A concerned citizenry and a manager who has the interests of the community are the core of the free public library movement.

Dunedin Council is committed to the principle of consultation, even when it is not required by law, for it believes it helps build positive relationships with stakeholders and the wider community and it encourages public involvement in decision-making (*DCC Consultation Policy adopted in 2000*). Council's Consultative Framework on Participation in fact mentions — 'Libraries' community surveys and consultation on options for service participation', which in fact gives the opportunity for the Friends to make regular submissions on budget and planning.

Local government in New Zealand has provided for a community voice through legislation (*Local Government Act 2002* and other legislation), requiring citizens to vote on strategic planning, this has created the opportunity for Friends and concerned citizens to argue a case for support of the library. A well developed Friends of the Library group is the perfect conduit for supporting and expressing concern for the library.

Great libraries have Friends -The British Library, New York Public Library, National Library of Australia. To sustain and value the friendship, library management need to explore opportunities with their communities. This includes creating a partnership which has been the success of many library-Friends over the decades. But to truly value and enhance the library movement we must provide the opportunities to create a culture that enhances Friends. When we do this, we shall truly value our libraries for the next generation.

*"Friends are valued for their voice and library management listen. For the Friends, it is about examining issues and being a watchdog."*



*Government funding pays only a portion of The New York Public Library's operating expenses. The Library wouldn't exist as it is today without membership support from Friends of the Library, a donor membership group of generous people from across New York City and around the world.*

*"A well developed Friends of the Library group is the perfect conduit for supporting and expressing concern for the library."*

# Better, more accessible, libraries for all in Australia

Dr Alan Bundy AM FOLA President

*"Countries such as Denmark invest three times as much per capita in their public library systems."*

*"Australia should now be setting as a target an investment in its public library system to at least match that of best practice countries."*

But who should pay for them?

The vision of Friends of Libraries Australia is Better, more accessible, libraries for all in Australia. It is a vision implicitly shared by a number of other library-support organizations around Australia, such as the Australian Library and Information Association and Public Libraries Australia.

The need for that vision is because, as the latest edition of the Directory of Australian Public Libraries shows, although Australia now has a national public library system of some 1520 public libraries, at only 9c per Australian per day it still invests sparingly and very unevenly in that system. This is despite its very high existence value, use by 60% of people of all ages, and its demonstrable return on investment in meeting a wide range of educational, literacy, cultural, community engagement, social agendas and government policies. Countries such as Denmark invest three times as much per capita in their public library systems.

Australia should now be setting as a target an investment in its public library system to at least match that of best practice countries such as Denmark. This would be a total of about \$2.4 billion, rather than the current meager \$800million. If that seems a very hard 'ask', bear in mind that in national fiscal terms it is 'a drop in the ocean'. It would be the equivalent of 2% of the national, sometimes wasted, expenditures on education.

FOLA will continue to asset that the main reason for the underinvestment in the Australian public library system has been the failure of the states to maintain the funding partnership with local government which has underpinned the achievement of a comprehensive national public library system in not much more than 30 years. It has raised this point in recent correspondence with the State Government of Western Australia urging it to increase its public library funding, which it is now doing.

If state governments had maintained their partnership with local government, the annual investment in public libraries would now be \$1.5billion. But they have not, with most now contributing only about 10% of library funding, and local government 90%. Just as two examples, in 1975 the State of Victoria contributed 0.21% of its operating expenses to its public library system. In 2009 that percentage had shrunk to 0.09%. In Queensland in 2000 the percentage was only 0.173%, but by 2006 it was much less, at 0.06%.

The real issue behind the failure of the state governments to invest in their public library systems is not lack of funds to do so – governments always find money for what they consider important, and the amounts needed for much better library-investment would require a very small shift in state budgets. Rather it is their lack of recognition of their constitutional responsibility for the performance of their public library systems. They recognize that responsibility in other community-critical systems such as health, education, aged care, family and community services. Why not their public library systems, the performance of which impact on all of those areas, and more? It is this which needs to be the focus of advocacy for better, more accessible, libraries for all in Australia.

Although councils usually have local operational and part-funding responsibility for the public library system, they do not have responsibility for the system. Nor do they usually have much capacity to increase their investment in public libraries to the levels needed, although some can certainly do better than at present. Similarly, the federal government does not constitutionally have the primary responsibility for each state/territory public library system. It does, however – as it accepts with health, education, aged care and other areas – have a key responsibility to hold the states and territories to account for their investment in, and performance, of their parts of Australia's public library system. It is time it did so.

Directory of Australian Public Libraries 8th edition 2010-2012 Adelaide, Auslib Press 2010

## FOLA President's Report 2013

*"FOLA remains one of the few national associations for Friends of Libraries, although threats to public libraries in countries such as the UK have stimulated forms of regional or national association."*

Friends of Libraries Australia was launched, as only the second such association in the world, by its foundation patron, the Hon Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG at the State Library of Victoria. In this, my eighth report as FOLA president, I acknowledge its great fortune that in 2012 another great Australian, Tom Keneally AO succeeded Michael Kirby to become FOLA's second national patron.

FOLA remains one of the few national associations for Friends of Libraries, although threats to public libraries in countries such as the UK have stimulated forms of regional or national association. As an indicator of recognition of FOLA's existence and achievement for nearly two decades, its executive director and founder Daniel Ferguson has been invited to speak at the 2014 national library conference of the Korean Library Association, South Korea now having about 100 friends of libraries groups.

Australia itself has a public library system which in terms of access, use, buildings, resources and innovation now ranks among the top ten nations worldwide. However there are no grounds for self satisfaction or complacency. Inequities and exclusion abound, and there is still very much work to be done to ensure that everyone in Australia - young and old, citizens, migrants, refugees, the homeless, those with disabilities, and visitors to the country are well served by proactive public libraries which several recent research reports have shown are the best possible investment in community connection and wellbeing by all levels of Australian government.

*"Australia itself has a public library system which in terms of access, use, buildings, resources and innovation now ranks among the top ten nations worldwide."*

Thus FOLA in 2013 continued its endeavours towards its vision of *Better, more accessible, libraries for all in Australia*, and its focus, at the national and local levels, on public library advocacy. In 2013 one example of this was FOLA's Peter McInness Award for Library Services to Children and Young People. This went to the Stirling Public Library in South Australia for an innovative program to meet the needs of children with disabilities. One outcome of this FOLA award was its contribution to the achievement by the program's initiator, Joanne Kaeding, of a Catherine Helen Spence scholarship to investigate similar initiatives in the USA.

Given the very positive outcomes of that award it is, however, disappointing, that FOLA's two other widely advertised national awards, for elders and adults and for public advocacy did not receive sufficient nominations to enable the awarding of either.

During the year FOLA continued to hear about, and report on its website and in its quarterly newsletter, the outcomes from effective partnerships between council, their library managers, and Friends. As was noted in my 2012 report, just how to promote those partnerships, and particularly how to encourage library managers to initiate and support them, has challenged FOLA since its establishment as the volunteer based and very lean organisation it remains to day.

