



# **The Library Campaign**

*Supporting friends and users of libraries*

## **The Handbook for Library Friends and User Groups**

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22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0TB

[LIBRARYCAM@aol.com](mailto:LIBRARYCAM@aol.com)

[www.librarycampaign.com](http://www.librarycampaign.com)

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# THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN HANDBOOK

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Whether you need to start up a campaign, or just want to help support your local library, this Handbook gives you all the information you need:

## 1. GETTING STARTED

- i. A Message from The Library Campaign Chairperson  
What can Friends/Users do for libraries?
- ii. How to start a Friends/User group:  
*What kind of group? / How TLC can help / Action checklist*

## 2. FIRST STEPS

- i. How to organise a meeting / Guide to good relationships
- ii. As you get started:  
*Basic principles / Day-to-day running / Organisation tasks checklist / Communication tasks checklist*
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## 3. CAMPAIGNING INFORMATION

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- ii. How good is your library service?  
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How to explain the value of libraries to local councils  
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## 4. CAMPAIGNING TACTICS

- i. Dealing with your local council: *how it works, who to contact, how to protest or query decisions, making a complaint, taking it further – the Ombudsman, judicial review*
- ii. Peaceful protest: *the law on marches/ the law on static demonstrations*
- iii. Lobbying & collecting funds: *the law on collecting money, handing out leaflets, putting up posters, selling newsletters*
- iv. Using the Freedom of Information Act

## 5. PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

- i. Working with the media  
*What journalists need / Talking to a journalist / Radio & TV*
- ii. How to write a press release  
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- iii. Articles for the press/ Letters to the Editor

## 6. MORE INFORMATION

- i. Find out about current library policy / Find out how your service matches up  
Find out more about library affairs / Have your say online
- ii. Friends/User groups / Volunteering/Community engagement  
Ideas for libraries: design/book promotion/etc.
- iii. Draft constitution, to adapt as you wish
- iv. The Love Libraries guide to great libraries:  
*What England's chief librarians think your service should offer*
- v. Secrets of success/ What The Library Campaign can do for you

For copies of the Library Campaign Handbook, contact the address overleaf.

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## A Message from The Library Campaign Chairperson

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Already there are over 150 libraries of all kinds benefiting from working with their Friends and Users.

For over 20 years the Library Campaign has been helping Friends and User groups save, maintain and enhance libraries throughout the UK. We are completely independent.

We have brought together our experience and advice in this Handbook. So whether you are:

- thinking of starting a group
- looking for ideas to influence the bodies that run your library
- seeking ways of helping your library
- devising activities for your group
- fundraising

this Handbook is designed to help.

It is only one of the many ways in which we help and support Friends and User Groups. We hope you will join us (we have special membership arrangements for groups) and become part of the national and international network of groups who care about libraries – and make a difference to them.

*Brian Hall*  
*Chair of The Library Campaign*

## WHAT CAN FRIENDS/USERS DO FOR LIBRARIES?

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### **They can make a difference ...**

#### **Libraries are the nation's guardians against ignorance and illiteracy.**

Whether they serve the public, a school, a college, a university or a specialist group, libraries are at the heart of the communities they serve.

But they face great challenges in meeting new expectations – from their users and from the organisations that fund them.

#### **But libraries need assistance at all times. Friends and Users of libraries can make the difference.**

They enable the community the library serves to give it support and recognition, and to speak out for it.

Support can be in many forms – resisting library closures or cut-backs, offering ideas, raising extra money, encouraging new users, forming partnerships to provide new services for the whole community.

Friends of Libraries are co-ordinated groups of users and supporters who operate independently. They do not have a vested interest and can promote the library's message through many channels.

#### **They can:**

- lobby opinion in favour of the library and its needs;
- give access to power and influence in the community and the local authority through their own key contacts;
- help the library to activate powerful 'word of mouth' support and spread information in the community.

#### **In practical terms they can:**

- meet the need of library enthusiasts to assist their library;
- provide ways for the community to help itself, including organising or sponsoring educational and cultural events and activities;
- raise extra funds, or be the 'partner' required for councils to get grants;
- be a means for consultation, formal or informal, between library staff and users.

#### **On a strategic level they can:**

- enable the library to develop stronger bonds with the community –not only at provider/user level but as concerned, committed allies;
- work formally and informally to develop and enhance the library's image in the community;
- ensure community support for the continued development of libraries and their services.

# HOW TO START A FRIENDS/USERS OF LIBRARIES GROUP

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## What kind of Group?

Friends/Users of Libraries groups are formed for many reasons, and in different ways.

Some start when people join together to protest over proposals that affect an existing service. Others start because the library service itself seeks the support and interest of the community, as part of its development of the service.

Often, a protest group will transform into an ongoing support group, if its initial campaign is successful. Or, on the other hand, a supportive group may find itself called to argue on behalf of the library service if it is threatened by council plans or cutbacks.

The support of users – if they are seen as independent – can be very valuable to library services.

Of course there is the potential for conflict between Friends/User Groups and councils or the Governing Bodies of the libraries. But mutual respect and understanding make the best foundation for the future.

## How The Library Campaign can help you start up

- We have professional-looking posters, post-cards, leaflets and other campaign material.
- We can put you in touch with other local Friends/User Groups or Library Campaign members – for advice, or to speak at a meeting.
- We may be able to get national publicity through our contacts.
- We hold national events and information days.
- It is probably a good idea to get a Constitution as soon as possible. It gets you taken seriously, and makes it very much easier to obtain grants etc. We can give you a draft constitution, based on the examples of other Groups, to adapt as you wish.
- In the longer term, you may want to consider registering as a Charity. There are advantages and disadvantages and we can help you understand them – and provide draft constitutions.

## CHECKLIST FOR STARTING A FRIENDS/USERS GROUP

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- 1.** Ask The Library Campaign for information on other Friends/User Groups or Library Campaign members in your area.

- 2.** Talk about the idea to other people who use or support the library, your friends and other contacts.

*Libraries command a great deal of goodwill and support in the community, and people are concerned for their libraries.*

- 3.** Go and see the librarian and the library staff to talk about the idea.

*Library staff are important allies. Experience shows that co-operation and partnership with the staff is important to the success of any group.*

- 4.** Talk to the local media

*Libraries and their users are of real interest to local newspapers (free and paid for), local radio and sometimes regional TV.*

- 5.** Form an action group or committee.

*It is not always easy to persuade busy people to join an action group or committee, but try to find at least one person with experience of voluntary or community groups. Retired library staff, including those from other libraries, can be invaluable (the CILIP Retired Members Guild is a good source of contacts).*

- 6.** Try to ensure the group represents all sections of the community.

*To be fully effective in lobbying and gaining community support, you need to work with other community organisations to ensure that all parts of the community, including minorities, are involved.*

- 7.** Encourage well-known local people and MPs (and Lords) to take an interest and lend their names to support you.

*They can help attract publicity and 'open doors' for you.*

- 8.** Contact members of the local council (or your library's Governing Body) to secure their interest and support

*They make the decisions on budgets and priorities. Elected councillors are concerned for the services in their electoral ward or division, and will want to know about the proposed group and its aims.*

- 9.** Now plan a meeting...

## HOW TO ORGANISE A MEETING

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- Publicise the meeting through posters, leaflets, media contacts, personal invitations to community leaders, business leaders, educationalists, trade unions (especially Unison), local groups and societies, and by word of mouth. Both council and voluntary community groups often have newsletters, websites and emailings.

*The Library Campaign can send you materials! Your library can also help with addresses and phone numbers, email addresses etc.*

- Make sure you invite the local press and/or let them know what happens immediately afterwards.

