



**FRIENDS OF THE SACRAMENTO PUBLIC LIBRARY
RESULTS OF AFFILIATE BRANCH SURVEY
February 25, 2015**

I. INTRODUCTION

Friends of the Sacramento Public Library (FSPL) wished to develop a strategic plan to guide and give focus to its activities and to assess whether and how it might need to change to accommodate the ongoing evolution of the Sacramento Public Library (SPL). As part of its plan development, FSPL conducted a survey of its branch affiliates and spoke with other interested constituencies. We received 55 responses from 26 branch affiliates—ranging from 1 from each of 13 branch affiliates to 6 from Belle Cooleage.

Who Responded Most responses (41) were submitted by officers but 12 were submitted by non-officer members of the board and 2 by folks who were no longer on their branch affiliate board. Only 2 responders worked in the area of branch communications, while 4 reported involvement with book sales.

II. MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Denise Watts analyzed this portion of the survey. We include in this section not only an analysis of the responses and comments but also information concerning how the membership services are actually administered. The numbers refer back to the number of the question in the survey.

5. FSPL keeps track of Friends' members and mails renewal notices. How useful is this service to your branch?

How we do it: FSPL tracks membership in an Access database. Memberships all expire on the last day of the month. FSPL sends a renewal form to the member in the month prior to a membership's expiration. For example, if a membership expires on 12/31/2014, the 1st renewal is mailed during the 2nd week of November. If the member does not renew by 12/31/2014, a 2nd renewal notice is mailed the 2nd week of January. At this point, FSPL mails 2nd notices to those who did not renew with the first notice (about 45% of all the members). All renewals include a letter telling them all the wonderful things the Friends do for the Library.

Summary: Most branches found this service to be very useful and rated it highly. If FSPL did not offer this service to branches, they would have to do it themselves, which would likely result in extremely low membership for the Friends. What is surprising is that 3 branches did not find this service to be useful-possibly because they don't understand how it works.

6. How could we improve this service?

Summary: 65% were very happy with the service. Some suggested that the branches follow up with the 2nd renewals themselves, but this may not be feasible as such a high percentage pay late. FSPL provides the renewal information quarterly, and branch affiliates can follow up if they wish.

Suggestions: Some good suggestions, that were previously being discussed by the Membership/Office Committee, include offering multiple year memberships (some people just do this anyway), and e-mailing renewal notices. A suggestion that we post this membership online is an interesting idea, but would only be useful to those people who are tech savvy and can figure out how to access something in a Google Doc. Another suggestion was to include a branch personalized letter with the renewal notice. While this makes sense, it would not be cost-effective as it would take FSPL's staff person considerable extra time and would depend on the branch to provide current information.

Recommendation:

M1. Reconvene the membership committee to move forward on suggestions as to how we can increase membership.

7. FSPL sends updated membership lists to branch leaders on a regular basis. How useful is this service to your branch?

How we do it: A survey conducted in October 2011 revealed that some branches wanted their membership data monthly, while most branches were happy with getting their data quarterly. The following branches get a list of current members monthly: ARD, DEL, ELK, FAI, NNT, NSA and ORA. Only 4 of those branches actually use it monthly. Keeping in mind that only 55% of members renew when their renewal is due, this list is often not very good information. The following branches have requested a monthly list of just new and renewing members: CHS, NHI, POC and ALT. 3 of these find this useful and use the information. The rest of the branches either originally asked for quarterly or changed to quarterly when they realized they didn't need it more often. For the branches such as Belle Cooleage, Orangevale and Elk Grove that do regular mailings to their members, the most efficient system is that they let FSPL staff know when they need the information and she prints current labels and e-mail lists for their membership. If a branch needs current information, it need only ask.

Summary: Over 85% of those responding found it useful or very useful to get regular reports. Since several branches do not respond to FSPL staff e-mail, it is difficult to tell if they receive these reports, and in general they are the branches who seem to find this service less useful.

8. How can this service be improved?

How we do it: The current service varies by branch, depending on what a branch has requested. FSPL staff sends the list to all branch presidents and membership chairs (when listed). If there is no membership chair, the report is also sent to the treasurer or secretary. One thing to keep in mind is that these lists contain personal information that we need to protect.

