



F·R·I·E·N·D·S

OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Supporting Friends of the Library Statewide

F * R * I * E * N * D * S TALK

April 2026

Dear Friends,

April brings so much promise with warming temperatures. I don't know about you, but I'M READY! One of the things I like about April is its focus on all things library and library related. One of the month-long celebrations is for school libraries. Those facilities are crucial for every school building. National Poetry is another month-long celebration that folds right into school libraries. My husband was an amateur poet at heart who composed haiku poems for our great-grandchildren that captured each personality in three lines! He just loved words! And April 17 is National Haiku Poetry Day this year.

My favorites, while teaching in the elementary grades, were always April Fools Day (4/1) and Easter (4/5). Rabbits, colored eggs, candy, pretty baskets, etc., really meant spring had arrived! April 19 begins National Library Week with National Library Workers' Day embedded on April 21. I hope you are planning something special for your library staff. And they should celebrate you on April 25, which is National Volunteer Week. All in all, April is a happy month with lots of fun days.

After all those happy notes, I am sorry to report that our Board member and Grants and

Awards Coordinator, Billie Lawson, has had to resign for health reasons. We are sorry to lose this important member of our team and wish him all the very best in his journey back to good health.

Has your group renewed your membership for this year? I hope you have as your participation is important to us and the work we try to do to support your work on the local level. Tim Como, our and your treasurer, is listed on the last page of this newsletter and would love to hear from you.

Some of that support has come from Judy Hills, our past president and current newsletter editor extraordinaire. Her knowledge and experience with MOUs is exceptional and has been shared in past issues of this newsletter and with individual chapters who are navigating this issue for the first time. We are lucky to have her expertise. Thank you, Judy.

Yours in Friendship,

Joyce Speas, President



MOU Update

Here is an update in the ongoing saga of the five Friends of the Library groups faced with signing an MOU by 3/31/26.

One of the Friends groups determined that they could not agree to a number of elements in the legally binding contract. To do so would put their 501c3 status at risk and would allow the final say on any program or spending to be made by the library with no recourse or appeal mechanism. The Treasurer said that if the group signed, that she would immediately resign as this was an ethical consideration for her. **The vote was six to two to "disassociate from the library and to not sign the MOU."** The two board members who voted "no" resigned from the Board immediately. Two other Board members had resigned in the past few months due to tensions and disagreements.

This group, per instructions from the library Board, will change their name and remove all references connecting the group to the library. This will necessitate a number of changes to their bylaws as well. The remaining Board

members agreed that part of their purpose will continue to be supporting the library, just without the formal connection. There are still a lot of unknowns at this point and it will take many months for things to settle into a new way of operating.

During these deliberations, the Friends used AI in a number of different ways. 1) They used AI to analyze both the original and the second MOU they received from the library to ascertain its impacts on both the library and the Friends. 2) They used AI to analyze their response to the library. 3) They used AI to analyze a document that reviewed their life cycle status and possible actions to take. 4) They used AI to generate possible new names and new taglines. 5) They used AI to create possible logos, once the new name was picked. 6) They used AI to analyze their bylaws to ensure compliance with NCGS 55A and IRS nonprofit rules. We encourage you to use these new tools.

Cooperating With Other Nonprofit Groups For Book Sales

The Friends of New Bern-Craven County Public Library hold two major book sales per year. Between times they receive donations which they cull, sort, and box by genres. They store these boxes in a climate controlled storage unit until time to take them to the next sale.

There are a number of nonprofits that have thrift stores that also sell books. These include but are not limited to the Knights of Columbus and the Colonial Capital Humane Society. Occasionally these two organizations have more books than they can accommodate and they give them to the Friends. Your Friends might develop similar relationships.

This same group of Friends also generally

have a lot of books left at the end of the sale. For the past two sales, the Friends of the Public Library of Johnston County & Smithfield have come and taken books, reducing the number that end up in the landfill. It is a good arrangement for both groups.

Additionally, these Friends donate appropriate books to the state prison and allow local nonprofits to come on the last day of the sale to pull books for their clients and programs.

What new ideas do you have for getting rid of books left after your sale?

THE ENDGAME by Judy Hills

(Author's note: The following article only applies to those Friends groups who are in serious decline or in crisis.)

