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

November 2026

Dear Friends,

This month's column could start exactly like last month's. Remember "Are you tired of all the political commercials on the radio, television, computer news feeds, newspapers, and magazines?" Well, relief is in sight. Election Day is nigh! Please remember to vote on November 3 and breathe a sigh while celebrating that freedom.

I hope your community had lots of fun with Halloween and Trick 'N Treating. Here in Sparta, we do "Trunk 'N Treat" at the fairgrounds as we do not have walkable neighborhoods. It was great fun with rides, a bounce house, and other entertainment while the "parade" circled around to all the cars and trucks that had treats to share.

Now, we can look forward to Thanksgiving. While celebrating with family and friends, it's a time to truly be grateful for those family members and good friends. May I also suggest that we include in that list our local libraries and the good people who staff them. Many libraries are truly the center of their communities. They often offer much more than books; although, we are grateful for those!

At Books 'N Friends, we recently added a new display of craft books in anticipation of our crafters getting ready for the holidays. It has been a great success! Before we even finished getting books in place, several people bought one or two books off the display. Thank goodness we had more.

What have you read recently? I just finished the latest Jack Reacher by Lee and Andrew Child. Lee is leaving the Reacher series to Andrew, his brother, as many of you may know if you are fans. I thought the last one was hard, but this one is too. Reacher does get himself involved in difficult situations, but you can count on him to find a way out.

The Friend of the Year awards will be announced in our December newsletter. There are so many outstanding Friends members to celebrate!

See this edition for the Seed Grant awards.

So, Friends, I wish you the happiest of holidays,

Yours in Friendship,
Joyce Speas, President

Congratulations Seed Grant Awardees! By Karen Schrader

Sampson County Friends of the Library and the Franklin County Friends of the Library each received a $500 Seed Grant award from FONCPL this year.

The **FONCPL SEED GRANTS** are awarded to a group forming a Friends of the Library organization or to one that is revitalizing a dormant Friends of the Library group. Eligible groups receive only one of these grants. As an incentive, FONCPL offers a free one-year membership in FONCPL. A FONCPL board member or other qualified Friends of the Library individuals are assigned to coach the Seed Grant awardees.

The Sampson County Friends is a newly forming, volunteer-led group establishing itself to support the Sampson-Clinton Public Library system consisting of four libraries: J.C. Library (Clinton), Rosenboro Public Library (Roseboro), Bryan-Memorial Library (Newton Grove), and Mirian Memorial Library (Garland).

Sampson County is a large, rural community that relies heavily on its library branches for literacy, lifelong learning resources, and community engagement. However, the library cannot meet these evolving demands alone. While their steering committee is excited and has the full backing of the Library Director and the County Commissioners' office, they are still starting from scratch. They did not have the initial funds they needed to get off the ground as an official, long-term partner for the library.

Sampson Friends will be using their Seed Grant funds to pay for establishing the IRS 501 (c) (3) fees, the Incorporation fees, and set up a bank account and checks.



Seated Left to Right: Kenna Gautier (President), Sharon Laboda (Vice President)
Standing Left to Right: Penny Ward, Michelle Thompson (Secretary), Lynn Ellington, Linda Carr (Treasurer)

Congratulations Seed Grant Awardees! By Karen Schrader

The Franklin County Friends of the Library is a dedicated group of volunteers that plan to merge and revitalize the Friends group in their county to support and advocate for the Franklin County Library system consisting of: Bunn Public Library, Franklinton Public Library, Louisburg Public Library, and Youngsville Public Library. Currently, Friends only supports the Youngsville branch.

Franklin County is experiencing steady growth, which increases the demands on the county library system. The revitalized Friends group plans to help the libraries serve larger and more diverse members of the county's population through their support and advocacy efforts.

Franklin Friends will use their funds for printing brochures, posters and other printed materials to support and advocate for their county's libraries by building membership and volunteer participation; increase community engagement and awareness of Friends; utilize funds for attorney's fees to assist in merging with the Youngsville Friends with the Franklin County Friends; and establish a fundraising campaign.



Book Bans: PEN America Report by Karen Robbins

School Book Bans are not going away. According to PEN America, **11,982 books** were banned in public schools in the 2025-2026 school year. This number is the highest recorded number of bans since PEN America began tracking in 2021.