Summary: Some of the comments suggest that branch folks are not providing FSPL staff with an e-mail address that they actually look at. If a branch wishes to have someone other than those described receive the report or desires specific information be included in the report, that branch should work with FSPL staff so that its needs can be met.

III. COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Karen Thomas evaluated the responses to the survey questions in this area.

9 & 10. FSPL produces the Among Friends newsletter 6 times a year. How useful is this service to your branch? How could we improve this service?

Seventy-five percent of respondents find the newsletter useful or very useful; 25 % are neutral about the newsletter.

Recommendations:

C1. Send out more frequent reminders to branch leaders about deadlines for submitting photos, captions, articles, flyers, and book sale information.

C2. Include more information about branch Friends activities above and beyond book sales.

C3. Post links to on-line newsletter on Facebook and Twitter.

11 & 12. FSPL maintains a Friends website at www.saclibfriends.org. How useful is this service to your branch? How could we improve this service?

The Friends website is managed by part-time staff person Denise Watts. Fifty-five percent of respondents find the website useful or very useful; 42% are neutral about the website and 3% find it not useful or harmful.

Recommendations:

C4. Publicize the website better on Facebook, Twitter, on the SPL website, and on printed SPL materials.

C5. Add a link to the Friends website on every branch page of the SPL website unless there is already a link to a local branch Friends website.

C6. Clarify the process for adding branch friends information to the FSPL website. This will require coordination between Denise Watts and members of the FSPL branch liaison committee.

C7. Improve communication between FSPL website, Facebook, and Twitter coordinators so that information gets shared on all three venues.

13 & 14. FSPL maintains a Friends Facebook page with 703 “likes.” How useful is this service to your branch? How could we improve this service?

At the time the survey was developed, FSPL’s Facebook page had 703 “likes”. This has since expanded to 1076 “likes”. Thirty-two percent of survey respondents find the Facebook page useful or very useful, 52 % are neutral, 16 % find the service not useful. While many older members of the Friends do not participate on Facebook, many younger members do and it is important for the Friends to continue growing this social media site.

Recommendations:

C8. Identify interested people at local branches with Facebook experience and authorize them to post information about their branch Friends’ activities and book sales on the FSPL Facebook page. This may require assistance from members of the branch liaison committee.

C9. Continue experimenting with Facebook advertising to help grow the base.

C10. Do more to promote Friends membership on the Facebook page.

15 & 16. FSPL maintains a Twitter account @saclibFriends with 499 followers. How useful is this service to your branch? How could we improve this service?

At the time of the survey the Twitter account had 499 followers. This has since grown to 552. Only 12% of survey respondents find the Twitter account useful or very useful, 57% are neutral, and 31% find it not useful.

While most Friends members are not currently engaged on Twitter, it is very interesting to take a look at who our followers are. They include most members of the Sacramento City Council and other elected officials, many community organizations such as the Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, and the Sacramento Ballet. Other followers include librarians, authors, Sacramento Bee reporters, educators, businesses, and others interested in literacy, books, and learning. So while Twitter is not currently an effective way to communicate with our own branch Friends members, *it is an effective way* for us to communicate easily with a vast array of Sacramento area “movers and shakers” and to promote the Friends organization and activities among these networks.

Recommendations:

C11. Invite branch affiliates to send in short messages and photos about branch activities that can be promoted on Twitter. This should be coordinated with Trish Consunji and Kathi Windheim.

C12. Conduct a workshop on Twitter for interested members.

17 & 18. The FSPL president sends out a monthly report on board meetings. How useful is this service to your branch? How could we improve this service?

Sixty-nine per cent of those responding to the survey find the reports useful or very useful, 28% are neutral, 4% do not find them useful.

Recommendations:

C13. Encourage branch leaders who receive the reports to forward to other local branch members who may be interested.

C14. Consider using Constant Contact as a way of distributing these reports. This would allow for interested people to add themselves as subscribers.

25 & 26. Some branch affiliates have received assistance from FSPL with the development of their own websites. How useful is this service to your branch? How could we improve this service?

While it does not appear that any branch affiliates have in fact received assistance from FSPL in developing their own website, at least 6 branches expressed an interest in this type of help.