Many Friends groups around the state are at a crossroads. They are being pressured to enter into MOUs that essentially strip them of their right to make decisions about their programs and finances.

Those that only fundraise by doing book sales are coming up against a harsh realization that:

- older members can't physically help with the sales the way that they used to;
- you can't depend on outside or Friends volunteers to show up when needed;
- the core book sale group is burned out;
- loss of space either to store the books or to sell the books;
- donations are down due to competitors (nonprofit thrift stores);
- costs are increasing;
- sales are declining;
- your return on investment (costs vs profit) is declining. (Hopefully, you are tracking your expenses and income over at least the last five years. If not, how will you know? Graph them for a better visual.)

Those groups with physical bookstores may face the same basic issues, but they may also have more competition. For example, one or more of the local thrift stores run by nonprofits may be increasing their sales of books by being open more hours for both sales and book donations, as well as devoting more shelves to display the books.

Some groups have tried to diversify their income stream with various fundraisers. Some have had success, but even the very same successful fundraiser held over and over is going to get stale, and sales will fall off. And some groups are just not good at marketing and selling tickets.

Membership may be falling. Key donors may be drying up. Your long-term Board members are dropping off for various reasons, including burnout. Your relevance to the li-

brary may also be waning. All are downward signs.

This brings us to the issue of long-term planning. And in today's economic climate, we're probably talking five years. What is your group's endgame? Exit strategy? Some of the signs of demise are listed above.

There are some groups of Friends that have served one or more libraries for over 50 years! Those groups should especially be taking a hard look at where they are. At the end of this article, there is the basic life cycle of any nonprofit. There is an excellent, detailed chart. [Click here](#) to see and read the article. Just ignore references to staff/employees.

In reviewing this chart, I suspect that many, if not most, Friends groups would fall into the maturity and decline stages, and some are in crisis. One exception I would note in the revenue element of this chart is that some of these same groups may be sitting on substantial cash reserves in checking, savings, and investment accounts.

So, that brings me to the topic of this discussion, your endgame. Every group's purpose statement includes "support the library." Hopefully, your group has been successful at doing that over the years you have been in existence. One way to fulfill your purpose and establish your legacy would be to create an endowment with all that cash (while you still have it). I am going to use an example of an endowment set up with the [North Carolina Community Foundation](#) (NCCF), as I am familiar with their program, but there are a number of other investment companies that are able to do this.

NCCF has one type of program, called a [Dedicated Endowment](#). This designated fund would provide an annual stream of income to your library, in perpetuity. NCCF will steward your gifts to the fund through their prudent investment strategy, maintaining the fund corpus while awarding an annual grant. The intent of your giving is preserved

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THE ENDGAME by Judy Hills (continued)

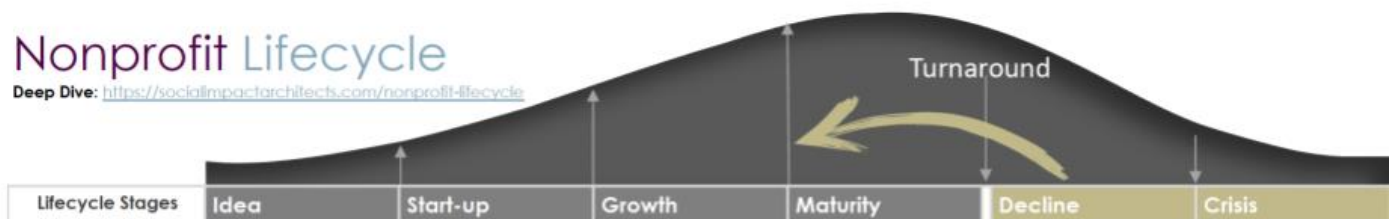
even if your Friends group ceases operations. You would need \$25,000 minimum initial funds to establish an endowment, and you (or any donor) may continue to contribute to this fund at any time. Another benefit is that if your Friends receive a bequest, these funds can go into the endowment. Donors to the fund are eligible for a tax deduction for their gift. [Click here](#) for a graph of how the endowment grows.

Additionally, you could put restrictions on the fund, such as "only to fund children's materials and programs" or "only for collection development." The library would need to agree to the restriction on accepting the endowment. The library would not have to

agree to accept the endowment funds if there were no restrictions; NCCF would just send a check annually.