FOLA does not have a federal structure or state or regional branches, but it has always encouraged and helped where possible,







*Images of Coventry Library Stirling, South Australia*

state or regional groups of Library Friends to come together to share their experiences and knowledge, and to help spread word about their value to councils and library managers. There is a statement to this effect on the FOLA website [www.fola.org.au](http://www.fola.org.au).

The only state which has done this consistently is South Australia, which has the highest numbers of Friends groups per capita in Australia, and perhaps not coincidentally the largest membership (over 600) public library Friends group in Australia at Stirling — and overall probably the best supported public library system in the country. On 1 July 2013, for example, the SA Forum for Friends of Libraries which I had the pleasure of attending, was a reinforcing success. This was in large measure due to its exemplary organisation by the Friends of Holdfast Bay Libraries, to be succeeded in 2014 by the SA State Forum organised by the Friends of Salisbury Libraries.

These annual forums could well be emulated at the state and regional level throughout Australia, and FOLA stands ready to advise on their organisation and contribute the attendance of the president or executive director to them.

FOLA also stands ready to respond to often short sighted threats to library services and their funding at the local and state level, particularly in rural areas. In 2013 it unfortunately, as in previous years, had occasion to do so.

The funding of FOLA remains constraining of its advocacy for better libraries for all — numerous individual Friends groups have larger

funds than does it. Nonetheless, this serves to reinforce the value of the relatively few Australian library suppliers who do sponsor its endeavours and awards. Those few are recognised on FOLA's website and newsletter. Among them, it is again not invidious to highlight the generous support of Bolinda Publishing since FOLA's inception in 1994.

My appreciation of the contribution of FOLA's national committee during the year is also expressed, and particularly that of treasurer Kristina Barnett who also served as vice president. Murray Drinnan continued as its valued webmaster.

The Friends of Barossa Libraries in South Australia, with the generous support of its library manager and local authority, hosted the 2012 FOLA AGM at Nuriootpa. It is one of those regional Friends of Libraries which attests to what can be achieved by an effective partnership between a library manager, a council and a well led Friends group as the library voice of its community.

Daniel Ferguson continued in 2013 to devote inordinate time over and above full time employment to the wellbeing of FOLA - the organisation which he initiated, and of which he will have been the mainstay for 20 years, in 2014.

There will be very good cause for celebration in 2014 of that initiative and achievement.

There will also be cause for reflection on where FOLA will, and can, be in 2034 — for the need for such an organisation will surely remain. Rather like democracy itself, the price of better libraries for all, will still require eternal vigilance.

**Dr Alan Bundy AM**

*"FOLA also stands ready to respond to often short sighted threats to library services and their funding at the local and state level, particularly in rural areas."*

*"My appreciation of the contribution of FOLA's national committee during the year is also expressed, and particularly that of treasurer Kristina Barnett who also served as vice president."*

# Worth the Investment

## Community and civic engagement through Library Friends

Daniel Ferguson Founder & Executive Director, Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA)

*In acknowledging the fundamental importance of community engagement as both a cause and effect of social capital, public libraries and Friends groups can develop and articulate a process for engaging with their constituent communities. This development is considered in the context of American and Australian public libraries.*

When sociologist Robert Putnam suggested in his 2000 book that people were “bowling alone” and becoming increasingly disconnected, he opened a discussion about apathy, declining social capital, waning social networks, and the need for renewed civic networks.

In a follow-up book three years later, Putnam concluded that the tide was turning, people were “better together”, and that one place they were coming together regularly was the public library. Life, according to Putnam, is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital.<sup>1</sup>

Community and civic engagement involves deliberate, consistent, and purposeful outreach to create an environment in which people of all ages and from all backgrounds feel they have a voice and a role in decisions and actions that affect their lives. However, civic engagement and democracy in action involve more than government decision-making. People come together in a variety of ways that are not government driven to solve problems, build stronger communities, address personal needs and plan for their collective future.

Public libraries are ideal community and civic engagement leaders and partners in democratic governance because they are trusted, stable, apolitical, and positive. They also bring substantial community assets to civic action, including connections to influential community groups.

Perhaps most important, libraries are already at the heart of the community, and civic

engagement is at the heart of where the public library is going in the 21st century. “People view their public library as this democratic place where opinions are heard, resources are universally available, everyone is welcome, and programs are offered about things that matter in the community,” says Hartford Public Library CEO.<sup>2</sup>

### Facilitating action with Friends

Friends of Library (FOL) groups play an important role in this facilitation by: establishing public discourse; identifying issues that will affect the community well-being; knowing all the community stakeholders; engaging local and state elected and appointed officials; challenging issues; and being active and visible in the community. The partnership between the Friends and the Library is further enhanced by building a proactive community/library relationship and culture.

In their paper on *Connected Communities*, James Svava and Janet Denhardt say it is hard to have civic engagement without a sense of community, and it is hard to fashion a sense of community without civic engagement.<sup>3</sup>

The ability to position the library at the heart of the community in which its role as a civic leader is widely communicated, understood, accepted, and valued, is what successful Friends Groups strive to achieve. They achieve this in partnership with library management and staff - they are not ‘bowling alone’.

Rachael Scott in ‘The Role of Public Libraries in Community Building’ cites five facets of community building: how libraries serve as a conduit to access information and to learn; how libraries encourage social inclusion and equity; how libraries foster civic engagement; how libraries create a bridge to resources and community involvement, and; how libraries promote economic vitality within the community.<sup>4</sup>

Libraries are important to people and sit at the

*“Community and civic engagement involves deliberate, consistent, and purposeful outreach to create an environment in which people of all ages and from all backgrounds feel they have a voice”*



*“libraries engage  
the public in civic  
discourse ... and  
develop the capacity  
for their communities  
to solve problems.”*

heart of many communities. This was recognised in the polemic study on American culture by Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* in 1831 and 1835.<sup>5</sup> Later in the 19th century; Carnegie’s philanthropy made libraries a common feature of American community life.

One definition of *community* relates to “communities of relationships” (Morse 2004).<sup>6</sup>

Building that relationship can be the role of Friends of Libraries — the conduit between citizens and the library that builds a stronger and more valued and vibrant public library and community.

Public libraries have the ability and capacity to promote civic engagement. Goulding (2008) notes: “Voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive society ... (And) third sector organisations (like the public library) enable individuals to contribute to public life and develop their communities.”<sup>7</sup> Willingham (2008) notes that libraries engage “the public in civic discourse ... and develop the capacity for their communities to solve problems.” An essential part in this process, particularly in the American context, has been the role and function of the Library Friends group. The ‘Friends’ serve as a conduit, a bridge between the library management and the community, structuring a relationship and building ‘civic engagement’ as a process and outcome.<sup>8</sup>

### **Friends and engagement in the United States**

#### ***Seattle Public Library***

In Seattle, the Friends see themselves as ‘community ambassadors’. Founded in 1941, it is one of the oldest and most active in the United States. The Friends have been strong advocates of bond levies for the library along with campaigning for adequate library funding. Since 1983 the Friends have researched and published city council candidates’ positions on library support. Most significantly, in recent times they were key supporters for the successful “Libraries for All” campaign which allowed for a new Central Library. In their advocacy efforts the Friends worked with many community, professional and neighbourhood groups.