*The local free and paid for local papers, radio and other media are well aware of the public interest and concern for libraries, and should give good coverage to the meeting.*

- Plan the meeting:

- Invite an outside speaker if appropriate.
- Designate somebody to take notes.
- Designate somebody to meet the press, or any special guests.
- Designate people to make sure you get contact details from everyone at the meeting who wants to support you.

*Important: have a clear idea of what the outcomes of the meeting may be, and prepare for them.*

### At the meeting

- Talk about why the group is needed and what it could do.

*Make sure somebody notes down all the ideas/offers of help mentioned.*

- Ask a speaker from a successful Friends of Libraries Group to share experiences.

*Success stories are invaluable in building confidence in what the proposed group can do.*

- Ask the meeting to set up a steering committee.

*A small group is needed to carry the ideas forward and turn them into action.*

- Send 'the hat' round for contributions to a 'start-up' fund – or to cover any cost in hiring the room.

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES – A GUIDE TO GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

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*Adapted from Southern Ontario Library Service 'Initiating a Friends of the Library Group', 1997*

### GOVERNING BODY OR COUNCIL

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<b>Mission</b>	To govern
<b>Mandate</b>	Statutory or constitutional framework
<b>Role</b>	Decide policies and priorities
<b>Responsibilities</b>	Alignment with national and corporate objectives and policies Compliance with legal requirements Financial probity & control
<b>Activities</b>	Develop and review policies, Library plan and priorities Secure best value

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### LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

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<b>Mission</b>	To manage
<b>Mandate</b>	Mission statement Library or business plan
<b>Role</b>	Propose policies and set priorities Advocacy Understanding of and contact with the community and its needs
<b>Responsibilities</b>	Service delivery Staff management Stock management Service promotion
<b>Activities</b>	Service review and monitoring through performance measures and surveys

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### FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

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<b>Mission</b>	To support
<b>Mandate</b>	Constitution Charitable status
<b>Role</b>	Fund-raising Representing users Volunteering Consultation
<b>Responsibilities</b>	Campaigning for service Persuasion of governing body Volunteer support plan Advocacy with other community groups Activities programme
<b>Activities</b>	Plan and implement fund-raising activities Volunteer support Secure & maintain membership Plan, promote and run activities Raise public interest through the media Newsletter to inform and enhance membership

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## AS YOU GET STARTED

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### Basic principles

- Make concrete plans to do something.  
*If you are forming to run a campaign, your initial aim is clear. Otherwise, first actions might include raising awareness and raising money – especially sponsorship for the establishment of the group and its initial programme.*
- Ensure people are designated to do all the tasks necessary.  
*Lack of clarity about who promised to do what can be disastrous.*
- Work with the library staff.  
*Get to know what are the pressures on the staff, their loyalties to the council or Governing Body, and the priorities they are working to. Mutual understanding is essential.*
- Make plans to maintain interest in the Group.  
*A newsletter or a regular mailout (email where possible, to save money) will keep members (and potential members) informed of activities and encourage them to stay (or get) involved. It also provides a means of communicating with the council or Governing Body, other organisations and the media – keeping the group in the public eye and bringing in new members.  
Local community groups and area forums have newsletters, leaflet drops, e-letters and websites. They will give you space instead of (or in addition to) your own publications.*

### Day-to-day running

- Decide how often you will have meetings. Review this from time to time as circumstances change. Will some meetings be just for the organisers/committee/steering group, or will all of them be open to all members?
- Some sort of action or event should take place about once a month to keep the campaign in the public eye and members involved.
- At all meetings, however informal, a clear record should be kept – either formal minutes or an action plan – specifying clearly: *what is to be done, when and by whom.*
- At the first possible meeting, review the checklist of tasks overleaf.

***These lists are deliberately comprehensive.  
Decide which tasks are most essential or practicable for your group.***

### **Organisation Tasks Checklist**

- Set up a distribution system (physical and/or virtual) for information (details of next meeting? urgent campaign news? minutes? newsletter?). For urgent matters, set up a telephone tree.
- Design and print an application form for new members.
- Ask the library to display it.
- Ask the library to give you a designated notice-board space.
- Contact new members in the area to invite them to get involved.  
*(If the member has joined The Library Campaign on a national basis we will pass on the details to you. If the member joins locally, you might like to encourage them to join The Library Campaign as an individual.)*
- Find out from new members – easiest way is to ask on their application form – what activities they are willing to undertake and what resources they can offer  
*e.g. Mr. Bloggs will type/ bake cakes/ petition/ man stalls/ take part in non-violent direct action/ has a computer/ can make photocopies/ works at the bakery/ lives next door to a TV star/ belongs to local tenants association...*
- Keep an up-to-date inventory of these resources.
- Keep a list of shops/ notice-boards willing to display your posters.
- Keep a list of friendly local businesses willing to give you raffle prizes/ buffet food & drink or other help in kind.
- Make banners, placards, bill/sandwich boards or information displays to be used at public events.
- Keep a scrapbook of what happens nationally and locally.

### **Communication Tasks Checklist**

- Inform all members of the date/place of the next event or meeting (if possible with an agenda).
- Put together a newsletter (paper, email or both) with local news, diary dates, articles, or content for others' newsletters.
- Print posters/leaflets for any special event or campaign meeting.
- Distribute/put up posters/leaflets.
- Inform the local media of meetings and/or events. Put a specific person in charge of the media – it's a specialised job!
- Tell The Library Campaign (1) anything interesting you are doing, (2) news of local or national importance (e.g. intended closures).

## THINGS TO DO

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*Whether you are running a crisis campaign or simply working to support your library, these basic activities are equally relevant. The following ideas are only basic. The most important thing is to find out what talents your members have – and take full and creative advantage of them.*

### **Build up support**

- Approach local trade unions, political groups, councils, schools, chambers of trade, clubs, local voluntary organisations, businesses, for support, affiliation and/or active participation.
- Hold occasional membership drives.
- Enlist local celebrities to appear at meetings or events.
- Hold (or organise for other interested organisations) public meetings and supply speakers. Educate several group members on the subject so that they can do public speaking. Or call on The Library Campaign for help.
- Organise public events to raise your profile.

### **Events**

- Run an information stall with your literature, petition etc. in public places (e.g markets, street corners, car parks, shopping centres). Ask the local council if you need permission, and from whom.
- Run a stall at local meetings; e.g. PTAs, councils, church, socials. Get permission from the organisers.
- Add attractions to your information stall and take it to local fetes, carnivals, fun days (e.g face painting, balloons, fancy dress).  
Contact the organisers. You may have to pay for your stall.  
*The Library Campaign can supply T-shirts, postcards etc for sale.*
- Organise an entertainment group to perform something based on your campaign issue: readings, dance, mime, drama, comics.
- Hold the occasional group party/barbecue/disco to bind it together and boost morale. And why not invite the library staff/ managers?

### **Lobbying**

- Go door-to-door with a petition and/or leaflet.
- Lobby your local MP. Phone constituency party headquarters (get the number from local directory or the council) and make an appointment for her/his constituency surgery. Persuade her/him to become a member and/or support the campaign in public.
- Lobby your local councillors, and the councillor/s responsible for libraries. As above.
- Organise letter writing campaigns – to the government, local authority, local and national newspapers.

**Fundraising basics**

This might be for your own expenses (e.g postage for a newsletter).

It could also be for special projects for the library.

**But be clear about this.**

Local councils have a legal duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. This includes buying books and other stock, maintaining the buildings, paying staff etc.

Friends/User Groups do not exist to take on these responsibilities, but to help develop the service further, fund special projects or buy extras that are desirable but not core essentials.