You can name the fund for your group (since you raised the money). What better way to fulfill your purpose than to ensure that the library you have supported for so long gets the benefit of your hard work into the future, after you and your organization are gone?

Remember, **NOTHING** lasts forever. The only question is how do you want your Friends to end and how do you want them to be remembered.



Librarian Mental Health

Many, if not most, of our library staffs are under big external stressors. In a 2025 informal study, five big themes emerge as the causes: 1) budget cuts, layoffs, closures, and defunding; 2) expectation that the library operates as a social service provider; 3) book bans, censorship and political interference; 4) rising cost of materials; and 5) mission creep. Mission creep stressors are public misunderstanding or devaluing of libraries and ongoing safety and mental health crises, among others. Imagine being called a pedophile at a public meeting.

Mental health symptoms being experienced by library staff include: stress, burnout, overwork, anxiety, panic, hypervigilance, depression, apathy, hopelessness, as well as toxic management, which does far

more harm to library workers than any patron.

So how can the Friends help? A pizza party won't fix burnout, but a kind word anytime you encounter a library worker might brighten their day a tad. Might your Friends Board members do small random acts of kindness for them? How might you stick up for them? How might you stick up for them publicly? Do consider this topic at one of your next meetings. [Click here](#) to read more.



Binge Reading



An article in "Mental Health" by Vladimir Hedrih discussed a new study that suggests that binge-watching and marathon reading may have hidden psychological benefits. "Two studies found that TV shows watched consecutively for longer durations or books read in long reading bouts were more memorable and more likely to be targets of retrospective imaginative involvement. In other words, when people engage in binge-watching a TV show or marathon reading a book, they are more likely to think about the stories of these shows and books afterward, relive them in their imagination, expand them, or imagine alternative story developments."

Now, as readers, we don't consider that binge-reading equates to binge-watching. In the study, those who do one or the other of those two binge sessions were more likely to do so to escape from their

daily reality or to experience new things and grow beyond their everyday self.

Stories that were simply "enjoyed" (fun stories with happy endings) could be recalled more accurately. In contrast, stories that were "deeply appreciated" (meaningful, emotionally complex, or challenging) "...triggered more dynamic imagination, inspiring people to invent backstories or imagine alternative plotlines to help process the story's deeper meaning." This second result was only experienced when the reader or viewer have more leisure time. It was suggested that bingeing might help people recover from daily stressors.

So, if you binge-watch or binge read, why do you do so and what benefits do you receive? [Click here](#) to read the entire article.



Another Idea: Repair Cafe

The Repair Café concept was developed in 2009 in the Netherlands by Martine Postma and Peter van Vliet. They hit on the idea of setting up low-key meeting places where neighbors could repair their broken items themselves supported by coaches and in a relaxed atmosphere. The first Repair Café was held in Amsterdam. Dozens of neighbors and interested people showed up that Sunday, where a host of volunteer coaches were at the ready with tools and materials. The afternoon was a great success; the initiative had obviously tapped into a clear need.

Since January 2011, the Repair Café Foundation has provided support to local groups in the Netherlands and other countries wishing to start their own Repair Café.

The Repair Café Foundation has the following goals:

- to bring back repairing into local society in a modern way;
- to maintain repair expertise and to spread this knowledge;
- to promote social cohesion in the local community by connecting neighbors from very different backgrounds through an inspiring and low-key event.

Tom Karches and Don Fick organized Repair Café NC in Cary in 2017 as a local chapter of the global repair movement. The goals of Repair Café NC are to:

- plan and operate successful Repair Café events throughout the region
- develop the local Repair Café chapter as a sustainable, community-focused organization
- freely share a set of best practices and lessons learned for organizing Repair Ca-

fé groups throughout the state and elsewhere

- have fun, share skills, and fix stuff.

Repair Café has partnered with iFixit—to offer tens of thousands of free repair guides in words and pictures. [Click here.](#)

[Click here](#) to read more about Repair Café NC. [Click here](#) to view their Facebook page.

Some repair cafes are being held at libraries. What a wonderful opportunity for Friends to help organize such an event at a library. [Click here](#) to view the "Start Your Own Repair Café" page. They don't charge for these repairs—they just put out a donation jar. It is up to the organizers how they want to handle the donations.