In 1998 Seattle voters said “yes” to the largest and most comprehensive library initiative in the country’s history, launching a \$290.7 million project to rebuild The Seattle Public Library.<sup>9</sup>

After opening the new building in 2004, the visitation to the library rose 211 per cent from 659,364 to 2,054,631.<sup>10</sup> And after one year of operations, the new Central Library was

associated with \$16 million in net new spending in Seattle, thanks to the number of out-of-town visitors who came to see the building.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Hennepin County Library (HCL)***

In 2012 the Friends of HCL raised more than \$1.2 million in support of cultural and educational programs, public awareness, literacy initiatives, technology and collections. More than 5,700 members of the community helped achieve this goal. Friend’s president, Lynn Schell concluded in her annual report: “Great libraries need great friends and we are thrilled to count you as one!”<sup>12</sup>

Another Friends member stated: “A community without a vibrant library system isn’t a community.”<sup>13</sup> In the past ten years more than \$41 million in direct programmatic and cash support has been given to HCL. In addition, Friends advocacy efforts, in partnership with the library and civic leaders, have secured hundreds of millions of dollars in increased public support for libraries.

#### ***San Francisco Public Library***

Citizens gathered to form the first Friends of the San Francisco Library in 1949. The group has been active leaders in the context of American Friends of Library groups ever since. However, during the ensuing years, the issue of a library building has always raised itself as a priority. In 1986 the Friends inaugurated a private fund-raising campaign for a new Main Library. In 1988 a Library bond for \$109.5 million and construction of a new 376,000 square foot Main Library was passed.<sup>14</sup> Finally in 1995, the New Main Library building was completed with the Friends and Library Foundation raising \$35 million towards the project. It was a twenty-two year effort, achieved with community support from the citizens of San Francisco, assisted substantially by the lobbying, campaigning and fundraising of the Friends of San Francisco Library.

#### ***New York Public Library***

The Beaux-Arts landmark building on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, New York, houses one of the outstanding collections in the world, with 15 million items. It is the New York Public Library. It is also significant in that it is supported by probably, the most successful and wealthiest Friends of Library group in the country. Building, collection, status and individuals have made this a landmark institution for these reasons, but also for the financial support provided by the Friends. Six levels of Friends membership give an opportunity to a wide section of the community, from \$25 to a Sustaining Friend at \$1,499.<sup>15</sup>

*“Citizens gathered to form the first Friends of the San Francisco Library in 1949. The group has been active leaders in the context of American Friends of Library groups ever since.”*

The Library is supported by a complex set of funding sources. The Friends offer to fund special initiatives that improve the lives of countless New Yorkers, such as grants for major new projects and special initiatives such as education-related activities. In 2011 they provided funds for essential materials and programmes like Summer Reading for 88,000 children and teenagers. These programmes at Branch level, reach the community in a very real and direct way. Adding value at the most 'localised' level of the community.<sup>16</sup>

### **Investing with Friends in Australia**

At the local community level, some notable examples are visible: Echuca (Vic), Toowoomba (Qld), Stirling (SA), Barossa (SA), Port Macquarie (NSW), and Balmain (NSW). These libraries have invested in new building projects. Why is this so important? Well, a paper by Bryson, Usherwood and Procter (2003) 'Libraries must also be buildings' states:

*The library is at any one time a meeting places, a learning resource, and a comfortable and relaxing public space. The buildings that are well designed and managed offer an array of resources that enable people and groups to establish relationships, carry on conversations, exchange ideas, and engage the life of the mind.*<sup>17</sup>

These Friends of Library groups have been leaders in community and civic engagement and can be regarded as an accepted model to anyone in Australia.

As Willingham (2008) noted "it's about weaving organisations, bridging divisions and developing capacity for their communities to solve problems."<sup>18</sup>

In these particular libraries, we also witness the success in understanding about building a firm foundation — planting, growing and deepening the links between Friends, library management and the community — engaged, connected and empowered.

There are now some useful tools to assist library management and FOL groups engage in persuasive argument about the benefits of the public library. One such tool is *The library's contribution to your community: a resource manual for libraries to document their social and economic contribution to the local community.*<sup>19</sup>

### **Echuca (Victoria)**

In 1988 the Friends of the Echuca Library was formed, with the goals to: Broaden general awareness of the library in the community; to promote and publicise the library's services and facilities; to help acquire books and other materials for the library's collection through fund-raising activities.<sup>20</sup>

In 2003, the Friends decided to appeal to the wider community and form a stronger group that would apply pressure on all levels of government to fund and build a new library. Finally, on 28 September 2011 the Mayor, Cr Pankhurst and Friends president, Stella Moore turned the first sod for the new \$5.1 million building. The new library opened on 24 August 2012.

Library Manager, Jenny Mustey comments on the project with the Friends "It was an incredible experience for me to feel their support and encouragement all along."<sup>21</sup>

### **Stirling (SA)**

In South Australia, within the Adelaide Hills Council, Friends of the Library Stirling (FOLS), based on the Coventry Library, have achieved a similar successful outcome. Stirling Friends have a remarkable membership — 800 members. This makes them one of the strongest groups in Australia. A position they have gained from strong leadership, both of the Friends and from library management. They have developed a true partnership for success and stand as an exemplary model for Friends groups around the country.

During local government elections in South Australia in November 2010, the FOLS succeeded in ensuring the election of councillors in favour of its much needed new library and re-election of mayor, Bill Cooksley, a strong library supporter. Questions were asked of all candidates. In his response, Bill Cooksley, standing for mayor, stated:

*My role is to be the Library Service's champion, to resist budget cuts ... argue and convince others at all levels that is one of the most important functions of Council. It was this personal commitment that supported my casting vote to progress the new Coventry (Library) and to fight and win the last mayoral election on the question of the new library.*<sup>22</sup>

### **Balmain (NSW)**

In the inner Sydney suburb of Balmain-Rozelle, the Friends of Balmain Library (FOBL) have established a successful community partnership with the local Community Bank. This has enabled a focus on youth work with projects between local schools, library and the Friends.

Success for FOBL is in part, due to a very dynamic committee, which, similar to Stirling, has seen resourceful, dedicated and skilled leadership of the Friends group over many years. Its achievements in library re-development, funding, program and collection development, speaks volumes for the hard work, but importantly,

*"In these particular libraries, we also witness the success in understanding about building a firm foundation — planting, growing and deepening the links between Friends, library management and the community."*

*"My role is to be the Library Service's champion, to resist budget cuts ... argue and convince others at all levels that is one of the most important functions of Council."*

*"Australia's public libraries produce by far the best return on investment of any agency in Australia."*

*"The evidence is accumulating that FOL groups can achieve outcomes for their communities beyond their actual numbers."*

strategic planning which sees building partnerships with the community as vital. The return on 'investment' for the library rebounds.

Hildreth (2010) refers to "civic engagement as about individuals learning about networking with each other through the neutral ground of the library."<sup>24</sup> Balmain is this 'neutral ground' which enables the partnership with the community and the investment to be multiplied.