**Money-making ideas**

- Sell things – jumble, bric-a-brac, cakes, garden produce, surplus library books, at local events, jumble sales, garage sales etc.
- Sell services (or hold 'an auction of promises') – car-washing, cooking, typing, portraits – whatever your members can do!
- Get sponsorship for events – storytelling, read-ins, a giant painting, scrubbing the library steps or tidying its grounds, runs, walks.
- Hold parties to sell —clothes, books, jewellery.
- Hold coffee mornings, tea parties, open house (charge entrance, or, safer still, specify a 'suggested donation').
- Hold fun days, discos, barn dances.
- Ask your members for bright ideas.

## WHO RUNS PUBLIC LIBRARIES?

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### LOCAL AUTHORITY

Public libraries are run by local authorities. They have a statutory duty to provide and promote a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service [under the 1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act]. They have no such legal duty to provide museums, galleries, theatres, sports centres etc.

The funds come from council tax and the general allocation from central government to local authorities.

*There is no specific funding ring-fenced for libraries – libraries have to compete with all the other services in the council's budget.*

Libraries are a comparatively small service (compared, say, to education or social services). They will probably be grouped with other services in a bigger department – e.g, archives, arts, community education, culture, customer services, heritage, environment, leisure...

The boss may therefore be called anything from Chief Librarian to Head of Arts, Culture & Heritage. There will also be a 'lead' councillor and a committee that include libraries in their brief – again, the name will vary. All local councillors are also sure to take an interest in the library on their patch. So will the MPs.

### National level

#### (1) THE DCLG

The Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) ultimately holds the purse-strings for public libraries.

It is the central government department responsible for local government. Every year, it determines how much each local council will get in funds from central government – which provides the vast majority of their funding.

*It does not determine how much of that funding is spent on libraries.*

*That is entirely for local councils to decide – after consulting with local people.*

#### (2) THE DCMS

Central government's policy on libraries is set by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).

*But it does not fund libraries.*

The DCMS covers a wide range of topics – the ones in its name, plus broadcasting, gambling, tourism, the arts, etc.

It is headed by the Secretary of State, whose brief covers all these areas. In theory, the 1964 Act gives him/her power to obtain information from councils, and even to intervene if a local authority is not providing a 'comprehensive and efficient' service. These powers have been used to some extent, but there has never been a full-blown take-over of a service.

Below the Secretary of State, one minister is more directly responsible for libraries (among other things).

A small number of DCMS civil servants cover libraries.

*Continued overleaf*

**(3) THE MLA**

MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) is a government-funded independent body. It advises the government on libraries (etc) and works on policy research and development.

*It does not run libraries, or fund them.*

For libraries, it has been given funds by DCMS to implement *Framework for the Future*. It has devised a detailed action plan, and farms out the work to various agencies.

This, and other development work, covers a vast range of subjects – e.g. access for disabled people, advice on working with small children/ reading groups/teens, better value in buying books, collection management, design, marketing, staff training – and much more...

Last but not least, MLA masterminds the People's Network scheme, which put computers/internet access into every library and continues to develop web-based resources.

MLA has produced a vast quantity of useful reports and resources, which can be found on its website.

MLA also has ten regional agencies, forming the MLA Partnership. They do much the same kind of development work, but what they do varies enormously from region to region.

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## HOW GOOD IS YOUR LIBRARY SERVICE?

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*You can only judge a library service against the standards it is required to meet. However, these are mostly very useful indicators. Libraries are also required to collect a great many statistics.*

*You should find this section of real value in assessing your service, comparing it with others – & arguing for improvements, or better funding.*

### THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE STANDARDS

First set out in 2001 by the DCMS, these aim to spell out clearly what a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service should provide.

The latest version (revised in 2004) lists 10 detailed measures that cover: number of buildings, hours open, internet access, PCs, speed of meeting requests for books, visits, user satisfaction – over-16s and under-16s, items of stock bought, items of stock replaced.

A new addition is a set of ‘impact measures’, designed to show how a service has found out – and met – the specific needs of its locality.

Every year, every library service is measured against these standards, and the results published by DCMS (on its website). Essential reading.

### FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

Published in 2003 and updated in 2006 by the DCMS, this is the first-ever national development plan for public libraries.

Basically it tells libraries what kind of service they should provide.

It also sets out an ambitious programme of improvement that is meant to cover ten years (until 2013) – called the Action Plan. If your library can’t get it for you, find it on the MLA website. Essential reading.

### AN INSPECTOR CALLS

The Audit Commission inspects local authorities for the government. For a few years it inspected library services as such. These reports can still be seen.

Now, however, it carries out a CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment), which grades a council’s overall quality. The Public Library Standards are part of the framework it uses to rate the ‘culture’ work. Also the CPA specifically looks for proof that a council consults its residents – and acts on their opinions. Useful reading at times.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

Two organisations regularly compile statistics on all the public library services, enabling you to compare one council against another, or the same council year on year – on spending level, number of visits, user satisfaction etc. They are Cipfa (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) and Lisu (the library statistics unit at Loughborough University). Very useful reading.

## HOW TO EXPLAIN THE VALUE OF LIBRARIES TO COUNCILS

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### THE SHARED PRIORITIES

In 2002, the government and the Local Government Association agreed on seven 'shared priorities' for all departments of local councils.

If a library service can argue that something it does (or wants to do) contributes to these priority areas – it's a powerful argument for getting resources. The priorities are also used in other measures of libraries' performance (e.g impact standards). Useful reading.

The seven priorities are:

1. raising standards in schools
2. improving quality of life for children, older people, young people, families at risk
3. promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities
4. creating safer and stronger communities
5. transforming the local environment
6. meeting local transport needs more effectively
7. improving the economic vitality of communities.

### WATCH THIS SPACE!

2006 could be seen as the year when the balance of power shifted in favour of library users (and users of local services in general). Straws in the wind:

(1) The MLA published a report ([www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/community\\_engagement](http://www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/community_engagement)) on 'community engagement' in public libraries. This pushes the need for 'active participation of the community in activities including decision-making'. It admits that this is 'not commonplace in libraries in any region'.

Library organisations are now working to change this, eg through training, and making funding for library projects (eg from the lottery) dependent on strong proof of genuine community engagement.

And there is a bribe. The Big Lottery Fund (in collaboration with the MLA) has opened an £80m fund for library services to spend on their buildings – but only on condition that they demonstrate genuine 'community engagement' as defined in the MLA report. Details: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

(2) There has been much talk by government ministers about the need for 'double devolution' – delegating more power to local authorities *on condition that they, in turn, delegate more power to local people*.

Part of this would involve drastically cutting the number of national targets councils are expected to meet. But it is meant to go much further, leading to a genuine change of culture – providing 'user-centred' services, not what suits the professionals running them.

Exactly the same points are being argued by the two bodies that work for local councils, the Local Government Association and IDeA (Improvement & Development Agency).

If all these threads weave together in the local government white paper, promised for the autumn, expect some interesting changes!

## DEALING WITH YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL

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*All local authorities say they believe in consulting their communities, and central government urges them to do so. How it works in practice, however, may not live up to these ideals.*

*You need to work the system – and this will vary from council to council. The information given here can only be a rough guide.*

### **Basic information**

To get information on your library service's plans or policies, or to contribute a point of view, the first step is to ask staff at your library.

If that fails, contact the head of library services direct.

If that fails, start to use the council's machinery. You can get the names/information you need from the library, the council's website or its HQ (ie, Town Hall, County Hall, City Hall). There may well be a department with a name like 'Democratic Services'. The secretaries of the various committees are usually helpful too. Finally, get a councillor to advise you on how the system really works in this particular council.

