



Newsletter
December 2025



Joe David

President's Letter

Not All the Heroes Are on TV

The world is quick to share its affection, respect and financial blessings when awards are handed out to movie stars, recording artists and athletes. But, not nearly enough of us even notice when the true heroes in Michigan's vast network of libraries are recognized for their achievements, as was the case recently at the MLA 2025 Annual Conference in Lansing.

I would like to congratulate all of these amazing people and organizations, not just on their awards, but on the impact they are having on the communities they serve. In particular, I would like to recognize a handful of the award winners whose Friends groups are members of the FOML family.

Here, in the words of the MLA, are why they were recognized at the Michigan Library Awards Gala:

Hart Area Public Library – Intellectual Freedom Award

"Awarded for courageous leadership in upholding intellectual freedom and the right to read. The library's transparent, policy-driven process in the face of book challenges exemplified the highest professional standards."

In addition to this prestigious award, the Friends of the Hart Public Library also qualified for FOML's most recent Harriet Larson Founder's Grant (see the story in this issue).

Delta Township District Library – State Librarian's Excellence Award

"Presented by the Library of Michigan and the Library of Michigan Foundation, this award honors libraries that demonstrate excellence in service, leadership, and community impact."

Rebekah Craft – Baldwin Public Library

"Rebekah was celebrated as *Public Librarian of the Year* for her bold leadership, empowering staff, and ensuring equitable access to information. Her vision and dedication make her a model of modern library leadership."

Heather Harris Brady – Traverse Area District Library

"Honored as *Library Support Staff of the Year* Heather was recognized for her creativity and dedication to community connection — including leadership in the 'Year of Reading,' millage campaign support, and initiatives to promote access and equity in library services."

All of us at FOML want to thank these amazing leaders for the important difference they are making in our lives. And, while we're at it, let's extend our appreciation to everyone else in the library industry who labors behind the scenes and out of the limelight to provide access to resources, teach classes, and deliver special programs that enhance our lives.

Does Online Selling Make Sense for You?

Selling books online isn't anything new, and it has worked out pretty well for some people. (Just ask Jeff Bezos at Amazon.) But, like anything else, when something takes off like online selling, everyone wants a piece of the action.

So, before you jump in with both feet, it's best to look carefully at whether it makes sense for your situation and if it is sustainable.

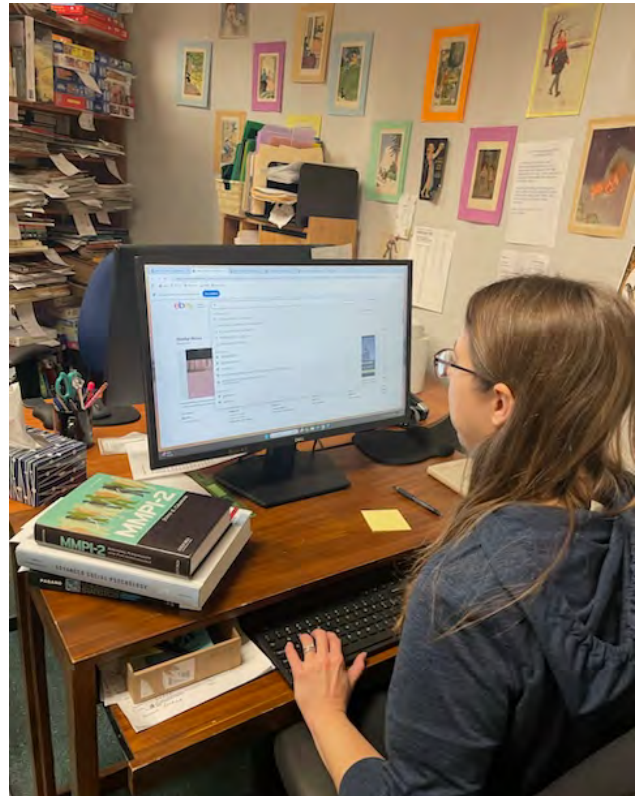
This is the first in a three-part series of articles that will help you answer that question. The first installment will deal with the question, "Is online selling a good fit for my organization?" The second will offer ideas on "How to organize for success." And, the final article will offer "Tips for successful online selling."

Is Online Selling a Good Fit?

Think of your Friends group as a business, with a product to sell—in this case, used books. In order to sell your product efficiently and profitably, there are a number of boxes you need to check off. For example, you need a way to reach potential customers. You need to offer more value than others selling the same product, especially in a saturated market. And, you need the right mix of resources to launch and sustain your program. Let's take a look at a few things you need to consider:

Supply of Books: Needless to say, if your supply of books is unreliable, you could have a problem sustaining your online sales operation in a meaningful way. Also, do you regularly receive enough quirky, hard-to-find, first edition, or signed books to let you differentiate yourself from the competition? You're not going to make much money listing another James Patterson or John Grisham book on eBay. We'll share some of the best-selling types of books in the third installment of this series.