37. FSPL helps advertise branch affiliate book sales on its website, Facebook, Twitter and in the newsletter. How useful is this service to your branch?

83% reported that this service is useful or very useful, 13 % are neutral, 4% do not find it useful. This is an area where we can be of real assistance to the affiliates. Our current venture into paid Facebook ads and boosts is an excellent way to test the “new” forms of advertising. We can specify the audience we hope to reach and it should be outside of our current member base. Our newsletter is directed to existing members and to a lesser degree so is the website. The current Book Den ads are still mainstream with print ads in the Bee taking the bulk of the money. The recent addition of radio spots on Capitol Public Radio shows promise.

Recommendations:

C15. That we add a budget line item especially for social media advertising.

C16. Reallocate the advertising budget of \$10,000 for Book Den ads to be handled at the Communications Committee level.

C17. Develop a 1-page document that tells branch affiliates how they can publicize their book sales and other events using FSPL media. Include deadlines for newsletter (longest time frame), procedures for submitting materials for website, Facebook, and Twitter, and contact information for all media coordinators. Disseminate this document widely throughout the network.

C18. Double-check book sale dates with branches before finalizing newsletter since dates sometimes change.

C19. Let experienced users teach branch members how to use social media sites such as Nextdoor.com to publicize local events and book sales.

IV. BRANCH LIAISON

Karen Lindh reviewed and analyzed the results of survey questions 19 through 26 and 21, 23, 25, and 33 and 34 and made some recommendations for future follow up based on individual responses to survey questions. Percentages are rounded, so results do not necessarily add to 100%.

19. FSPL holds all-branch meetings three times a year. How useful is this service to your branch?

68% responded that the meetings were very useful or useful). 23% of respondents were neutral. 9% of respondents said not useful. 3 respondents skipped the question.

20. How could we improve this service?

The theme among the responses was that the sharing of information from Friends, the library director and between branches is useful to the branches.

Recommendations :

L1. Retain three meetings per year, schedule them on the morning of the last Saturday of February, June and September (library space permitting), and hold half the allotted two hours for branch sharing.

21. The Chair of the Branch Liaison Committee sends out summaries of the all-branch meetings. How useful is this service to your branch?

66% responded that the summaries were very useful or useful. 28% of respondents were neutral and 1% said not useful. 2 skipped the questions.

22. How could we improve this service?

There was very little specific feedback. Those that mention the summary generally find it helpful.

Recommendations :

L2. No change to the current process.

23. Branch Liaisons from the FSPL board maintain regular contact with branch affiliates. How useful is this service to your branch?

78% responded that having branch liaisons was very useful or useful. 17% of respondents were neutral and 4% said not useful. Three respondents skipped this question.

24. How could we improve this service?

Comments were generally favorable, particularly about specific liaisons, but not universally so. There were a number of comments reflecting the need for more frequent attendance at affiliate board meetings and the need for more information as to what the FSPL is doing. In addition, there was a request that we create a master calendar to minimize overlapping book sales between branches. We now have a master calendar (although we do not “police individual branch sales), have a policy that liaisons will attend as many branch meetings as possible, and try to pass on hot issues at our meetings and through emails throughout the year. Communication is the heart of making the relationship work between FSPL and branches.

Recommendations:

L3. That we retain and try to strengthen the current liaison system. One method to ensure that all branches are receiving the info they need is for the President or Board to adopt a “hot list” of FSPL’s top three priorities quarterly. The liaison will share that information with his/her branches at branch meeting or through email (e.g. Jan.-March 2015 tax filing documents and conflict of interest statements due, Big Day of Giving coming).

L4. In addition, if a liaison cannot attend branch meetings because two branches meetings overlap, consideration should be given to appointing a new liaison for one of the branches.

25. Some branch affiliates have received assistance from FSPL with the development of their own websites. How useful is this service to your branch?

Only 20% found this service to be very useful or useful. 60% were neutral and 19% said not useful. 8 respondents skipped the question.

26. How could we improve this service?

The majority of the comments indicate that branches didn’t know this service was available. Several branches indicated interest in learning more about developing a website.