### **How Councils work**

In theory, the sovereign body of the council is the full council meeting.

All councillors can attend and vote on major matters (eg, the constitution, the policy framework, the budget, and the appointment of chief officers).

### **There are three main ways to structure councils:**

1. an elected mayor with executive powers
2. a leader & cabinet with executive powers, selected by the full council
3. an elected mayor with an appointed council manager.

### **The executive mayor or cabinet is responsible for:**

- proposing new policy and the budget
- conducting the best value reviews required by government inspectors
- promoting the council's interests in partnership
- implementing, with the council's officers, decisions of the full council.

### **Who to turn to**

Whatever the structure, each council has a 'lead' councillor for each department. This leaves power in the hands of relatively few councillors. The other councillors have no 'portfolio' and, often, little access to decision-making or inside information.

Start with the councillor whose ward contains your library, your own ward councillor (if different) and the 'lead' member for libraries.

Plus, of course, your head of library service, the council's Chief Executive and perhaps your MP.

Many councils also have bodies with names such as 'area forums'. They usually have no power at all, but can speak for you and gather support.

**Getting heard**

Find out which meetings are open to the public. Get the dates from HQ (or its website). You are entitled to get access to the agenda in advance. With advance notice, you can ask a question, present a petition and/or lead a deputation. Limited time is allowed for these in the agenda. You can't just chip in from the public gallery – unless you feel you have no alternative but to disrupt the meeting, and perhaps get thrown out, to get publicity. After the meeting, you are entitled to access to the minutes.

**Getting nowhere?**

You are entitled to make a formal complaint to a councillor about a council service, or you can complain about a councillor. HQ (or its website) must advise you and help you to do it.

You are also entitled to invoke the scrutiny process. Every council has one, made up of councillors without portfolio and reflecting the political balance of that council. The structure varies from council to council, but there will be one or more committees specialising in areas of the council's work, and maybe an 'overview' committee doing more in-depth investigations. All involved must act impartially and independently.

**Still getting nowhere?***THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMEN*

Once a council's own machinery has been tried – but not before – you can contact the Local Government Ombudsmen (three in England). It is an independent, impartial and free service. They can investigate complaints about how a local council has done something – ie, alleged maladministration. They cannot question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with it. [www.lgo.org.uk/](http://www.lgo.org.uk/) 0845 602 1983 (9am – 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

*LAST RESORT – JUDICIAL REVIEW*

If you are unhappy with a decision by any public body, you may be able to take 'judicial review' proceedings in the High Court. You must apply 'expeditiously' and certainly no more than three months after the decision. You'll need legal advice (legal aid is available for judicial reviews). As with the Ombudsmen, it is not enough just that you disagree with the decision. You have to show it was illegal, irrational or arrived at unfairly. The High Court will decide if you have an arguable case that it is prepared to hear.

## PEACEFUL PROTEST

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*In practice, citizens making a point about libraries should be unlikely to attract active suppression. The publicity would be disastrous. However, it's wise to know what the law says.*

*This advice is based on the comprehensive guidance on the website of Liberty, the human rights charity. Consult it if you need more detail – or run into problems. And send them a donation in gratitude! [www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-of-peaceful-protest/index.shtml](http://www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-of-peaceful-protest/index.shtml)*

### **Background**

The law is a mish-mash of historic 'common law' police powers (eg to prevent a breach of the peace or obstruction of the highway), the bye-laws of local authorities (eg on dispersing a crowd), case law and statutes such as the Public Order Act 1986 (POA) – much extended recently.

Police or local councils can also give public order 'directions' to constables. When lawful directions are issued to you (eg, not to continue down a particular street), it's an offence not to comply.

In theory, sometimes in practice, there are now huge legal powers to suppress marches, rallies, vigils and informal protest methods such as festivals or hunt sabotage.

But all these powers have to be set against the human rights in the European Convention (eg freedom of expression; peaceful assembly).

### **Static Demonstrations and Rallies**

The POA gives the police powers to control static 'assemblies' in a public place. Two people can be a public assembly. A public place is any highway (or pavement) or place to which the public have some access, including libraries, parks, shops, offices, restaurants, pubs, cinemas, football stadia and rights of way.

Attempts to regulate a very small group, however, may be open to challenge under the European Convention.

The police can impose conditions (restricting location, duration, number of people). But they cannot ban a public assembly. And you don't have to give notice.

A 'trespassory assembly' is 20 or more people on land in the open air without the permission, or in excess of the permission, of the occupier. The police can ban these if there is a risk of serious disruption or a risk to an important site or building. This is a widely drawn provision, which puts a great deal of power in the hands of occupiers of land.

Again, it is an offence to ignore bans or conditions.

### **Marches and Processions**

The POA gives the police even more extensive controls over 'processions' – defined as people moving together along a route (even if it's just a handful going to a Town Hall to hand in a petition).

**Giving advance notice**

Organisers of processions should give advance notice to the police, if their purpose is to demonstrate support or opposition to the views/ actions of any group; to publicise a cause/campaign or to commemorate an event.

Deliver it in writing (or send by registered post) to the most local police station, a full week in advance, giving date, time and route and name/address of the organiser. There is no legal definition of 'the organiser'.

The police may impose conditions on processions and, in limited circumstances, ban them. These can be challenged.

If the march is arranged at short notice, deliver the notice as soon as practicable.

Advance notice need not be given if it is not reasonably practicable.

This is to allow for a completely spontaneous procession (eg, if a meeting turns itself into a march, or if there is short notice of the subject of your protest).

Make a last-minute phone call to the police if possible, to show you want to follow the spirit of the law. Keep a record of the call.

If a protest march occurs regularly (weekly, annually) at the same time, along the same route, no notice should be required.

**After the Procession begins**

After the procession begins the most senior officer on the spot can impose conditions, which do not have to be in writing – but only if there is a risk of serious disorder, damage, disruption or intimidation.

If proper notice was not given, or if the march does not proceed as per the notice, or if police conditions are disobeyed, both 'organiser' and participants commit an offence.

## LOBBYING AND COLLECTING FUNDS

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*In practice, citizens making a point about libraries should be unlikely to attract active suppression. The publicity would be disastrous. However, it's wise to know what the law says.*

*This advice is based on the comprehensive guidance on the website of Liberty, the human rights charity. Consult it if you need more detail – or run into problems. And send them a donation in gratitude! [www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-of-peaceful-protest/index.shtml](http://www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-of-peaceful-protest/index.shtml)*

### Street collections

The law is confused – but mostly it allows wider latitude for collecting money for charitable purposes than for commercial or political ones (ie any charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purpose, including the advancement of education).

If in doubt, check local bye-laws with the local authority and the police.

### Leaflets

You don't need a licence to hand out leaflets. It must have on it the name and address of the printer.

Some local bye-laws restrict where leafleting may take place.

The police may also move on leafleters if they cause an obstruction.

It is an offence to hand out leaflets that are threatening or insulting.

### Petitions

You don't need a licence to collect signatures for a petition.

If you go in a group to present a petition, you are governed by the law on 'processions'. See PEACEFUL PROTEST sheet.

Petitions to Parliament must conform to special rules and wording.

Ask the House of Commons (telephone or see its website).

### Posters

Sticking up posters in public places is legal, if:

- You have the consent of the owner of the wall (etc) in question.
- The poster is no more than six feet square.
- It advertises a non-commercial event, including political, educational or social meetings.
- There is no bye-law to prevent it.

### Newsletters

People over 18 may sell newspapers in the street or from door to door, for campaigning purposes – but not for profit, or as a device to raise money for a political organisation.