If you are currently engaged in this effort or if your Friends decided to establish one, we'd love to hear about your experience (and send pics!).



The Dewey Decimal System VS Bookstore Model (AI-generated)

On a newsfeed recently we noticed an article, "10 skills every kid in the 1970s had mastered by the age of 12 that most adults today couldn't do it if their life depended on it." There were some interesting skills noted and one of them was "using the Dewey Decimal System." Melvil Dewey developed this system in 1876 and **this year is its 150th year of use**. Many, if not most libraries, use it.

This system categorizes knowledge into 10 main, broad classes (000-900), which are further subdivided using decimals for specific subjects, ensuring that books with similar subjects are shelved together. The ten major groups include:

- 000 - Computer science, information, & general works
- 100 - Philosophy & psychology
- 200 - Religion
- 300 - Social sciences
- 400 - Language
- 500 - Science (including mathematics)
- 600 - Technology (applied sciences)
- 700 - Arts & recreation
- 800 - Literature
- 900 - History & geography

How it Works: Materials are assigned a "call number" (e.g., 599.756 for tigers) that serves as a specific address based on the topic. The number generally includes three main digits followed by a decimal point for more precise, detailed subject classification.

Structure: The first three digits indicate the main class, while the digits following the decimal point represent further, more specific divisions.

Usage: The system is primarily used in public and small academic libraries to organize non-fiction collections.

Benefits: By using numerical, thematic grouping, the system makes it easier for users to find materials on similar or related subjects on the shelves.

The system is maintained and updated by the OCLC, a non-profit cooperative.

Has the DDS outlived its usefulness? The bookstore model (or "genrefication") offers libraries improved browsing, higher circulation, and a more user-friendly experience by organizing books by subject/category rather than numerical,, Dewey Decimal System. It enhances discoverability for patrons, specifically aiding children and casual users, by using intuitive, labeled sections rather than abstract numbers.

Benefits of the Bookstore Model over Dewey Decimal System

Enhanced Browsing and Discovery: Books are organized by popular, user-friendly, and descriptive topics making it easier for patrons to find materials without knowing specific call numbers.

Increased Circulation: Libraries, particularly public and school libraries, often see higher usage and checkouts of non-fiction when arranged by topic, as it makes the collection feel more accessible.

Improved User Experience: The model is more welcoming and intuitive for children and casual browsers, reducing the need for staff assistance to find popular, general subjects.

Logical Grouping: It mimics how people shop for books, which, aids in faster, independent navigation and retrieval of materials.

Modernization: It, replaces an antiquated system (1876) with a more contemporary,, relevant, and flexible approach for modern collections.

Considerations: While the bookstore model is advantageous for browsing, the Dewey Decimal System remains effective for finding specific, non-fiction items and for academic research, where precise, granular classification is needed.

Has your library considered switching?



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Public Libraries**

Helping Friends Build Resilience

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CALENDAR

All material for the newsletter is due to editor **Judy Hills** by the 25th of each month.

[Click here](#) for the 2026 Calendar of National Events—use these to plan your activities.

FONCPL Board Zoom Meetings 10 AM quarterly

Here are a few dates of note:

April

- 4/1 Library Snapshot day
- 4/1 April Fool's Day
- 4/2 International Children's Picture Book Day
- Apr 2-8 Passover
- 4/3 Good Friday
- Apr 4-11 National Robotics Week
- 4/5 Easter Sunday
- 4/6 Plan Your Epitaph Day
- 4/7 World Health Day
- 4/11 National Pet Day
- 4/12 Drop Everything and Read Day (D.E.A.R)
- 4/13 Thomas Jefferson's Birthday
- 4/13 National Scrabble Day
- 4/15 Tax Day
- 4/15 World Art Day
- 4/15 National Bookmobile Day
- 4/16 National Librarian Day
- 4/17 National Haiku Poetry Day
- 4/17 Arbor Day
- April 19-25 National Library Week
- 4/21 National Library Workers' Day
- Apr 19-25 National Volunteer week
- 4/22 Earth Day
- 4/22 Administrative Professionals' day
- 4/23 World Book day
- 4/23 Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
- 4/28 National Superhero Day
- 4/28 National Great Poetry Reading Day