Recommendations:

L5. Schedule training on website development in conjunction with All Friends meeting, and promote participation from branches.

33. FSPL provides financial assistance in the form of “Assisting Friends Matching Grants” to branch affiliates. How useful is this service to your branch?

64% said found this service to be very useful or useful. 32% were neutral and 4% said not useful. Three respondents skipped this question.

34. How could we improve this service?

Branches that have received grants were very supportive. Many commenters indicated that they didn't know this program existed. While we have passed on info to branches at least once, apparently we have not yet adequately communicated the existence of this program and how to use it.

Recommendations:

- L6. Continue highlighting existence of the Matching Grant program.***
- L7. Ask branches that have received grants to describe their program for FSPL newsletter or Facebook posting or Twitter feed.***
- L8. Provide liaisons with info to share with their branches.***
- L9. Report at All Friends meetings how many grants have been issued, to which branches, and how much money remains for assistance for the year.***

V. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Margaret Clausen evaluated the survey responses concerning financial assistance services.

How useful are the following services provided by FSPL?

- 27. Liability insurance for affiliate volunteers.**
- 29. Annual tax reports for state and federal agencies.**
- 31. Nonprofit (501(c)(30) tax-exempt status to the branch affiliates.**
- 33. Financial assistance in the form of "Assisting Friends Matching Grants."**

Approximately 81% found the provision of liability insurance to be useful or very useful. Two responders found it was not useful. Approximately 81% responded that preparation of annual tax reports was useful or very useful. Over 90% of responders found the provision of nonprofit tax-exempt status to be useful or very useful.

It seems clear from the responses to the survey that most of the respondents would like more information and would like to share information, not only about financial issues, but about other areas as well. FSPL is the "parent" organization and we need to communicate better and more frequently with our affiliates to create improved relationships.

Recommendations:

- F1. Try a regional model to improve communications and the flow of information from FSPL to the branch leadership and vice versa. As an example, in***

addition to the three “All Friends” meetings per year which are highly structured and limited in time, we might divide the branches into 3-4 geographic areas and offer periodic meetings specific to branch interest groups to communicate important information from the corporate board and to allow individuals to network.

F2. In January (following election of officers), the FSPL president would invite new presidents to attend any 1 of 3 regional meetings to cover such items as conflict-of-interest forms, availability of matching grants, evidence of insurance, etc. Allow time for presidents to talk to each other their plans for the coming year and to share ideas.

F3. In April, invite the individuals responsible for communications to attend regional meetings led by the FSPL communications person to discuss newsletters, social media, etc.

F4. In July, invite those in charge of book sales to attend regional meetings to talk about pricing strategies, storage, advertising, etc. These meetings would be led by Book Den staff/volunteers.

F5. In November, invite branch treasurers to regional meetings to review year-end reporting requirements. The FSPL treasurer would facilitate these meetings.

VI. BOOK SALE SERVICES

Jo Anne Marie evaluated the survey responses in the area of book sales services.

35. FSPL provides branches with books from the warehouse for local book sales. How useful is this service to your branch?

The results show about half the branches responded at the neutral or useful level.

All branches had been advised that they could visit the Warehouse the week after each warehouse sale and select books to sell at their book sales. We had only 2 branches take advantage during the year. This year with once a month sales it will be harder to let them come and browse and take whatever they want. We are well aware of the importance of supporting affiliate sales. They generally want children’s books and we don’t get enough to let people take whatever they want.

Recommendations:

B1. We need to decide whether we want to lose money on the Book Den side to help affiliates.

39. FSPL loans out banners, aprons and other paraphernalia as needed to branch affiliates. How useful is this service to your branch?

How we do it: FSPL staff keeps 30 aprons at her house and sends them out to branches before their book sales as requested. She keeps a chart of the dates and needs for these items. Four large signs are kept at Central and are sent out to branches

as needed. Issues only arise when several branches have sales on the same weekend, which happens in May and early December. Sometimes items go directly from one branch to another, but working together FSPL staff always makes it happen. The table cover fell apart and the banner is missing (it was old). Other items such as the canopies and tablecloth are kept at the Book Den. Branches need to work with the Book Den manager when they need those items. All other "paraphernalia", such as Book Sale bookmarks, membership brochures, posters and newsletters, are distributed by FSPL staff on an as needed basis. Branches can usually get these materials within 3 days after their request. When we get new items in, FSPL staff uses the Library's distribution chart to figure out how many to send to each branch.