**The legal background**

The law provides a specific right to use a public highway: the right to pass and re-pass along it (including the pavement), and to make ordinary and reasonable use of it.

Reasonable use includes orderly processions and peaceful non-obstructive public assemblies.

Unreasonable obstruction of the highway is a criminal offence.

There may also be bye-laws - laws relating to a particular area - that restrict activities.

Since access to the public highway is often, in practice, central to the exercise of powers to demonstrate, the courts should be slow to countenance any improper restriction by police.

**Bye-laws**

Many activities on the highway and other public places are restricted by local bye-laws.

Bye-laws for parks may, for example, prohibit public meetings, bill-posting, the erection of notices, stalls and booths, and the sale or distribution of pamphlets and leaflets.

They usually give the police and council officials the power to remove anybody who breaches the bye-laws. It is an offence to breach a bye-law.

A copy of local bye-laws should be available for inspection at the town hall. Often, bye-laws have to be prominently displayed near entrances to private land.

Bye-laws can be challenged if they are obviously unreasonable or inconsistent with the general law or the European Convention.

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## THE RIGHT TO KNOW

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*Citizens who want to know about any aspect of their libraries should be able to get all the help they need from library staff – failing that, by contacting their head of service. However, there have been cases where the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has had to be used.*

*This advice is based on the comprehensive guidance on the website of Liberty, the human rights charity. Consult it if you need more detail – or run into problems. And send them a donation in gratitude! [www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-to-know](http://www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-to-know)*

### **The Public Interest**

The FOIA gives a legal right of access to non-personal information held by or on behalf of public authorities. The fact that parliament enacted FOIA is proof that it considers there is a general public interest in providing access to information held by public bodies.

There is no general public interest in withholding information – apart from specified exemptions. And many of these are ‘qualified’ – the authority must still release the information unless the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. The public interest test has a presumption in favour of disclosure.

Factors that might be considered include information that:

- concerns an issue affecting a large number of people;
- sheds light on how public funds are being spent;
- deals with a matter that is a subject of public controversy;
- would help people make more informed choices on important matters.

### **Requesting information**

The authority must proactively make information that it holds available to the public (eg, policies and procedures, statistics, financial information).

It must produce a Publication Scheme, laying out all the published information that it holds, and how to access it. This can be obtained from its website, or by contacting the Town Hall.

It also has a legal duty to provide information on request. To make a request, write (or email or fax – but it must be in writing), describing the information you want. If you need it in a particular form (eg, a copy of a letter, or in electronic form) say so.

If you are unsure what to say, or if the council is unable to identify the information you request, it has a duty to help you clarify your request.

So it may be a good idea to speak to the council’s designated Information Officer before you start.

The council should comply within 20 working days. If it wants extra time to decide if it is in the public interest to disclose the information, it must tell you in writing how long, and why.

There should be no charge. But there is no duty to supply the information if the cost of doing so exceeds the ‘appropriate limit’ (for local councils it is £450, equivalent to one employee spending 24 hours on the task).

There may be a charge for copying and postage, but this should be reasonable (around 10p per A4 copy).

**Absolute exemptions**

Councils will not supply on request information available by other means – if it is on the website, or in a public register, unless you can argue that for some reason you are unable to access it in the way they suggest.

Other absolute exemptions cover security matters, certain court and tribunal documents, and personal information – this is often cited incorrectly. It covers only ‘personal data’ (ie biographical in a significant sense and with the person as its focus). Thus, for instance, if the information is the name of a functionary who was at a meeting, or who wrote a specific email, you could argue that this is not personal as defined – it merely refers to his/her involvement as an employee.

Genuinely personal data should be withheld if disclosure would be ‘unfair’ to the data subject. This is a complex balancing exercise, taking into account all the circumstances of the case.

**Qualified exemptions**

Relevant ‘qualified exemptions’ include information prejudicial to law enforcement/crime detection, audit functions or health and safety.

But the onus is on the authority to show that such damage would be significantly likely (though not beyond reasonable doubt). Even then, it must still show that the public interest test favours withholding.

An authority can also withhold information if it can show its disclosure would prejudice its own commercial interests, or those of anyone else (eg, trade secrets, information on commercial negotiations). Prejudice to commercial interest normally declines over time.

A council cannot disclose information provided by other parties, if this would constitute an actionable breach of confidence. The test for an ‘actionable breach of confidence’ includes a public interest test.

**If the information is refused**

If a public authority refuses a request under FOIA, it must provide a refusal notice, giving reasons. The Liberty website gives detailed advice on how to deal with such notices.

If the authority has no internal review mechanism, or if you request an internal review and the authority still refuses to disclose the requested information, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner. Details on the website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

**Groups have to keep their ideas and activities in the public eye – and it is worth learning to do it well!**

**You can make good use of your main outlets at local level by**

- 1. contacting phone-in programmes**
- 2. writing a letter for the letters page**
- 3. attracting the attention of a press, radio or TV journalist via a press release.**

## **WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

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Every group should have a press officer.

You should be able to get advice and help from the press office of the local council.

Keep an up-to-date list of newspapers, radio stations, TV regional news programmes and press agencies. To find out all this, ask the council press office. Failing them, your local library.

Thoroughly read, listen to or view the most obvious outlets for your stories. You may well be able to find out whom to contact and how.

You will certainly get a feel for the kind of stories they like to use, and their usual style and length of treatment.

Find out who are the key journalists.

It may be the news editor, or the local reporter who covers a particular area, or possibly a specialist – the local government correspondent, or possibly the arts or education correspondent.

It is absolutely vital to know the deadlines of each publication or programme. If your story does not arrive in good time for the very next edition, it will almost certainly be dropped altogether.

When you have your first story ready, contact the name you have noted, or the news editor or chief reporter of each publication/programme.

Write a letter or press release as confirmation, giving your name, address and telephone number.

**The bottom line: The only way to guarantee something is published or broadcast is to buy advertisement space!**

## WHAT JOURNALISTS NEED

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Most magazines/programmes are inundated with material. They cannot hope to use it all.

The best way to get your material used is to become familiar with your target publication or programme. What kind of stories do they use?

What length? What is their style – formal, chatty?

Journalists work under pressure, so be brisk and to the point.

When possible, give information in written (typed) form as a press release or letter or report.

Yesterday's news is dead news. Use email or the telephone if time is short. Do not try to peddle something old. It is better to wait for the next release and resolve to plan more efficiently in future.

Personalities make news, especially when they say something quotable

Journalists only want to attend meetings that will provide a story. Don't waste their time!

Press conferences are seldom necessary.

There is often a local angle on a national event – look out for an angle you can exploit.

## TALKING TO A JOURNALIST

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General reporters are not employed to know the facts, but to know how to find out. Don't expect them to know all about you (or libraries). Use everyday language, not jargon. Think about what might need explaining.

A good journalist accepts nothing at face value – so be prepared to be cross-examined. There is no reason why any journalist should be on your side. But you can expect them to be reasonably objective.

## RADIO & TV

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If you are going to be interviewed on radio or TV, go over in your mind WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY. Aim to get this into your answers, NO MATTER WHAT THE QUESTIONS ARE.

Make sure you do not wander off the point.

Try to anticipate what kind of questions you might be asked, or criticisms that might be made. Go over it again and again.

When you are on air, use notes, if you can keep them out of sight.

## HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

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### **The basic principle is – grab attention**

- Remember – every press release competes with hundreds of other items going across the journalist's desk. Take an honest look at the news involved. Will it attract immediate interest?
- Why is this press release worth reading? Point out how your news relates to the community or audience served by this newspaper/programme, or its overall significance and/or uniqueness.
- Start directly with the main point of the news. Then follow with the subsidiary information.
- The basic questions - What? Who? Where? When? Why? and How? - should all be answered, as early as possible in the story.
- Brevity is a virtue (ideally no longer than 400 words). Turn the page for more tips.

### **Using photographs**

Sending a photo increases the chances that the press release or the photo, or both, will be used.

OR YOU CAN make it clear on the press release if your event would make a good picture – whether it is a demonstration outside the Town Hall or a fun event in fancy dress.

Type 'PHOTO OPPORTUNITY' in capitals, explain what it is and exactly when it will take place. A photographer will not want to hang around waiting for something to happen.

### **Taking your own photo**

Put creativity into how the photo is posed. The media is overloaded with shots of people in a line, passing cheques or awards, shaking hands. Nothing makes an editor yawn faster.

So:

- Group people tightly.
- Get them to do something.
- Make use of anything colourful, appealing or unusual that you can put into the photo – a child, a toy, balloons, placards. A book with a striking cover is a good standby.
- Take the photo at an unusual angle.

### **Photos – Technical details**

- Take note whether your target publication uses colour or might prefer black and white.
- The photo should be in sharp focus, with good contrast.
- Most publications prefer 8" x 10" glossy prints, or a digital photo of about 300dpi.

### **Photo captions**

- Provide a caption: both in the press release and on the back of the photo. (Attach it firmly with tape. Do not use paperclips or write on the back of the photo – these will dent and spoil it.)
- Include your name and telephone number in case the picture gets separated from the story.
- If there are people in the picture, name them or at least describe them (e.g. 'children from X School').

Make sure you have permission to publish from the people in the photo or (if relevant) their parents.

## PRESS RELEASE FORMAT

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*These tips make the release look professional and increase its chance of being used.*

Get a letterhead with the group's name, contacts and other details.

The suggestions below make it easy for an editor to use your release.

*If it is well written the editor might simply put editing marks on it and put it straight into production.*

- Type, double-spaced, one side only, on standard A4 paper.
- Avoid unusual typefaces, such as those that resemble handwriting.
- Print in black.
- Leave ample margins on both sides of the page.

At the top left or right side of the first page type:

- The date. If you are sending early news which must not be made public until after a certain date, add "EMBARGOED UNTIL : [date]".
- Contact name
- Email address and telephone/ fax numbers – give day and night numbers.

*This makes it easy for an editor to reach you with questions. Lots of editing is done at night. If the editor cannot reach you, the release may be binned.*

- Page 1 of ... pages
- Total number of words.

Headline – this must be short and capture the essence of the story in one or two lines.

*It will seldom be used (heads are written at the last minute to fit a given space), but it may attract attention.*

Write in clear, straightforward, standard English.

- Avoid slang, jargon, 'governmentese' and exaggeration.
- Use the active voice and strong verbs.
- Don't over-use adjectives and adverbs.
- Write as much as you need to tell your story. Then stop!

Do not clutter up sentences with long introductory phrasing.

Many editors will not bother to read any further and your release has gone in the bin.

Surnames need forenames (accurately spelt). If there is a name with an unusual spelling, put 'OK' in pencil over the name (or in brackets after the name) to reassure the editor.

Editors like a short quote from someone involved in the story.

Put ### or ENDS prominently at the end of the story.

Proof-read carefully.

*Errors leap to the editor's eye and tend to discredit the rest of the release.*

## GETTING AN ARTICLE INTO A NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE

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**There is one vital rule – check with the editor.**

**It is not true that newspapers and magazines generally welcome articles contributed by amateur writers.**

**Never send unsolicited articles to newspapers or magazines ‘on spec’.**

### **Commercial publications**

In commercial publications the journalists’ unions tend to discourage the use of articles by unpaid amateurs.

The clear exceptions are where the editor commissions articles from an expert on a specific topic. That might possibly apply to you.

But even if you think an article by you would serve a useful purpose, you must still ask the editor first. If s/he is interested, s/he will still want to discuss the length of the piece, its approach to the subject, deadlines, possible pictures etc.

Send a brief note or email and follow up with a phonecall.

And do have a good look at the publication before you get in contact.

Nothing annoys an editor more than being sent something that is three times the length of anything the publication ever prints, is on a subject that they clearly don’t cover, or has an approach or style that is nothing like the publication’s usual content.

And see if you can ‘angle’ your story to the aspect that most clearly concerns this particular publication – jobs at risk? literature? heritage? social deprivation? young families? local facility etc...

### **Non-commercial publications**

Non-commercial publications, such as trade union branch magazines, parish magazines or community newsletters, generally welcome contributed articles.

Ask your group members for ideas on publications they know about.

But the same basic rules (see above) still apply.

It is sensible and courteous to check with the editor before starting to write. It will also save you from wasting your time.

Tailor length, style etc to the publication, and see if you can ‘angle’ your copy to the aspect that most clearly concerns it.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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*You probably have most chance of getting your message into a local paper (or blog) if you write a good letter. Especially if time is short.*

### THE BASICS

No-one has the right to have a letter published, however important the subject. A letter often stands more chance than a press release – but publication is at the discretion of the editor.

Submitting a letter for publication is like a game of chance – you are more likely to win if you follow the rules, but there is no guaranteed success.

The group may decide to have an agreed policy on who writes letters to the press.

The more letters you send the better – although not all will be published. Obviously, use different names and different wording.

A letter might be written:

- to inform (eg to publicise your organisation);
- to respond to a point made in a previous report, article or letter;
- to show that ordinary people object to something.

### HOW TO WRITE THE LETTER

If the letter is a response, correction or complaint, it should be written the same day. If possible, deliver it by hand.

Remember that space on the Letters page is short, just as in the rest of the publication. Make it short, make it clear that it matters.

In composing letters to the press, you should aim to:

- deal with a single topic
- be as brief as possible, clear and concise
- be reasonable but firm
- follow the same rules for style and presentation as for WRITING A PRESS RELEASE (see separate sheet).

If the letter is ‘made-to-measure’ (ie for one publication only), check the normal length of published letters and the style of the paper.

If the letter is ‘off-the-peg’ (ie addressed to several papers), write in the simplest style possible.

## FIND OUT ABOUT CURRENT LIBRARY POLICY

[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk) – the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council advises the government on library (etc) matters, commissions research, develops resources. It does *not* fund public libraries directly. Best place to get your bearings: click on “Programmes”. For details of the *Framework for the Future* go to: [www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/framework](http://www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/framework)

[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk) – the Local Government Association lobbies on behalf of local government. Publishes papers that are very supportive of libraries. Enter ‘libraries’ in the search tool to see the latest. Very useful: plenty of information on the shared priorities. NB: in any direct dispute with a local council, the LGA must support the council’s side.

[www.librarycampaign.com](http://www.librarycampaign.com) – The Library Campaign is the umbrella body for all UK Friends/User groups. It gives essential advice on forming a group, information, contacts with other groups, campaign material, news, newsletter, website, meetings.

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) – the Audit Commission – funded by the government but independent – is the body that inspects local authority services – including libraries – and publishes reports. You can find all the reports on your own council, and others.

## FIND OUT HOW YOUR SERVICE MATCHES UP

[www.cipfastats.net/leisure/publiclibrary/default.asp](http://www.cipfastats.net/leisure/publiclibrary/default.asp) – the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy collects figures on library performance and on user satisfaction (the Cipfa PLUS surveys). A mass of statistics (plus commentary) to compare your service with others. You have to register to get access, but this is fairly painless.