Findings include:
7,370 unique titles banned 2025-26
4,500+ not previously recorded by PEN America
114— the highest number of school districts banning books in a single year

YA books represented over half of all bans, with 90% of those being fiction books. The article gives good reasons for concern. "…stripping young readers away from books that help them fall in love with reading." (Spotlight on School Book Bans, Pen America, Oct 5, 2026.)

Texas has the most book bans, at 8000, followed by Florida. These states have set the precedent for other states to follow. The strongest two influences on book banning in schools are state legislation and organized groups. Government leaders are amplifying the trend.

72% of bans in districts tracked by Pen America are due to state legislation 72%! book review policies cite state law banned by committees that are mandated by law the district's rationale cited state legislation.

Political pressure includes sending threatening letters to districts, conducting hearings, and naming librarians as child abusers. Here in North Carolina, the Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools have been called in for hearings multiple times, told they are not compliant with the "Parents Bill of Rights". So far, each time the superintendent has had strong arguments to defend the district's position. However, the legislature has sought to pass a law to include withholding financial aid to districts not in compliance. They named it CHCCS (a reminder of which district they are blaming for their frustration).

Some districts remove titles that have been challenged in other districts, feeling intimidated by the legislature. This quiet censorship is insidious, because the community may not even know.

And AI has been a disaster for school districts who purchase programs to help them identify books to remove from the collections. " …generative AI/generative AI chatbots repeatedly recommend removing books, not because those books are obscene under the prevailing legal standard, but instead because other districts have banned them." (Spotlight on School Book Bans, Pen America, Oct 5, 2026.)

According to Pen America, "AI tools scrape the list of titles without consideration for nuance, context, or intent, speeding up censorship."

Several titles are appearing for the first time on lists kept by PEN America, such as an older Gary Paulsen book *The Beet Fields: Memories of a Sixteenth Summer*. Other titles have been around repeatedly: *Sold, A Handmaids Tale, Looking for Alaska, The Kite Runner*, and the list goes on. Titles most commonly targeted are books about race or racism, LGBTQ+ people or characters, people of color, and sex.

This is why we, as public library advocates, must be vigilant. We must support our trustees as they navigate challenges. We must listen respectfully and point patrons to the library reconsideration process when we hear of a challenge.

Of national concern is H.R.7661 "Stop the Sexualization of Children Act" which would deny funding to schools for books, programs, or activities that promote literature to children under 18 that includes sexually oriented

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Book Bans: PEN America Report (Continued)

material. Remember that there are not materials like this in schools NOW, and think about teenage readers who will not have access to appropriate materials, books, and literature about sexual topics that are age appropriate. This would be a Federal Law and impact every single state and school district. Imagine the consequences. Stay informed and read PEN America updates if you are concerned about book censorship.

Applying the 30/70 Rule Using AI by Cindy Shipley

Applying the 70/30 Rule using an AI component

Expanding on last month's article on the **70/30 rule** in completing tasks in Friends of the Library organizations, AI can assist with the 70% task workload. This frees the humans to concentrate on the remaining 30% of the task work.

The **70/30 Rule** is an excellent framework for integrating AI into a Friends of the Library (FOL) organization. It ensures that 70% of the heavy lifting, drafting, and organizing is handled by AI, while 30% relies strictly on the human touch—the context, community connection, and final decision-making that AI cannot replicate.

Applying the **30% Rule for AI** (often framed as the 70/30 productivity and oversight model) to a **Friends of the Library** organization is an effective way to maximize your volunteer hours, boost fundraising, and scale community outreach without losing the authentic human touch that makes nonprofits successful.

In practice, the rule means **AI handles roughly 70% of the repetitive, drafting, and data-heavy groundwork, while the human volunteers and board members retain the final 30% for strategy, empathy, editing, and values-driven decisions.**

Here is how a Friends of the Library group can practically apply this framework across the core operational areas:

1. Fundraising and Donor Relations

- **What AI does (The 70%):** Drafts baseline appeal letters, writes templates for grant applications, generates ideas for donor thank-you campaigns, and segments donor data to find trends.

- **What Humans do (The 30%):** Reviews the tone to ensure it matches the community voice, personalizes notes for major donors, decides which funding projects to prioritize, and makes personal phone calls.

Example: Ask for an AI tool to write a draft newsletter asking for donations for the children's summer reading program. Once the AI provides a solid structural draft, a board member steps in to inject personal anecdotes about local library patrons and signs off on the final messaging.