We had 2 suitcases to lend to be filled with promotional materials. We now only have one, as the second one has a broken wheel. One of the most readily accepted items, when tabling for Measure B, were stickers. They are easy to transport and not a huge outlay initially. There was mention made of tote bags with our logo but the cost is prohibitive. To get them for \$1 a bag we need to place an order for 2500.

Summary: This service is highly valued by those who use it and not valued by those who don't.

Recommendations:

B2. Remind everyone that these items are available. Perhaps this can be presented at the next All Friends meeting.

B3. Purchase or repair the second suitcase.

B4. Purchase 2 new banners as well as new items for give away if that is seen as useful.

B5. Purchase pens with FSPL logo.

VII. ADVOCACY SERVICES

Chuck Shulock and LEAC evaluated the survey responses in the area of advocacy services. The survey asked respondents to numerically rate "how useful to your branch" were the following three services:

1. FSPL has sent out advocacy alerts several times a year on timely issues.
2. FSPL has provided advocacy training to branch leaders.
3. FSPL helped lay the foundation for a citywide advocacy campaign in Sacramento.

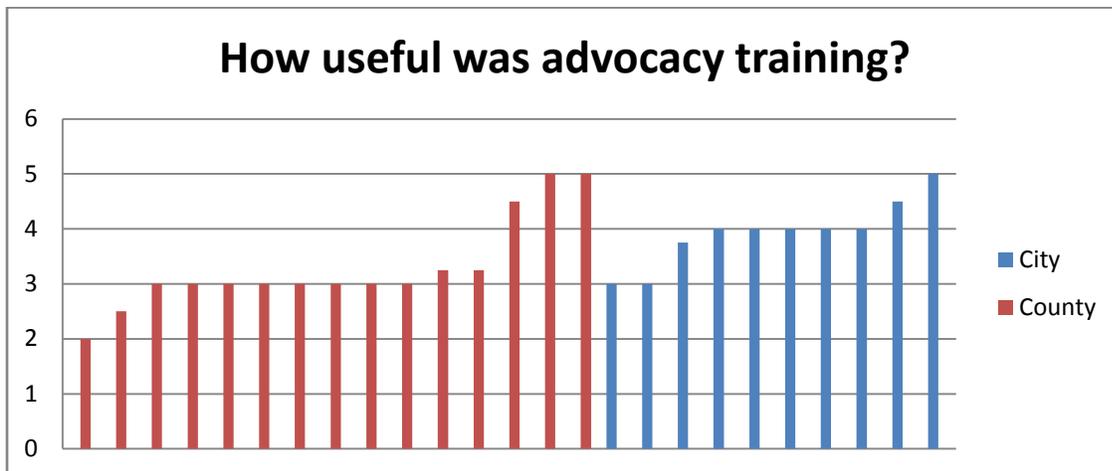
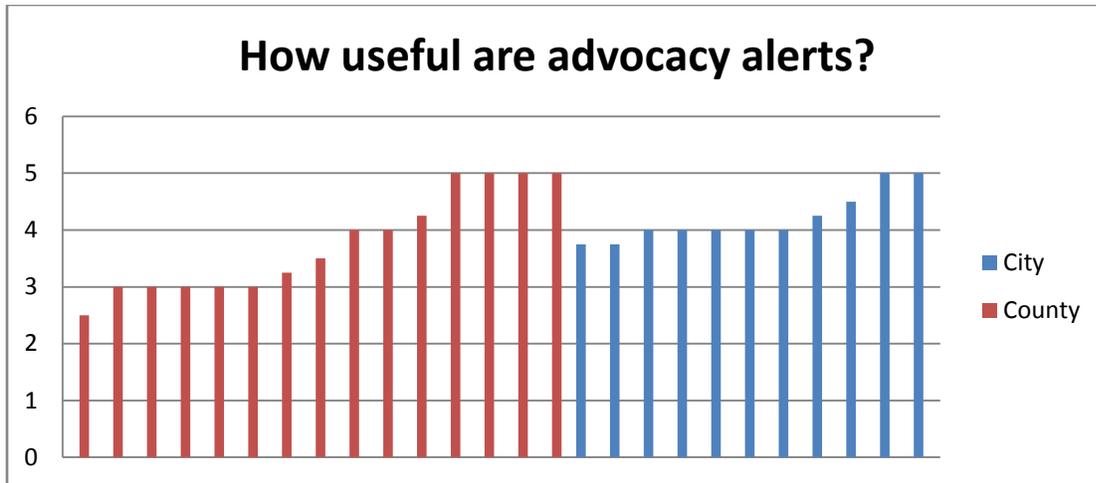
Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended responses as to "how could we improve this service?"