[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk) – DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport) is the government department that lays down government policy on libraries (but does not provide their funding). It also lays down the Public Library Standards. See them here. Click on ‘libraries and communities’ on the side panel.

[www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu) – the library statistics unit at Loughborough University also produces a mass of figures (with a commentary) about libraries’ performance, including what they spend on stock and estimates for the future. Look at the trends in your own service, and compare it with other services.

## FIND OUT MORE ABOUT LIBRARY AFFAIRS

<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/square/ac940/weblibs.html> – this independent website, run by Sheila & Robert Harden, is (among other things) an easy way to get basic details of all public library services in the UK.

[www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk) – the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals is the professional body for librarians in all types of library. Supports The Library Campaign. Handy for news – especially its Public Libraries Group ([www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/public](http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/public))

[www.goscl.com](http://www.goscl.com) – the Society of Chief Librarians. News, regional news, lots of useful links. Nose around (especially under Newsletters and Reports) for examples of good practice.

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) – the Department for Communities & Local Government is the department that gives local government its funding. A vast website that rarely has anything specifically about libraries, but gives you the flavour of government thinking.

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk) – Unison is the trade union that represents and organises most library workers in the public sector. Unison (and its predecessor Nalgo) have always been very supportive of The Library Campaign. Friends/User groups may be able to get help and advice from local Unison branches. Look them up in the phone book or contact the local regional office – addresses and other useful info on the website.

[www.sconul.ac.uk](http://www.sconul.ac.uk) – if ‘your’ library is not a public library, it may be connected to the Society of College, National & University Libraries. It does not cover further education, but specialises in the national libraries and libraries for higher education and research.

### **HAVE YOUR SAY ONLINE**

[www.librarycampaign.com](http://www.librarycampaign.com) – of course!

[www.lovelibraries.co.uk](http://www.lovelibraries.co.uk) – Love Libraries works closely with library users and The Library Campaign. It has a lively blog.

[www.goodlibraryguide.com/blog](http://www.goodlibraryguide.com/blog) – a lively but not always reliable blog for all-comers, run by controversial library campaigner Tim Coates.

[www.libri.org.uk](http://www.libri.org.uk) – Libri is a charity that campaigns and publishes reports on libraries. It has space for comments.

## INFORMATION ON FRIENDS / USER GROUPS

[www.librarycampaign.com](http://www.librarycampaign.com) – The Library Campaign is the umbrella body for all UK Friends/User groups. It provides advice, information, contacts with other groups, campaign material, news, newsletter, website, meetings.

[www.librarylondon.org](http://www.librarylondon.org) – Libraries for Life for Londoners is the umbrella body for London groups. The website has a lot of information and links that are generally useful, and links to London groups.

It also holds regular meetings with very good speakers. All welcome.

*Overseas Friends/User groups obviously work in very different legal/financial contexts, but they can be good sources of ideas and contacts:*

[www.folusa.org](http://www.folusa.org) – Friends of Libraries USA (folusa@libertynet.org).

[www.friendsoflibraries.ca](http://www.friendsoflibraries.ca) – Friends of Canadian Libraries.

[www.fola.org.au](http://www.fola.org.au) – Friends of Libraries Australia.

### PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE:

*Friends of Libraries Sourcebook*, Dolnick, S (ed) 1996, American Library Association; Ferguson, D. (2004); *Friends of Libraries Resource Book*, Tullamarine: FOLA.

## FRIENDS/USER GROUPS IN THE UK

*Friends of Libraries: a report to the Library & Information Commission.*

Capital Planning Information (1999).

*Friends of Libraries: a new dimension*, ditto (1998).

## VOLUNTEERING

*Friends/User groups should be very careful not to act as unpaid workers doing the jobs of library staff, or carrying out the core functions of the library.*

*But pilot projects show they can pioneer service developments, carry out special projects – and have a good time.*

[www.csv.org.uk/Volunteer/Part-time/Lending+Time/](http://www.csv.org.uk/Volunteer/Part-time/Lending+Time/)

*CILIP has advice and guidelines (written for librarians, but very useful for all) :*

[www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof\\_issues/ivpl.html](http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof_issues/ivpl.html)

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*Current thinking is that active engagement with users and the community is not very good in libraries but is to be strongly encouraged:*

[ww.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/community\\_engagement](http://www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/community_engagement)

*and the government plans to make it policy for local councils in general:*

White Paper on Local Government, autumn 2006

## IDEAS FOR YOUR LIBRARY – DESIGN & DECORATION

[www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk) – the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment is the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space.

Two reports specifically on public libraries: *Better Public Libraries* and *21st Century Libraries*. Go to 'Publications', then 'Libraries' and use the search tool.

[www.cilip.org.uk/buyersguide](http://www.cilip.org.uk/buyersguide) – extremely useful: lists manufacturers of library furniture, signage and many other products – with links to their websites to see what's on offer and get ideas.

[www.designinglibraries.org.uk](http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk) – set up as a resource for *Framework for the Future*, this is a big but rather patchy site on library design, with articles, picture galleries, links, discussion forums etc.

## MORE LIBRARY IDEAS – INCLUDING PROMOTING BOOKS

[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) – the National Literacy Trust is an independent charity 'dedicated to building a literate nation' – which includes promoting reading for pleasure. It provides an enormous amount of information and links to many campaigns and projects (many of which issue FREE promotional material).

[www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk) – The Reading Agency publishes promotional material and runs dozens of projects to promote books to all kinds of people. It is a huge source of information, ideas – and links to other campaigns and organisations (many of which issue FREE promotional material). Subscribe for a regular newsletter. Very useful is their rolling calendar of book-related promotions, events, author tours, etc. Go to 'Projects' and then 'Events'.

[www.lovelibraries.co.uk](http://www.lovelibraries.co.uk) – Love Libraries is a ground-breaking project to transform three public libraries in 12 weeks flat – without large sums of money. This is now complete. The next phase aims to spread the lessons learned to all libraries – involving users and The Library Campaign.

[www.openlibraries.net](http://www.openlibraries.net) – Opening the Book is a company that publishes promotional material, sells furniture, provides training (including online), has website design and library design services and is another great source of ideas.

[www.goscl.com](http://www.goscl.com) – the Society of Chief Librarians. Nose around (especially under Newsletters and Reports) for examples of good practice.

[www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk) – the Social Exclusion Network is run by librarians (etc) working to make services more accessible to all kinds of minorities – ethnic, disabled, gay, young etc etc. Lots of basic information and news of good practice. Subscribe for a regular newsletter.

*This is a draft basic constitution, to use as a starting point. Adapt it to suit your own needs.*

## **FRIENDS OF [yourname] LIBRARY**

### **CONSTITUTION & RULES**

#### **NAME**

The name of the Organisation is the FRIENDS OF [yourname] LIBRARY hereafter known as the FRIENDS.

#### **AIMS**

THE FRIENDS OF THE [yourname] LIBRARY EXISTS TO SUSTAIN AND IMPROVE THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN THE BOROUGH.

The FRIENDS will play an active role in responding to local and national proposals on library services.

The FRIENDS will maintain contact with councillors, managers, residents and other library users, but not to the exclusion of others.

*SPECIFICALLY THE FRIENDS WILL CAMPAIGN FOR:*

- a. Adequate funding of the service by the council & by other means.
- b. Extensive opening hours which provide adequate access for users.
- c. The widest possible selection of books, newspapers, magazines, audio & video tapes and computer databases.
- d. An attractive building and layout.
- e. Active promotion of the library service.
- f. The maintenance of national standards.
- g. Resisting reductions in opening hours and staffing needs.
- h. And do all such other things as may be necessary to further the aims.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

1. Membership is open to any individual, group or corporate body who wish to promote the aims of the FRIENDS.
2. Membership fees (if necessary) shall be determined by the committee and recommended by them for approval or otherwise by the Annual General Meeting who shall have sole authority and discretion to set membership fees.
3. Membership shall cease if the membership fee is unpaid six months after it is due.