People Resources: Do you have one or more volunteers who will fully commit to supporting your



The right books, access to technology and dedicated volunteers are a great place to start for any online selling operation.

online sales channel of distribution? And, can they make that commitment without robbing Peter to pay Paul? The size of your online operation is directly impacted by the number of volunteers available to support it. You will need to do book sorting, researching, photography, listing, filing, shipping, and customer relations. Some Friends groups have 10 or more people sharing in these duties. Others have only one. Obviously, there is a major difference in what can be accomplished based on the people resources you have available.

Storage Capacity: Once you list a book online, you need to file it in a way that will make it easily located once it sells and to ensure that it won't be sold in another of your channels of distribution (unless you are going to promptly remove it from your online listings). It won't help your online brand and reputation if buyers keep learning that books listed are no longer available. So, make sure you have the physical space to store the online books separately from others.

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Online Selling

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Impact on Other Channels: As a business, you may have multiple ways you offer your product to customers. For example, there are old-fashioned book sale events; in-library bookstores; and, of course, online sales. So, how will it affect your other sales channels if you begin culling out some of your best books to sell online? Maybe the returns from online sales are worth it. But, you don't want to risk killing the golden goose for a small return via online sales. Make sure there's enough to go around. If you're doing a good job of identifying books that will sell for \$25 online rather than \$2 in a book sale, you should be fine.

Scalability: It probably goes without saying, but the scope of your online operations can always be scaled up or down depending on the evolving answers to the book supply, people resources and storage questions. So, if you're short on any of them, start out by matching your expectations to the limits of your resources. We'll talk more about this in future installments.

So, is online selling a good fit for you? Sometimes, there's no way to reliably answer that question without giving it a try. But, it never hurts to do your homework first so that you go into it with your eyes wide open. Check back in the next issue for some insights into how you might best organize yourself for success in online selling.

Fundraising

Spring Lake Friends Put the 'Fun' in Fundraiser with 'Donate to Dine' Event

Team building is an important, but sometimes overlooked, component of a successful volunteer organization. And, of course, fundraising is generally at its very core of existence. So, it makes sense to jump at an opportunity that blends both into a single activity, right?

Well, it did for the Friends of Spring Lake District Library who tapped into a fun way to raise money by partnering with their local Culvers Restaurant for a percentage of the receipts during a busy dinner shift.

They recently held their second "Donate to Dine" event, where Friends of the Library served meals, working in shifts to assist the staff. Wearing black aprons adorned with their Friends of Spring Lake Library logo, they delivered butter burgers and fries as they talked to patrons, handed out Friends brochures, and raised over \$600 in donations and tips for the Friends. Not bad for a three-hour event!

Both the diners and the restaurant staff appreciated the extra help with lots of smiles and laughter emanating from the Friends who had a grand time delivering food to the tables.

Deb Willison, Friends secretary, took the lead in planning this fundraiser, posting lots of flyers in the area, utilizing social media, and contacting the local radio station that promoted it.

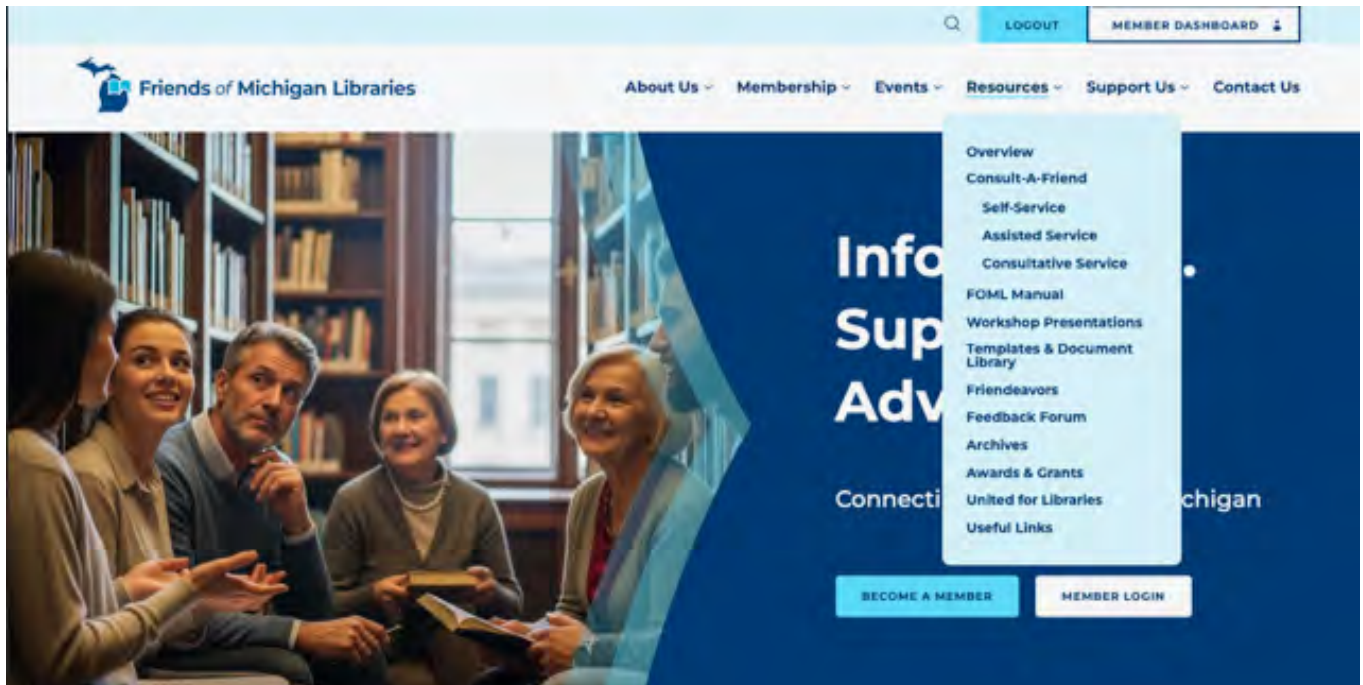
If your Friends groups would like more information about how to host an event like "Dine to Donate," you can contact Deb through the Spring Lake District Library or Treasurer Kathleen Golaszew for more tips.