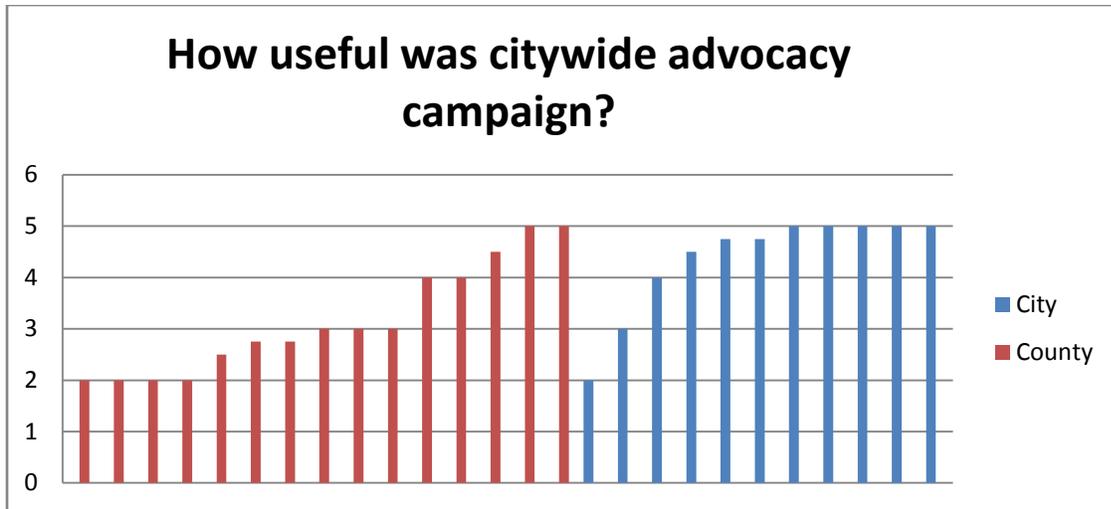
Results

Overall, the advocacy alerts (average score 3.95 on the 1 to 5 scale) were ranked as somewhat more useful than the advocacy training (average score 3.61) and the citywide Measure B advocacy campaign (average score 3.67). In all cases, the advocacy

activities were found to be less useful by county branches than by city branches. In particular, the citywide advocacy campaign was found to be much less useful by county branches (average score 3.17; 10 of 15 branches saying "neutral" or "not useful") than by city branches (average score 4.36, only 2 of 11 branches saying "neutral" or "not useful"). The graphs on the next page show the results for each question broken out by city and county branches.

In the open-ended responses there seemed to be good awareness of the Measure B campaign, but a number of respondents mentioned a lack of awareness of the advocacy alerts or advocacy training. There was also a suggestion to make the alerts city- or county-specific rather than system-wide. Although not directly advocacy-related, in response to other questions one branch suggested a "unifying Friends activity of some sort that could be shared by all affiliates, e.g., Banned Books Week, I Love My Library Day, etc." This might help build a sense of shared mission.





Recommendations

A1. Increase branch awareness of advocacy efforts through more regular communication

A2. Educate county members as to why the health of the city branches matters to county branches

A3. Where possible and appropriate, clearly separate out city vs. county issues (while emphasizing their interdependence).

VIII. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Anita Scuri and Karen Lindh evaluated the survey responses to general questions.

47. Would you like FSPL to provide more help and training in any of the following areas?

Suggestions: A few people requested help with creating flyers. FSPL staff already do book sale fliers for some branches and can put those together quickly for anyone who needs it. There were several requests for training in a variety of areas. FSPL staff is available to train branch folks in many areas during the summer.