### Conclusion

In 2005, Dr Alan Bundy, in his paper 'Twelve Million Australian Public Library Friends: Worth An Investment' stated "Australia's public libraries produce by far the best return on investment of any agency in Australia."<sup>25</sup> This is supported by the work of McEntyre (2010)<sup>26</sup> and Victorian government research such as, *Dollars, Sense and Public Libraries: The landmark study of the social-economic value of Victorian public libraries*<sup>27</sup> and *Victorian Public Libraries 2030 Strategic Framework, Summary report*.<sup>28</sup>

There is much supporting evidence, both in Australia and the United States to confirm the role Friends of Library groups play in community and civic engagement.

The evidence is accumulating that FOL groups can achieve outcomes for their communities beyond their actual numbers, because they are often recognised as the voice of the community about the library.<sup>29</sup>

If we use Scott's (2011) analysis, we can observe her five facets of 'community building' at work in the libraries we have studied. In the United States: Seattle, Hennepin, San Francisco and New York, and in Australia: Echuca, Stirling and Balmain. While these libraries may have afforded some of the facets of community building without a Friends group, what our research indicates is that, with a FOL group, acting as a conduit between citizen and library management, a more valued, vibrant public library and community can be achieved.

As Alexis de Tocqueville observed:

*They get together in large numbers, they converse, they listen to one another, and they are mutually stimulated to all sorts of undertaking. They afterwards transfer to civil life the notions they have thus acquired and make them subservient to a thousand purposes.*<sup>30</sup>

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# *National Backyard Cricket:*

## **A New Vision for Philanthropy in Public Libraries**

**Jack Goodman, FOLA President**

Since their initial development in Australia, our public libraries have been the responsibility of local government. Generations of Australians have diligently paid their local rates and, in return, councils have provided the bulk of the funds necessary to build facilities, populate collections of materials, and staff them with trained professionals.

Depending on where you live, your local library may receive modest supplemental support from your state government. Though in nearly every case state funding for public libraries has been on the decline over the last several decades.

The Friends of Libraries movement has been one of the few structured channels through which Australians have been able to support the development of their local libraries. Until now.

In the latter half of 2020 Friends of Libraries Australia Inc (FOLA) was approached by the LBW Trust — a cricket-themed charity that has raised millions over the years in support of education initiatives in cricket-playing nations. The LBW Trust (it stands for Learning for a Better

World and is a fun play on words) had decided it wanted to expand beyond its support of learning programs in countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan and find a way to make a difference closer to home.

FOLA seized the opportunity to introduce the leadership of the LBW Trust to Australia's public libraries, the work they do, the services they provide, and the difference they make to millions of Australians every day. The chairman of the Trust, David Vaux, AO, was particularly taken by the role country libraries play, leveling the playing field of educational opportunity by acting as an alternative entry point for learning and further education.

The fact that libraries are so often overlooked in terms of the work they do and the return on investment they provide also struck a chord. Research in Australia and many other countries over many years has repeatedly shown that a dollar invested in public libraries provides between three and eight dollars of "return" in the form of economic benefit to local communities. And yet in spite of this knowledge,

*"The chairman of the Trust, David Vaux, AO, was particularly taken by the role country libraries play, leveling the playing field of educational opportunity by acting as an alternative entry point for learning and further education."*



*"the idea of National Backyard Cricket Day rapidly took shape as a fun way for everyone to get involved with an enjoyable game in support of a great cause."*



public libraries in Australia remain relatively underfunded according to international best practice and other benchmarks.

The LBW Trust also had a brilliant idea for fundraising. Leveraging its sporting theme, as well as the nation's love of cricket, it developed the idea of a National Backyard Cricket Day. Along the same lines as the Cancer Council's

annual "Australia's Biggest Morning Tea" fundraiser, the idea of National Backyard Cricket Day rapidly took shape as a fun way for everyone to get involved with an enjoyable game in support of a great cause.

The concept deserves some elaboration. Its key elements are:

- Each year, January will be designated National Backyard Cricket Month.
- During the month a national media campaign will run to encourage all Australians to get outdoors to enjoy a game of backyard cricket — and raise funds for an educational cause.
- Participants can register their games on the National Backyard Cricket website — [www.nationalbackyardcricket.com](http://www.nationalbackyardcricket.com) — invite their friends, and make donations. They can also choose which of the Trust's educational programs they want to support — from Kathmandu and Sri Lanka to Australia's country public libraries.

High profile patrons include a number of Australia's cricket legends, including Dennis Lillee and Greg Chappell, as well as current Governor General David Hurley and former Governors General Sir Peter Cosgrove and Sir William Deane.

(Continued overleaf)



## *National Backyard Cricket:* **A New Vision for Philanthropy in Public Libraries**

(Continued)

What sort of activities at our libraries will the funds raised by National Backyard Cricket support? The initial intention is to enable libraries to enhance the educational sessions they offer for learners of all ages through, for example, the upgrading of physical resources, including computers and connectivity; and the running of English language sessions for refugees. Other opportunities to build connections will arise, no doubt. We can imagine book clubs that may feature a cricket theme, or indeed collaborations between libraries and local cricket clubs. With luck and perseverance, people's imaginations will take hold and they will add their own spin (pun intended!) to the ways that cricket and libraries can come together for the greater good.

The LBW Trust has ambitious plans to make National Backyard Cricket Day an annual event and to encourage thousands of games of cricket in every corner of the country.

What makes this so significant for Australia's libraries? Part of the excitement is the potential for National Backyard Cricket Day to raise awareness of the nation's public libraries and the critical role they play in local life, particularly in regional communities.

Even more interesting is the potential to build a bridge between Australia's passion for sport and its quiet respect for libraries as local learning institutions. Few people realise that public libraries are the nation's largest membership-based organisations, that nearly half of all Australians are members of their local library, and that visits to public libraries across Australia exceed by far the combined attendance at all professional sporting events in the country.

In the past, many library advocates have bemoaned the fact that sport attracts an outsized share of government funding (at all levels of government), as well as public and media attention, while libraries' contributions

often go unnoticed as they toil in the shadows. But this is not a surprise. No one tunes in to watch a test match between libraries, and you'll probably never see a librarian on a tin of Milo or telling you which brand of vitamins is best for your health.

FOLA is understandably excited about this opportunity. While some may say we are straying from our mandate to support the creation and continuation of friends groups in Australia, we view it differently. FOLA's mission is to work toward better public libraries for all in Australia. In this regard, building new partnerships and connections with other organisations that share FOLA's altruistic bent is at the core of our mission. We hope all supporters of Friends groups will join us in looking for ways to help libraries engage with National Backyard Cricket to build enthusiasm and support for these essential educational initiatives.

The inaugural 2021 National Backyard Cricket campaign concluded with a game and reception at the Governor-General's residence in Canberra on the 4th of February. In spite of COVID restrictions, a group of representatives from the LBW-Trust, the embassies of several countries where the Trust sponsors educational programs, as well as a number of librarians from regional NSW were able to travel to Canberra to enjoy the hospitality of the Governor-General, David Hurley and his wife, Linda. And while the cricket was definitely of the backyard variety, the sentiment and enthusiasm for National Backyard Cricket Day gave us great confidence that it will become a new Australian tradition — and that the nation's country public libraries will be better off as a result.