2. Book Sales and Inventory Management

- **What AI does (The 70%):** Categorizes genre trends, suggests pricing tiers based on standard market values for donated books, and helps draft descriptions for rare or collectible books listed online.

What Humans do (The 30%): Sorts through physical donations box-by-box, evaluates the actual physical condition of a book, manages the physical setup of the bookstore or book fair, and handles customer interactions.

3. Marketing, Social Media, and Advocacy

- **What AI does (The 70%):** Creates a monthly social media content calendar, writes captions for upcoming book sales, generates image concepts for flyers, and summarizes long library board reports into digestible social posts for advocates.

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Applying the 30/70 Rule Using AI by Cindy Shipley (continued)

What Humans do (The 30%): Captures real photos of library events and volunteers, approves the final text to ensure facts are correct (checking for AI "hallucinations"), and engages directly with comments and community members online.

4. Event Planning and Programming

- **What AI does (The 70%):** Brainstorms themes for author talks, trivia nights, or gala events; outlines checklists for event logistics; and drafts welcome speeches or press releases.

What Humans do (The 30%): Secures local speakers, negotiates venue details, partners with library staff to align with library goals, and hosts the actual event with warmth and hospitality.

Key Benefits for a Friends Board

- **Combats Volunteer Burnout:** Busy volunteers run most Friends groups. Offloading the "blank page syndrome" to AI for writing and planning tasks saves countless hours.

- **Maintains Quality and Trust:** Libraries are trusted community institutions. Keeping that final 30% human-led ensures your messaging is accurate, empathetic, and free of robotic-sounding jargon.

Lowers the Technical Barrier: You don't need a tech-savvy board to benefit; treating AI as an "over-eager intern" that always needs a final human editor makes the technology approachable.

Follow these guidelines to use AI with the 70/30 Rule.

1. **Start with Admin Quick Wins:** Use AI first for internal tasks like summarizing meeting notes. This builds comfort with the tool among board members without any public-facing risk.

2. **Establish "The Human Firewall":** Explicitly mandate that **no text generated by AI goes public without a human review**. This protects your organization from AI "hallucinations" (made-up facts, wrong dates).

Create a Prompt Library: Save the AI prompts that work well for your library (e.g., *"Write a friendly Facebook post for a Friends of the Library group announcing..."*). Share these with committee chairs so they don't have to reinvent the wheel.



Licensed Library eBook Market is Unstainable by Diana Fotinatos

Currently, most publishers and eBook aggregators force libraries to acquire ebooks with licensing terms that make it impossible for them to meet their standard access and preservation missions. Ebook licenses offered to libraries often:

Are prohibitively expensive – Ebooks can cost a library three to 10 times the consumer price for the same print book.

All ebook licenses offered to libraries by the "Big Five" publishers expire either after 24 months or 26 checkouts. By contrast, a print book can last significantly longer with standard maintenance and repair.

If the library would like to continue to lend that title, they must repurchase the licenses at the same inflated price. Some libraries pay a cost per circulation fee on top of initial fees.

Publisher	Format	Average physical retail price	Average OverDrive price	Markup	Books published per year	Model
Scholastic Corporation	eBook	$8.37	$11.79	41%	100 -1000	Expires after 24 mos
HarperCollins Publishers	eBook	$16.71	$24.10	44%	> 1000	Expires after 26 loans
Disney Books	eBook	$9.01	$15.14	68%	100 -1000	Expires after 26 loans
Hachette Book Group	eAudio	$27.62	$65.00	135%	100 -1000	Expires after 24 mos
Simon & Schuster	eAudio	$28.82	$76.99	167%	100 -1000	Expires after 24 mos
Penguin Random House	eBook	$17.41	$55.00	216%	> 1000	Expires after 24 mos
Simon & Schuster	eBook	$16.43	$58.19	254%	> 1000	Expires after 24 mos
Macmillan Publishers	eBook	$16.52	$60.00	263%	> 1000	Expires after 24 mos
Hachette Book Group	eBook	$16.13	$64.25	298%	100 -1000	Expires after 24 mos

Data from ReadersFirst.org.

eBook licenses come with restrictions on libraries' lawful, traditional uses –

- Cannot be made into accessible formats for print-disabled readers.
- Ebooks are not allowed to be in the traditional interlibrary loan program. In Connecticut, 82% of available ebooks are under the metered copy model, meaning that they cannot be loaned to other libraries.
- A library cannot make preservation copies of ebooks.
- Sometimes libraries cannot buy an ebook for several months after it is released, and sometimes ebooks are not available to libraries at any price.