#### **GENERAL MEETINGS** (Annual General Meetings & Extraordinary General Meetings)

4. An Annual General Meeting shall be held each year at a date, time & place to be decided by the committee. This meeting should be held not more than 18 months after the formation of the FRIENDS and every 12 months thereafter. Not more than 15 months shall elapse between AGMs.
5. Notice of the AGM shall be given to all paid-up members not less than 28 days prior to the AGM, together with a call for nominations to the committee & motions for discussion. The accidental omission to give notice of a meeting to or the non-receipt of notice by a person entitled to receive notice shall not invalidate the proceedings at that meeting.
6. An Extraordinary General Meeting can be called by the committee, or required to be held within 30 days of written notice by 25% of the paid-up membership being sent to the secretary. No business other than that notified shall be conducted.

7. A quorum for any General Meeting shall be five or one tenth of the paid-up members, whichever is the greater. In the event of a quorum not being present within half an hour from the appointed time for the meeting, or if during a meeting a quorum ceases to be present, the meeting shall stand adjourned to the same day in the next week at the same time and place or to such time and place as the committee may determine. If at that re-convened meeting no quorum is present, the business of the General Meeting shall be conducted by those present.
8. Each paid-up member shall have one vote. Group or corporate members shall nominate one member to vote on their behalf. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair of the Meeting shall have a second casting vote.

### **OFFICERS**

9. The officers of the FRIENDS shall be the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary. A Publicity Officer may also be appointed.
10. The officers shall be elected at the AGM. All committee members and officers shall serve for the term of one year and be eligible for re-election upon retirement.
11. The committee has power to fill any vacancy which exists or arises between AGMs by co-opting a new member who shall serve until the next AGM.

### **COMMITTEE**

12. The committee shall consist of the elected officers, to be elected at the AGM, plus up to 5 further elected members.
13. The committee shall have the power to co-opt further members up to a total of 3.
14. The quorum for committee meetings is 4 and the chair shall have a casting vote.
15. Members of the library staff may be committee members or officers with the exception of the Chair.
16. In the event of a vacancy occurring among the officers, the committee shall have the power to appoint one of its own number to fill the vacancy.
17. The committee shall be responsible for the daytoday running of the FRIENDS.

### **FINANCE**

18. The FRIENDS shall have the power to collect membership fees and raise funds by appeal, grant, donations or other means, excluding loans.
19. The committee shall have the power to open a bank account on behalf of the FRIENDS. Cheques issued on this account shall bear the signatures of 2 officers.
20. The Treasurer shall be empowered to pay out-of-pocket or other expenses incurred on behalf of the FRIENDS as agreed by the committee.
21. In the event of it being agreed to wind up the FRIENDS, any remaining funds to be donated to the Central Library.

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

22. Amendments to the Constitution may be adopted by a motion at the AGM or at an Extraordinary General Meeting on a vote of not less than two thirds of those present.
23. Notice of any proposed Amendment shall have been given to current members not less than 14 days before the Meeting.

### **DATE OF CONSTITUTION BEING AGREED:**

### **SIGNATURES OF OFFICERS:**



## **The Love Libraries guide to great libraries**

### *WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY SERVICE?*

- *Free books to browse and borrow*  
At least 6 free books per person
- *A wide range of reading resources*  
From bestsellers to new and older titles, books you won't find in your bookshop, talking and large print books, magazines, newspapers and text books
- *Any book from anywhere*  
Order any book through your library (even out of print books)
- *A community of readers*  
Connect to other readers through reading groups and recommendations
- *Modernised, customer friendly services, right for the community*  
Convenient opening hours to suit local people Easy to join, get answers to questions and borrow books, CDs and DVDs
- *Internet for all*  
Every library has computers and staff trained to help you use them
- *24 hour access*  
Through your library's online catalogue, online reference and other services
- *Expert, helpful staff*  
To answer your questions and offer advice on reading and information
- *Free, independent information*  
From a trustworthy source
- *Events programme*  
Regular events, including activities for readers and author visits
- *Family activities*  
Family reading and learning activities – baby rhyme time, homework clubs, holiday reading challenges...
- *A place for young people*  
A safe local space with things to do
- *Help with learning*  
Resources and advice for learning, including improving reading and writing skills
- *A well maintained and equipped building*  
A safe, accessible, local community space that's a pleasure to visit
- *Have your say and get involved*  
The best libraries have a lot to offer you. To find your local library go to [www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk](http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk)
- *What do you want?*  
Fill in any extra ideas that you or your group think would work well in your particular locality.

**The Love Libraries guide to great libraries**

The checklist overleaf was created by the Society of Chief Librarians<sup>1</sup> for the national Love Libraries Campaign<sup>2</sup>.

It shows the basics that the nation's chief librarians think every public library should be able to offer.

Use it as a measuring tool, a basis for discussion or a springboard for brainstorming.

How does your library measure up?

How does this checklist measure up against your own ideas for your library?

<sup>1</sup> [www.goscl.com](http://www.goscl.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.lovelibraries.co.uk](http://www.lovelibraries.co.uk)

## THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS

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### **Experience suggests that a Library Friends /User Group succeeds if it:**

- is independent of the council or the library's Governing Body
- is independent from politics and pressure groups
- is accepted by library management
- has a library management that makes available time to work with it
- has good relations with library staff at all levels
- understands how the governance of the library works, and how local and national policies affect it
- has clear objectives for action - short, medium and long term
- has clear objectives for the use of its funds
- has a code of practice that ensures that:
- any funds it raises are (and are seen to be) extra to normal library funding
- the role of volunteers is understood and respected
- reflects all the social, ethnic and cultural groups served by the library
- works with other community groups
- is willing to learn from other Friends/User Groups
- has a core of keen people willing to make time for it
- has access to a wide range of skills
- has access to the media
- understands sponsorship
- manages its funds well

***Above all...***

***Don't expect miracles,  
Don't become too disillusioned,  
Don't give up hope!***

***Do keep going***

***Do call for help from The Library Campaign!***

*Full details overleaf...*

## What is The Library Campaign – supporting Friends and Users of Libraries?

We are a registered charity with these objects:

- ◆ To advance the lifelong education of the public
  - by the promotion, support, assistance and improvement of libraries
  - through the activities of Friends and Users Groups
- ◆ We work with all kinds of libraries and their Friends/User Groups.
- ◆ We can help people – and libraries – to:
  - set up Friends and User Groups
  - share ideas and experience
  - advocate and campaign for better services
  - prevent reductions in services
- ◆ We produce a magazine, *The Campaigner*.
- ◆ We keep a database of Friends/User groups and members.
- ◆ We have a website with news and information, lists of local groups and links to their sites and other useful sites.
- ◆ We can supply promotional leaflets, posters and other publicity.
- ◆ We can supply advice, contacts and speakers for local groups.
- ◆ We hold national events and information days for members.
- ◆ As the voice of the library user we talk to the policy makers – including government and the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council – to influence their thinking.
- ◆ We provide displays and speakers at national events.
- ◆ We have international contacts with other Friends/User Group organisations.



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# The Library Campaign

*Supporting friends and users of libraries*

22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0TB  
LIBRARYCAM@aol.com      www.librarycampaign.com

Our finances come from subscriptions and support from  
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