<https://nationalbackyardcricket.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/FOLAFriends/photos/a.1051087868355000/2149286271868482>

*"We hope all supporters of Friends groups will join us in looking for ways to help libraries engage with National Backyard Cricket to build enthusiasm and support for these essential educational initiatives."*

*"And while the cricket was definitely of the backyard variety, the sentiment and enthusiasm for National Backyard Cricket Day gave us great confidence that it will become a new Australian tradition."*



**FOLA**

*Keys to  
Success*



## FOLA Keys to Success



# Creating a Culture

*Nine (9) guiding principles in creating a culture of enhancement that will nurture and sustain successful Friends*

**Library Manager** — The library manager must have a desire and belief in the benefits of having a Friends group.

**Availability** — Continuous communication, information and encouragement are needed to sustain interest on the part of volunteers; the library manager must be available for such leadership.

**Willingness** — A willingness to assist Friends in understanding the legal and organisational structure of the library.

**Leadership** — Staff leadership in helping the Friends formulate long-term goals and short-term objectives. The Friends group should be challenged to think and plan on a broad scale.

**Being Honest** — honest appraisals by both parties as to whether the library's program is worthy of a Friends group. If library programs do not meet community needs, a Friends group will be useless.

**Devote Time** — The Friends must be made to feel that the library manager is an important and indispensable part of its endeavours.

**Giving Praise** — Praise and publicity for the achievements of the Friends. All appropriate governing bodies should learn of their achievements.

**Community Connection** — Awareness of how the community views the Friends. A group that becomes elitist, overspecialised, or simply social may antagonise the community.

**Inspiration** — Most importantly, the realisation that the library manager's performance can and should inspire faith in the library program and, therefore, increase and inspire the Friends' willingness to work for the program.

## FOLA Keys to Success



# Friends and Library Management

### *Clear Structure and Intent*

A Friends group Constitution needs to clearly set out the goals of Friends, and express what Friends will and won't be involved in.

Delineation between Friends and general volunteering roles. All Friends are volunteers with the Friends group and some are also volunteers in other roles (eg general library volunteers), but there needs to be clear definition of which volunteer capacity they are working in.

### *Guidance*

Friends groups need to acknowledge that Library management has the task of determine appropriate directions for the Library.

Friends then ensure that programs of Friends support these directions.

Friends are a source of innovative and interesting ideas then work with the library to sanction ideas in light of the library's directions, and help them to fruition.

### *Support*

Support by library management for the concept of Friends and the value of Friends.

Support by Friends for functions of library – this may take a variety of forms (financial, political, promotional).

Support provided by library staff eg administrative support, staff on front desk promoting Friends, and understanding from management that this is legitimate time spent by staff.

### *Trust*

Establish a rapport and trust that the Library and Friends are working in the same direction.

Trust that Friends will make judgements which are appropriate and support the objectives of the library.

### *Communication*

Keep library staff informed of Friends activities.

Keep library management involved in Friends.

Keeping Friends informed of library activities, political dimensions, staffing changes or issues, library goals and future directions.

### *Team Work*

Recognise that Friends are part of the library team.

Library management and Friends working together to achieve aims rather than working at odds with each other.

Recognise the different strengths and abilities of Friends team members and harnessing those energies and strengths appropriately.

Recognise that Friends membership means different things to different members, and that this impacts on how and when different members will contribute to the team.

### *Involvement*

Commitment from Friends Committee Members – time, energy and enthusiasm.

Commitment from Library Management – time and support for value of Friends.

### *Mutual Benefit*

Ensuring a balance between the effort of supporting a Friends group and the \benefits which an active and healthy Friends group returns to the library.

### *Facilitation*

Friends can facilitate discussion on a political and community level which staff cannot. The role of Friends in this area can be vital as Friends form a link to the community and can represent the needs of the library users, both to staff, and also to funding bodies.

*(Sarah Philpott, former Library Manager, Unley Public Library & Patricia Chigwidden, President, Friends of Unley Library, South Australia)*

## FOIA Keys to Success



# Library Advocacy

### ***Following are ways you can support your library.***

As a member of library staff, as a Friend, as a library user, every day is an opportunity to confirm and communicate how important your library is to the entire community.

#### ***Talk, talk, talk!***

Look around you. There are people everywhere who could use their library, and who don't know about the resources waiting for them. Talk to people and tell them why you love and value the library. Help them see what they could learn. It doesn't take much more than friendly conversation with a friend.

#### ***Keep informed***

Stay up to date with information about your library, with Council information, Library information, newsletters, local newspapers, Council/Library web site, talk with your library staff. Get to know your Friends committee members.

#### ***Get to know your elected representatives***

You've elected your Councillors; get to know them. Learn from their web sites about what the issues are in your community. Let them know what you think about your library. Let them know you want them to support library-friendly policies. Make an appointment to see them, and invite them to library events. Let them see how you are using the services provided by the library. Remind them that you vote.

#### ***Work on your library's print or online newsletter***

Many libraries have a newsletter for patrons. Volunteer to write an advocacy column for the newsletter, highlighting ways that patrons and advocates can help the library.

#### ***Make and distribute handouts***

Important information about the library, its services, and needs can be distributed in writing, for people to read later or pass on to others. If you have desktop publishing skills, or know someone who does, work to build materials that can be passed to others. May be it can be a "wish list" of things the library needs or "ideas for action" on issues facing the library.

#### ***Plan a library event***

Any event during the year is an opportunity to showcase your library. Create an event or promotion that will get your Friends and other volunteers involved.

## FOLA Keys to Success



# Six Basics of Working with Volunteers

1

### *Planning*

Define your project clearly and always seek the approval of your librarian. Divide your event into 'chunks' to make planning less formidable, who will do what: what committees are needed; you have to ask for participation and know what you're going to do.

2

### *Recruiting*

Don't recruit volunteers until you know what you need! Identify specific tasks and skills, and put your needs on paper. Advertise in a variety of ways. Some libraries have a volunteer interest sheet.

3

### *Orientation and Training*

Remember the home basics: contact people in advance and follow up with reminders; make the event fun and welcoming for your volunteers; assign greeters, have a sign-in sheet, and provide a place for volunteers to put their coats and bags.

4

### *Supervision*

Coaching, cheerleading, how do Friends handle money? One example: Two Friends members might be in charge of money at a book sale. Supervisors (or the Friends President) can serve as a support system.

5

### *Recognition*

Say thank you in person and in writing. Inform all of your volunteers of the results of your project. Consider providing treats or pizza during a full day of service – or offering perks and benefits to volunteers who come in regularly. Do give thought to what sources of funding for recognition events are appropriate and ethical for Friends.

6

### *Evaluation*

What went well? What didn't? Note what did and didn't go well – and correct for the next event. It's easy to forget the simplest, most tiny details.

