

SECTION 15. NEWSLETTERS

Several FOL chapters prepare and circulate chapter newsletters. Publishing a newsletter provides members and others who receive it with information about what is going on in the library branch and within the chapter. Newsletters also connect FOL chapters with their communities. They are excellent tools to publicize chapter meetings and events, promote library programs and happenings, and otherwise facilitate awareness and advocacy in the community.

Basics

Most chapters that have newsletters issue them quarterly. However, a biannual or even an annual newsletter can be a good starting point for those that have not done a newsletter before. Newsletters can be printed on glossy or plain paper and can vary from a page or two to six or more pages in length. Many chapters publish both electronic and paper versions so as to broaden their readership. All chapters should include some form of graphics in their newsletters. Adding photos of events, programs, or even library patrons can enhance and encourage readership. Using images such as clip art and otherwise creating visual interest is an important aspect to highlighting information and will enrich the content. The frequency, form, and length of chapter newsletters should be determined by how each chapter's needs and resources can best be met.

Format

There are many applications that can be used to prepare a newsletter, including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, PageMaker, and In Design. Each chapter should use the application with which its newsletter editor feels most comfortable. However, if the newsletter is to be sent out electronically, the file should be converted to a PDF so that readers can access it easily. PDF files are universally accessible (using a PDF file reader such as Adobe Acrobat, which is available at no cost on the Internet). Sending the newsletter as a PDF file also maintains the format and structure of the document and thus enables each reader to see the newsletter as it was intended to be seen.

Clearance

Although chapter newsletters do not require the approval of the branch manager or MCPL, it is strongly recommended that branch managers be given the chance to preview newsletters. It is a good practice for the chapter to submit a draft of each newsletter issue to the branch manager; he or she may be able point out errors or omissions and may have suggestions as to content. Additionally, the branch manager will not be surprised by what is in the newsletter when it is circulated. Sharing the newsletter draft fosters partnership between FOL chapters and MCPL.

Distribution

The way in which newsletters are disseminated varies from chapter to chapter. Many send their newsletters electronically via email with a PDF attachment. Please note: When sending a mass email, always make sure to hide the recipients' email addresses by sending them by blind copies (bcc). Using electronic newsletters can reduce costs significantly. However, if a chapter elects to distribute its newsletters *only* electronically, members without email or those who choose not to provide their email address will not receive them. Some chapters print paper copies and send them via the U.S. Postal Service. Using printed newsletters may ensure that almost all members will receive the newsletter, but the price may be considerable. If a chapter sends fewer than 200 copies via the U.S. Postal Service, the mailing cost will be the standard first-class postal rate. If a chapter sends 200 or more copies, it can use the FOLMC's non-profit "stamp" and pay a reduced rate (for copies going to any 208xx or 209xx zip code). Many chapters send their newsletters electronically in addition to mailing out paper versions to reach the broadest readership possible.

Newsletters should, of course, be sent to all current chapter members. Chapters may elect to continue to send newsletters to persons whose memberships have lapsed as a means of encouraging those individuals to renew their memberships. Chapters should also consider sending newsletters to persons outside of their membership—for example, elected Montgomery County officials, MCPL leadership, other branch managers, FOLMC leadership, other FOL chapters, the FOL Chapter Liaison, and others with whom the chapter wants to maintain a relationship.

Newsletters can also be posted to a chapter's page on the FOLMC website. (To do so, email the FOLMC Development Coordinator.) Extra paper copies can be printed and made available at a designated spot in the library branch or posted to a community bulletin board. *However, please note that approval from MCPL must be sought before distributing the newsletter in a branch.* Chapters that take the time to publish newsletters should use every opportunity to display and distribute them.

The chart in Appendix 15-A shows which chapters have newsletters and which do not. For the ones that do, the chart provides information on newsletter frequency, format, length, manner of preparation, and the number of copies produced.

Chapter Newsletters

	Frequency	Format	Length	Graphics	Preparation Software	# of Copies	
						Elec.	Ppr.
Aspen Hill	Quarterly	Plain	4 pages	Photos & Clip Art			
Bethesda	6x/year	Glossy	4 - 8 pages	Photos & Clip Art	iStudio Publisher	75	250
Chevy Chase	Quarterly	Plain	1 page (2-sided)	Clip Art & Photos	Word & PDF	340	210
Damascus	Quarterly	Glossy	4 - 6 pages	Photos & Clip Art			
Davis				No newsletter			
Gaithersburg				No newsletter			
Germantown	Quarterly		4 pages	Clip Art & Photos			
Little Falls				No newsletter			
Olney				No newsletter			
Potomac	Quarterly		Up to 6 pages (2-sided)	Photos & Clip Art; Color Shading	PDF	100	50
Praisner				No newsletter			
Quince Orchard				No newsletter			
Rockville				No newsletter			
Silver Spring	Quarterly		4 pages	Photos			Elec
Twinbrook				No newsletter			
White Oak				No newsletter			