Libraries have little, if any, bargaining power and are rarely able to change the terms of the contracts offered to them by publishers. As a result, libraries face financial and practical challenges in making ebooks available to their patrons. More and more taxpayer money is spent on repurchasing previously owned materials, which means less and less perpetual access to content and increased hold ratios and longer wait times for library ebooks.

According to Ellen Paul, the Executive Director of the Connecticut State Library Consortium, ebook contracts are like "the Connecticut [Department of Transportation] paying six times more for asphalt than a general contractor and every two years seeing the road disappear."

How is this issue impacting your library? Interested in learning more, contact Diana Fotinatos, Brunswick County Library Trustee at diana.fotinatos@gmail.com.

- Library borrowers are also book buyers: access to a library has never meant customers stop buying books – a study from Canada found over half of library users also bought new books, and another study found 1 in 3 respondents bought a book online or from a bookstore that they first found in a library
- High prices for libraries hurt emerging authors: if libraries cannot afford to build a balanced collection, they prioritize what's currently popular over exposing customers to new or lesser known writers

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS:

Libraries are eager for dialogue to develop mutually beneficial models with publishers, an open conversation about exploring alternatives acceptable to all parties – ones that use taxpayer funds responsibly while protecting the interests of creators and publishers.

Here are two potential concrete fixes to start a dialogue with the largest publishers:

1. Time-metered e-book licenses (e.g. 1- 2 year licenses) are rarely a responsible use of taxpayer funds – **library licenses should be based on usage.**

- The bottom line: **libraries are using taxpayer funds to pay for items they're not getting full use out of**
- The current model makes the cost-per-usage higher, while taking a chance on new authors riskier

2. An option of perpetual licenses for mid- and backlist titles would work better for public libraries – and **many libraries are willing to pay a premium for such access.**

- Perpetual licenses are **not about ownership**. They're about libraries maintaining their ability to **build and sustain a collection** after initial demand has waned
- As demand for popular works subsides, perpetual license options could present an attractive continued revenue stream for publishers and authors
- **Such licenses have a precedent:** all Big Five publishers once offered them, and several continue to provide perpetual access to audiobooks to this day alongside many independent publishers
- Greater flexibility means up-and-coming authors can find new audiences

Display Terms for Bookstores & Libraries

Position & Layout Terms

Face-Out / Front-Facing: Displaying a book with its front cover visible rather than tucked spine-first into a shelf.

Off the Shelf: A general industry and library phrase for books pulled out for a special exhibit or curated feature (often labeled "Off the Shelf and On Display").

Horizontal Book Creep / Laid Backs: Terms used when books are stacked flat on top of one another either in front of or instead of standing upright.

Shelf Trophies: A popular modern term (frequently used on BookTok and among readers) for special-edition hardcovers, collector's copies, or physical representations of digital/audiobooks displayed like awards.

Stand & Display Hardware

Bookstand / Bookrest: A small cradle or angled stand used to prop an open or featured book upright.

Lectern / Podium: A larger stand used to hold a reference book or speech text.

Bookend / Book Stop: Supports used to keep a row of books standing up on a flat surface without a full wall enclosure.

https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/book-storage-ideas

One Middle-High School Repurposes Their Library

Burdened by a clunky, rarely used circulation desk and stacks of reference books from the 1970s, Brentwood Middle-High School's library was in need of an upgrade, said Middle School Principal David Radcliffe.

"Kids don't check out books like they used to," he said. "Last year, we created a committee of teachers and students and asked them, 'What do we want this place to be?' "

Brentwood's library and media center keeps the books, but adds a podcasting and TV studio, a large-group instruction space with flexible seating and tables, and renovates a closet as a kitchenette to serve as a student-run coffee shop.

"There was a time when school was the place to get information. Now the information is in their pocket, on a smartphone," Radcliffe said. "They already have the information. Now the goal is — we want students to be problem-solvers."

As technology changes how students find and absorb information, more school districts are rethinking what their libraries should offer. The new emphasis, at least locally, is to emphasize hands-on learning, collaboration and career readiness.

"Gone is the typical library," said Dawn Nicolazzo, media specialist at Gateway High School in Monroeville. "High school libraries and media centers are going to be transformed into areas where students can do multiple activities." Click here to read more.