*(FOLUSA and the Minnesota Association of Library Friends – USA)*

## FOLA Keys to Success



# Incorporation

### *What is incorporation?*

Incorporation is a voluntary process whereby a not-for-profit organisation (FOL group) can apply to become its own 'legal person' (i.e. the association becomes a distinct legal entity that continues regardless of changes of its membership).

### **Some of the advantages of incorporation include:**

- Protection of the members and office holders against personal liability for debts and other legal obligations of the organisation.
- The ability to sue and be sued in the name of the association.
- The ability to invest and borrow money.
- Greater eligibility to apply for grants.

### *Friends should consult the following agencies in your State:*

**Victoria:** [www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/incorporated-associations/become-an-incorporated-association/should-your-club-incorporate](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/incorporated-associations/become-an-incorporated-association/should-your-club-incorporate)

**NSW:** [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/associations-and-co-operatives/associations/about-associations/before-incorporating-a-new-association](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/associations-and-co-operatives/associations/about-associations/before-incorporating-a-new-association)

**Queensland:** [www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/associations-charities-and-non-for-profits/incorporated-associations](http://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/associations-charities-and-non-for-profits/incorporated-associations)

**South Australia:** [www.sa.gov.au/topics/family-and-community/community-organisations/setting-up-a-community-organisation/incorporate-an-association](http://www.sa.gov.au/topics/family-and-community/community-organisations/setting-up-a-community-organisation/incorporate-an-association)

**Western Australia:** [www.commerce.wa.gov.au/consumer-protection/associations-and-clubs](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/consumer-protection/associations-and-clubs)

**Tasmania:** [www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/clubs-fundraising/incorporated-associations](http://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/clubs-fundraising/incorporated-associations)

**ACT:** [www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1504/~/incorporated-associations](http://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1504/~/incorporated-associations)

**NT:** [nt.gov.au/law/rights/incorporated-associations](http://nt.gov.au/law/rights/incorporated-associations)

### *Public Liability*

#### **What does public liability insurance cover?**

This is insurance indemnifying the Not-for-Profit Organisation against legal liability for personal injury and/or property damage claims made by third parties as a result of negligence occurring in connection with the not-for-profit organisation's activities and/or their products (goods sold).

The Municipal Association of Victoria, through its insurance broker, Jardine Lloyd Thompson has negotiated the inclusion of Victoria Not-for-Profit groups within a new national community insurance facility, known as Local Community Insurance Services (LCIS).

- Email [communityinsurance@jlta.com.au](mailto:communityinsurance@jlta.com.au)
- Or [www.communityinsurance.com.au](http://www.communityinsurance.com.au) for background information.
- Or Local Community Insurance Services on 1300 853 800

On 12 December 2006, Local Community Insurance Services commenced its operations, which, via a strategic alliance with one of Australia's leading insurers, QBE Insurance, can deliver:

- A specialist focus on the insurance needs of community groups and associations.
- Insurance products and services that are specifically tailored for community groups.

Local Community Insurance Services can deliver to groups located in New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory, Victoria and Western Australia.

## FOLA Keys to Success



# Growing Friends in the next decade

### **Use of technology**

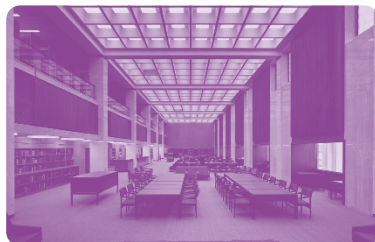
Friends should develop with their library a 'Friends' web site. Younger library users see the modern public library as being not merely within a building, but connecting to in a variety of ways. Technology is a key to their use of the modern public library. Check out some overseas sites – highly commended is that of the Friends of the Hennepin County Library (USA), ADD Bristol Libraries (UK) see also Balmain (NSW).

### **Becoming more politically savvy**

As local government is changing, so Friends need to reflect the new dynamics of such local environments. Friends of Stirling (SA), Great Lakes (NSW), Waverley (NSW) – display partnership building with council.

### **Regional groupings**

Initiating the growth of Friends groups within a regional context can add exposure, and help weaker groups in an area by harnessing ideas and expertise. Also, it can provide a more effective voice within the management structure – West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation (Vic), and state wide gatherings in South Australia, held each year at the State Library of SA.



### **Quality and training**

Provide a clear direction and guidelines for effective operations – Friends of the National Library of Australia (ACT) and State Library of South Australia (SA).

### **Code of operations (conduct)**

Provides a written policy for all Friends. Issues such as OH&S and Child Protection are important issues in all areas of volunteering today – See Members Code of Conduct Friends of the National Library of Australia (ACT).

### **Publicity**

High quality newsletters and well developed strategies with local media outlets provide effective communication – Friends of the State Library South Australia (SA), Balmain (NSW), Toowoomba (Qld)

### **Library management**

Co-ordinating with library management on goals and visions of service development – Friends of Stirling Library (SA) and Friends of Toowoomba Library (Qld).

### **Dollars \$\$\$**

Greater success and partnering through funding raising – Friends of the State Library of South Australia (SA), Toowoomba (Qld), Launceston (Tas).



## FOLA Keys to Success



# Membership Drive

### MAKE NEW FRIENDS, BUT KEEP THE OLD.

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#### → *Celebrate the past*

Begin with a thank you for the past support, and be sure to mention all the great things that the members past support has made possible for the library.

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#### → *Look to the future*

Give a hint of plans for the new year, stressing that “your support will make it happen!”

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#### → *Make it easy*

Use a mail merge program to preprint membership forms so that members don't need to write all their address information again.

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#### → *Return envelopes*

Include a preaddressed return envelope. If all they have to do is write the cheque and find a stamp, its more likely to get done!

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#### → *Follow-up*

After a month or two, follow up with the non-renewing members, perhaps with a postcard, second mailing, phone call or even a handwritten note.

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#### → *Renewals*

Follow up with those who do renew, too, by sending a thank-you or a membership card (easy to print on business card stock).

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#### → *Appealing*

Make membership appealing and fun. Be sure your members know how much you and the library appreciate their help and support.

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#### → *Looking for new members too.*

##### *A few quick tips.*

- People join because they are asked, and the more direct the asking, the greater the response.
- Some places to find prospects: friends of Friends (ask your members to suggest names), library supports (staff may be able to identify possibilities), in other community organisations, and at the library (set up a table in the entrance and staff it with welcoming Friends).
- Show off! Be sure that your print materials are good looking and that your mailings and other solicitations are done in an attractive manner.
- Brag a little, be sure prospective members get to know your group's activities and accomplishments. People like to be part of a success story.
- “What's in it for ME?” may be the unspoken question when you ask people to join. Have your answers ready. Benefits of membership may include such things as a newsletter, invitations to special events, shop early at the book sale. Some groups offer premiums, a calendar, a coffee mug, or a bookmark. Of course, one benefit is always the opportunity to help support and enhance the library.
- Don't let depositing the cheque be your last contact. Send membership card, an information letter, a personal welcome or thank you. It's the Friendly thing to do!

*(Jane Rutledge with Friends of Indiana Libraries – USA)*



## FOLA Keys to Success



# Moving into the Community

Friends of Library groups have to become visible players in the life of the community to have equal footing with other, perhaps, more socially involved groups.