48. What other services would you like to see FSPL provide?

Several commenters talked about info sharing among the branches. One method is devoting time at every All Friends meeting for branch sharing. One suggestion encouraged sharing of branch newsletters. Perhaps branch newsletters or links (assuming they are shared with Denise) could be posted on the Friends general info page, or on a new newsletter tab.

49. Do you have ideas about services or support that your branch could provide to other branches or to FSPL as a whole? Some examples might be assisting

local branches with book sales, providing volunteers for the Book Den, participating in advocacy events. All ideas are welcome.

A number of commenters indicated the importance of helping or being helped by other branches.

Recommendations:

G1. This topic would benefit from some additional brainstorming, but should be delayed until after the current effort to examine membership recruitment.

50. Which of the following methods do you use to communicate with your local members?

Over 60% of respondents communicate with their members via email (including emailed newsletters—42%--and Constant Contact—10%).38% communicate via printed newsletter, 21% via Facebook and 42% via telephone. Other unspecified methods of communication totaled 29%.

51. What would be the best method(s) for FSPL to communicate with your branch?

Email was the overwhelming choice (93%), followed by newsletter (33%), telephone (22%), and Constant Contact (10%).

52. Do you have any other suggestions for how we can improve support and communication between the FSPL Board and our branch affiliates?

While many commenters emphasized communication, there's a fine line between useful information and bombardment, as some of the respondents noted. There were several comments that information was not being filtered down to all the members and the board and there was uncertainty as to which branch affiliate members should be receiving information from the FSPL.

Recommendations:

G2. Some thought should be given as to how to package the current flow of information better so that individuals actually look at it, read it, and process it.

G3. Consideration should be given to asking the branch affiliate leadership how much information they would like to receive and to whom it should be sent.

53. How would your branch affiliates be able to assist the FSPL?

Most responders elected to skip this question. There were only 19 responses, of which 14 indicated their branch would assist with FSPL programs. 8 indicated their branch

would assist with FSPL outreach efforts and only 5 would help recruit new members to the FSPL board.

IX. INPUT FROM OUTSIDE CONSTITUENCIES

As part of the strategic planning process, we interviewed (either in person, over the telephone or via email) the following FSPL constituencies: the library director, the Foundation president, and two members of the Joint Powers Authority—one from the city (Angelique Ashby) and one from the county (Susan Peters).

1. What is FSPL doing right re your organization?

The Library: FSPL understands that it is there to support the library (not compete with it) and it is an unabashed advocate for SPL. Examples: LEAC & the parcel tax, meeting with elected officials to let them know how important the library is. FSPL's advocacy and support roles are important. It is also important that FSP continue to evaluate how its role and its future are evolving.

The Foundation: Book Den and branch in-library book sale areas, programs and volunteers, support for Measure B and laying the groundwork for 2016. The FSPL strategic plan and change in administration are changes for the better.

The JPA Members: One member indicated that FSPL is doing a great job and she appreciates all the volunteers. The other member indicated that she likes the FSPL's focus on people who use our libraries—putting a positive human face on the library for Measure B.

2. What can we do better re your organization?

The Library: FSPL should establish its own identity that distinguishes it from the Foundation, while at the same time figuring out ways we can all work together. FSPL should position itself as one of the entities that you can support that supports the library (e.g. Big Day of Giving).

The Foundation: Standardize reporting and donor recognition protocols (as a way to increase support); work with the Foundation to improve accountability from the library as to how it uses funds from both entities.

JPA Member: Continue the focus on people who use the library so that the general public will better understand and will support the library system.

3. What do you see as your needs—what would you like us to do that we are not doing now?

The Library: Hopes that in 2015, we will come closer in alignment with SPL.

The Foundation: Some sort of partnership or sponsorship of the Walk 4 Literacy (financial or non-financial) to make it more of a community event. Sponsor a table at the Authors on the Move event (\$2,000). Don't let the past stand in the way of future cooperation.

The JPA Member: Take advantage of the various supervisors' newsletters and community newspaper columns to help publicize book sales and other activities.