2026 National Book Award Finalists Announced

Twenty-five Finalists to contend for National Book Awards in the categories of Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Translated Literature, and Young People's Literature

The 25 Finalists for the 2026 National Book Awards for Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Translated Literature, and Young People's Literature were announced today with the *New York Times*. The five Finalists in each category were selected by a distinguished panel of judges and were advanced from the Longlists announced in September with *The New Yorker*. Winners will be announced live at the 77th National Book Awards Ceremony & Benefit Dinner on Wednesday, November 18, 2026. For more information and to register to watch the livestream, please visit nationalbook.org/awards.

2026 Finalists for the National Book Award for Fiction:

Hannah Lillith Assadi, *Paradiso 17*
Edwidge Danticat, *Dèy*
Julián Delgado Lopera, *Pretend You're Dead and I Carry You*
Valeria Luiselli, *Beginning Middle End*
Morgan Thomas, *Mad Eden*

2026 Finalists for the National Book Award for Nonfiction:

Colin Asher, *The Midnight Special: The Secret Prison History of American Music*
Abdelrahman ElGendy, *Huna: A Memoir of Revolution, Prison, and Becoming*
Camonghne Felix, *Let the Poets Govern: A Declaration of Freedom*
Sara Nović, *Mother Tongue*
Joseph Osmundson, *Spawning Season: An Experiment in Queer Parenthood*
Bloomsbury Publishing

2026 Finalists for the National Book Award for Poetry:

Victoria Chang, *Tree of Knowledge*
Carolina Ebeid, *Hide*
Brenda Hillman, *Still House in the Desert: An eco-contemplation*
Fady Joudah, *Exhibit G: Poems, Essays, and Photographs of Gaza*
Ikweed Editions
Susan Stewart, *Bramble*

2026 Finalists for the National Book Award for Translated Literature:

Karl Ove Knausgaard, *The School of Night* Translated from the Norwegian by **Martin Aitken**
Vicente Luis Mora, *Centroeuropa* Translated from the Spanish by **Rahul Bery**
Intan Paramaditha, *Night of a Thousand Hells* Translated from the Indonesian by **Stephen Epstein** and **Tiffany Tsao**
Mohamed Mbougar Sarr, *Pure Men* Translated from the French by **Lara Vergnaud**
Samar Yazbek, *Your Presence Is a Danger to Your Life: Voices of Survival and Witness in Gaza* Translated from the Arabic by **Leri Price**

2026 Finalists for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature:

Elana K. Arnold, *Holloway*
Tae Keller, *When Tomorrow Burns*
Keala Kendall, *That Which Feeds Us: A Hawaiian Gothic*
David Levithan and **Gabriel Duckels**, *The Fight of Our Lives: AIDS in America*
Julian Randall, *Shook*

Publishers submitted a total of 1,912 books for this year's National Book Awards: 451 in Fiction, 727 in Nonfiction, 285 in Poetry, 159 in Translated Literature, and 290 in Young People's Literature. **Judges'** decisions are made independently of the National Book Foundation staff and Board of Directors, and deliberations are strictly confidential. The 77th National Book Awards Ceremony & Benefit Dinner will be livestreamed for readers everywhere on the **Foundation's website** and **YouTube**.



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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:

November

11/1 National Authors Day
11/1 Daylight Saving Time ends
11/2 All Souls' Day
11/8 National STEAM/STEM Day
11/8-11/14 National StoryWalk Week
11/9 Carl Sagan Day
11/10 National Young readers' day
11/10 Marine Corps Birthday
11/11 Veterans Day
11/12 Chicken Soup for the Soul Day
11/15 National Drummer Day
11/19 National Smoke Out Day
11/18 National Princess Day
11/26 Thanksgiving Day
11/27 Day After Thanksgiving, Black Friday
11/30 Cyber Monday

December

12/1 Giving Tuesday
12/5 International Volunteer Day
12/7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
12/7 National Letter Writing Day
12/9 Christmas Card Day
12/10 Dewey Decimal System Day
12/10 Human Rights Day
12/13 National Guard Birthday
12/15 National Cupcake day
12/17 Wright Brothers Day
12/18 National Ugly Sweater Day
12/20 Go Caroling Day
12/21 Winter Solstice
12/21 Crossword Puzzle Day
12/22 National Cookie Exchange Day
12/24 Christmas Eve
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Kwanzaa (until Jan 1)
12/28 National Card Playing Day
12/31 New Year's Eve