- Make an inventory of notable organisations and associations in the community. Create a partnership of 'interest'.
- Members of your group should participate in other community organisations and be aware of the necessity of being ambassadors for the library.
- Take advantage of any opportunity or venue to bring up the library. The Friends should provide a Speaker's List, with information from the library.
- The Friends should set up a correspondence committee to write a periodic column in local newspapers and other local publications. Letters to the editor are important.
- Nurture media contacts to receive notices ahead of time when there is a special Friends' activity. Don't abuse this, as space is limited.
- Local elected officials should be on the Friends regular mailing list. They should receive invitations to library events. They should be invited to become members.
- City or municipal celebrations should list the library as one of their sponsors.
- Conduct regular meetings with the Library Manager.
- Join Friends of Libraries Australia and learn about other groups in Australia.

## FOLA Keys to Success



### WHEN FRIENDS AREN'T FRIENDLY

Most Friends groups are indispensable to the libraries they serve. Sadly, though, some Friends groups get out of sync with their library, their mission, and their roles. When this happens, trust and goodwill evaporates and relationships break down. Some groups have disbanded over disputes that should never have happened in the first place, and there are library managers who hear about these stories and vow never to have a group of their own. The sad fact is, when the understanding of roles breaks down, the library suffers.

We normally hear stories of wonderful groups and their successes. However, occasionally we hear of a disgruntled group, individual, or library manager, who are in conflict about what the Friends role is or should be. Typically, problems arise because of the following issues:

- Friends are secretive and unwilling to share their organisational and financial information with the library.
- Friends don't invite the library's administration to their meetings.
- Friends believe that because they raise the money, they should decide how it is spent.
- Friends are opposing library policy and/ or direction.
- Friends are giving their money to organisations or initiatives outside the library.
- Friends have become 'club-ish' and follow their own agenda.
- Friends' officers don't turn over, and they begin to think of the money raised as their own.

The typical mission of a good Friends group is to "support the library through fund raising and advocacy." This is a tacit agreement to also support the decisions of the library management. If this is not the case, then the Friends are not behaving as Friends.

In terms of spending decisions, the ideal model is one in which the library manager presents the Friends with a wish list from time to time in priority order, and the Friends provide funding for that wish list. Remember, people in the community join and give money to the Friends because they believe that money is going to support the library, as determined in consultation with library management.

Libraries need Friends — now more than ever. They need Friends who are positive about the library and its direction, who understand their important role for fund raising and advocacy, and who stick to their mission to support the library.

"In terms of spending decisions, the ideal model is one in which the library manager presents the Friends with a wish list from time to time in priority order, and the Friends provide funding for that wish list."

# Leadership



*Christl Markovic presented with Honorary Life Membership  
by Dt Alan Bundy, with Dr David Parker*



*Gerritt Stafford,  
Friends of SLSA & FOLA*



*Jack Goodman (FOLA President), Hon Michael Kirby  
(Foundation Patron), Daniel Ferguson  
(Executive Director & Founder)*



*Margaret Broeks presented with  
Honorary Life Membership*

# FOLA Office Bearers

## Patron

Honourable Michael Kirby AC, CMG  
Thomas Keneally AO

## President

Honourable Margaret Lusink AM  
Peter McInnes  
Dr Alan Bundy AM  
Jack Goodman

## Vice President

Honourable John Cain  
Colin Watson  
Chris Awcock  
Kristina Barnett

## Treasurer

Margaret Broeks  
Kristina Barnett  
Dr David Parker OAM

## Board

Ely Cameron  
Agnes Gregory  
Helen Hayes  
Jock Murphy  
Brian Southwell  
Philip Walshe  
Sandie Grocock  
Sandra Lavender  
Ray Osborne  
Alison Aprhys  
Kylie McKinley  
Jill Newton  
Jellie Wyckelsma  
Richard Crago  
Rae Webb  
Colin Dunnett  
Kay Craddock AM  
Michael Skeldon  
Elaine Chippendale  
Dr Norman Curry AM  
Judith Field  
Denise Jepson  
Joyce Lilley  
Jim Lowden

Victoria Quinton  
Merete Smith  
Dr Peter Chippendale  
Gerrit Stafford  
John Murrell  
Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois  
Graham Dudley  
Kay McLoughlin  
Michael Proctor  
Mike McCausland  
Prue McCausland  
Bill Biscoe  
Jill Stevens  
Christine Lloyd  
Gaby Meares  
Rosemary Burden

## Liaison Members

Patricia Chigwidden  
Kerrie Mott  
Bill Tully  
Prue McCausland  
Pamela Rohner  
Glynis Beckwith

## Honorary Life Members

Honourable Margaret Lusink AM  
Agnes Gregory  
Jellie Wyckelsma  
Margaret Broeks  
Peter McInnes  
Christl Markovic  
Honourable Michael Kirby AC, CMG  
Dr Alan Bundy AM

## Executive Director & Founder

Daniel Ferguson

## Awards

Baker & Taylor Awards  
FOLA Best of Friends Awards  
Eric Flynn Award  
Peter McInnes Award  
Colin Watson Award  
and Oration

# FOLA Sponsors

1987 – 2025

## Foundation & Continuing Sponsor



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CAVAL  
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## Chronology: 1987-2024

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**1987** Library Promotion Committee of Victoria formed the Friends sub-committee.

**1988** Article in Australian Library & Information Association newsletter InCite Vol 9(5) April 1988 *Friends of the Library: A National Concern* by Daniel Ferguson.

Dr Christine Henderson published an article *Friends of the Library: A Future Role* in Friends of the Library Newsletter No 5 July 1988, Public Libraries Branch SLSA.

**1994** FOLA launched at a function in Queen's Hall, State Library of Victoria, by the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby AC, CMG on 9 December 1994.

The Honourable Mrs Margaret (Peg) Lusink AM elected the first president of the FOLA committee, along with the Hon John Cain and Colin Watson as Vice-presidents.

Daniel Ferguson formally appointed as Executive Officer of FOLA Incorporated.



**1995** The issue of Compulsory Competitive Tendering in Public Libraries in Victoria becomes a matter of attention for FOLA and the community.

FOLA sends material to all public libraries in Australia relating to the Friends movement.

**1996** Community groups and Friends groups seek FOLA support as a number of libraries face closure as a result of Council Amalgamations in the State of Victoria.

1st FOLA national conference held in Melbourne on 7 October.

**1997** FOLA Library Week Awards presented to Alexandra (Vic), Byron Bay (NSW), Hastings (NSW), Warragul (Vic), Willunga & Aldinga (SA) and Unley (SA).



**1998** The 2nd biennial conference of FOLA is held in Adelaide at the State Library of South Australia on 24 October. FOLA publishes proceedings in a 68 page booklet, *Pathways to Partnership*.

**1999** FOLA launches its website at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/foia.main.html>

Executive Officer records an obituary in the journal *Aplis 12(3) September* of the death of Colin Watson, Vice-president of FOLA, former Foundation Library Manager at DVRLS and lifetime supporter and advocate for the development of Friends of Libraries in Australia.

FOLA sponsored a CCT Workshop held at the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne on 26 February.

**2000** Honourable Barry Jones AO delivers the Colin S. Watson Oration on 16 May in Melbourne.

The 3rd biennial conference of FOLA held at the National Library of Australia, Canberra on 20-22 October, with thirteen speakers participating.

**2001** FOLA president, Dr Alan Bundy launches new website and domain [www.foia.org.au](http://www.foia.org.au) at a function held at Kay Craddock's Antiquarian Bookshop, Melbourne on 8 August.

In December, Daniel Ferguson is invited to the UK to deliver a number of workshops on Friends, arranged by Geoffrey Newman, Friends of the British Library and Geoffrey Smith, Library Consultant.

**2002** Helen Hayes, University Librarian at the University of Melbourne, undertook a workshop which assisted in the development of the FOLA Strategic Plan for 2002-2006.

FOLA biennial conference held in Sydney at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts on 17-19 May.

**2003** FOLA Baker & Taylor Best of Friends Awards established. Awarded to Friends of Alexandra Library, Friends of Hastings Library and Friends of the Toowoomba City Library.

Successful Friends: Creating Partnerships, A workshop for Friends of Libraries held at Unley Civic Centre, Unley, South Australia on 12 April.

**2004** In April, Daniel Ferguson undertakes a tour of New Zealand, conducting workshops on *Developing Successful Friends*.

FOLA celebrated 10 years with a function at the National Library of Australia on 3 December.

**2005** 5th biennial conference held in Adelaide at the State Library of South Australia on 14-15 October.

164 Friends of Library groups are listed in *Directory of Public Libraries (Auslib Press)*.

**2006** Daniel Ferguson presented a paper at the 2006 ALIA Biennial Conference, Perth, Western Australia, 19-22 September: *Growing Friends: Building Social Capital of a Nation*.

Daniel Ferguson delivers workshops for the State Library of Western Australia. *Why Our Public Libraries Need Friends: Report on Workshops presented by Daniel Ferguson, FOLA, March 2006 by Lucia Ravi, PLS Customised Services, State Library of WA, May 2006.*



**2007** Friends of the State Library of South Australia celebrated 75 years.

**2008** FOLA Peter McInnes Award presented to Hurstville Library, NSW and the FOLA Eric Flynn Award presented to Campaspe Library, Victoria.

FOLA workshops and events held around Australia including Warragul (Vic), Grenfell (NSW) and overseas in the UK and in Japan at the National Diet Library, Tokyo on 2 December.

In December, Margaret Broeks, foundation treasurer of FOLA, retires on 10 December, after 16 years of service. Margaret continued as President of the Friends of Altona Library in Victoria.





**2009** Dr Alan Bundy and Daniel Ferguson presented a workshop at Geelong Regional Library Corporation on 10 December: *Successful Friends the New Library Partnership: Community Engagement*.

FOLA signed with FOCAL (Friends of Canadian Libraries) a document to present to IFLA in support of commencing a Friends group within the sections of the International Federation of Library Associations.

FOLA participated in the National Libraries Summit organised by ALIA held at the National Library of Australia, Canberra on 26 March.

**2010** The FOLA Colin Watson Award for Library Advocacy was presented to Byron Bay Friends of the Library. The FOLA Eric Flynn Award was presented to Friends of the Murray Bridge Library.



A Friends Seminar was held at the State Library of New South Wales on 29 October.

**2011** FOLA Friends Awards were presented to the Friends of Adelaide Hills Library, Friends of Port Macquarie Library and Rockhampton City Library.

AGM was held at Campbelltown Public Library, South Australia on 1 September, at which a soft-launch of FOLA's redeveloped web site was presented.

**2012** FOLA publishes a series of information sheets titled *Keys to Success*, relating to Friends and library management issues.

**2013** One of the most successful Friends groups in the country publishes: *Friends for Twenty Years: The Friends of Port Macquarie Library* by Judith Hansen. This was a model FOL group where the Friends, library management and civic community worked together to achieve outcomes.



**2014** On Tuesday 9 December, FOLA celebrated 20 years with a function in Queen's Hall, State Library of Victoria (location of the launch of FOLA in December 1994). Guest speaker was FOLA patron, Tom Keneally AO.

Life Membership was presented to Christl Markovic a leader in the Friends movement in South Australia, including 34 years a member of the Friends of the Stirling Library and 12 years as president.

Daniel Ferguson visited South Korea at the invitation of the Korean Library Association to present a series of workshops and deliver conference papers.

**2015** FOLA Forum and AGM held at the Council Chambers, Civic Centre, Victor Harbor, South Australia on 11 September 2015.

**2016** West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation reported they have 9 FOL groups operating with the service with over 300 members. Much of the success for this was due to the inaugural CEO of the library corporation, John Murrell, a member also of the FOLA Board.

**2017** FOLA launches a new Facebook page [www.facebook.com/FOLA.friends](http://www.facebook.com/FOLA.friends)  
AGM held at Nuriootpa Library in September. Friends of Barossa Library are one of the oldest and most successful groups in South Australia.



**2018** FOLA website [www.fola.org.au](http://www.fola.org.au) upgraded, thanks to the work of FOLA president, Jack Goodman.

Book Feasts launched with Taryn Bashford, a Queensland author who has gathered authors and readers together for discussion in public libraries.

FOLA held four Friends Forums during the year at Inverloch (Vic), Murray Bridge (SA), Balmain (NSW) and Geelong (Vic).

AGM and Forum held on 25 November at Geelong Regional Library (Vic). Patti Manolis, CEO gave a talk *Reimagining Friends: Friends of Geelong Regional Libraries Initiative* and Debra Rosenfeldt (State Library of Victoria) *Libraries Change Lives Campaign*.





**2019** Jack Goodman, president and Daniel Ferguson, executive director meet with the Australian Library and Information Association executive director, Sue McKerracher at ALIA House, Canberra on 8 August.

FOLA celebrated its 25th anniversary on 5 December 2019 at a function in the Institute Building, State Library of South Australia.

The State Library of South Australia was home to the first Friends of Library group in Australia, launched in 1932.

**2020** Partnership between LBW Trust and FOLA established in support of country public libraries.

Margaret Broeks, FOLA Board member and Treasurer (1994-2008) and Friends of Altona Library (Vic) President for 28 years, died aged 89 years.

**2021** FOLA Board member, university librarian and library educator, Gerrit Stafford died. Gerrit was a distinguished contributor to the development of FOLA and the Friends of the State Library of South Australia.

**2022** FOLA's advocacy in support of libraries continued, with FOLA president writing to East Gippsland Shire Council concerning proposed reduction in library hours.

FOLA Foundation president, the Hon Margaret Lusink AM celebrated her 100th birthday.

**2023** 2023 marked the third year with the partnership between FOLA and the LBW Trust in support of National Backyard Cricket and funding to country public libraries, which saw \$110,126 being distributed to 78 libraries around Australia.

**2024** FOLA publishes the Report: *Overlooked Underfunded Outsized Social and Economic Impact, Why Australia Needs to Invest in Country Libraries*.

FOLA celebrates 30th anniversary with a function at the State Library of New South Wales.



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