Friends volunteers put on aprons and smiles for the "Donate to Dine" fundraiser.

Services

New Website Offers More Opportunities for Members to Connect with Information and Each Other



FOML introduced a revamped website on October 30 with an enhanced portal that gives members easy access to an expanded array of services and information. Have you logged in yet? If you didn't receive an email asking you to reset your password and it's not in your junk file, send us an [email](#) and we'll help you reset it.

To get you started, here is a quick tour of some of the new features and services you may choose to tap into when you are looking for answers to challenges or new ideas to help your organization grow:

Friendeavors: If your group has either completed or is planning an interesting event or activity, visit our new Friendeavors page. You can share a write-up and photos that both acknowledge your efforts and inspire other Friends groups to do the same.

Feedback Forum: Would you like to know how other Friends groups are handling membership dues, online sales, millage elections or hundreds of other topics? If so, check out our new Feedback Forum. Consider it a simplified form of market

research, as your questions are pushed out to all our members. Their responses are stored and viewable on our website.

Consult-A-Friend: More than 25 Friends groups have utilized this service since we introduced it at the beginning of the year. We are continuing to add information and tools to either help you find answers yourself ("Self Service") or ask for a helping hand from us ("Assisted Service" and "Consultative Service").

Search Function: We've tried to make it easy for you to find what you're looking for. Just click on the "magnifying glass" at the top of any page, type in a key word or two, and hit enter. You will get links to every location on the site where those words appear.

There's plenty more to explore on our new site and more on the way as we add templates and more content to assist you in your operations. Please do us a favor and drop us a [note](#) if you have any suggestions for improvement.

FOML Events

Charlevoix Library Welcomes FOML for ‘Talk About Friends’ Workshop

More than 35 people, from libraries in Northern Michigan as well as downstate, attended the “Talk About Friends” workshop on October 10 at the Charlevoix Public Library. Joe David, FOML president, introduced FOML board members before Steve Hall, president of the Friends of the Charlevoix Public Library and a FOML board director, welcomed the attendees and introduced Charlevoix Library Director Ryan Deery.



Steve Hall, president of the Charlevoix Friends and a director on FOML's board, is seen here welcoming more than 35 people to the “Talk About Friends” workshop.

Over the course of the next three hours, they shared questions, problems, concerns, and successes with one another. Keynote speaker Clare Membiela, Law Library Consultant from the Library of Michigan, spoke about the importance of having robust policies and procedures in place for both libraries and friends’ groups.

Two breakout sessions followed with discussions on the following topics:

What are your greatest concerns?

- Attracting younger board members – Offering childcare like a story time during meetings, change meeting times to evenings or at least alternate between day/evening.
- Reduced donations: Will book sales still exist in 5-10 years?
- How to get the Friends group known to the public so they will attend events; branding/advertising?
- Encouraging library staff to recognize the Friends at library events and encourage membership.

What innovative services does your library or Friends group offer?

- Tutoring by retired teachers.
- Donating books to schools for grades 1-3.
- Selling books on a donation basis; asking buyer to give what the book is worth to them.
- Seed Libraries (Charlevoix has a very nice area for this).
- Support public “Little Libraries,” with memorial naming rights for those who maintain them.
- Support for speakers for elementary schools.
- Scavenger hunts in the library to draw in elementary age children and their families.
- Library Boards and Friends Boards attending each other’s meetings.

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'Talk About Friends' Workshop

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What fundraising do you do beyond book sales?

- Fish Fry Fundraiser with free books for children
- Sponsor concert series with basket raffles
- Christmas in July – Christmas trees crafted out of books.
- Giving Tree with leaves that can be imprinted for a donation
- Golf Outings, Jewelry sales, wine auctions,
- Christmas basket on-line auction with donated items
- Garage Sale – sell donated items and sell space for anyone wanting to sell items

Participants received a folder containing a summary of FOML's 2024 "Year in Review," a flyer with information about the "Consult-A-Friend" program offered by FOML, a one-page "Ten Ways to Energize Your Volunteers for Fall" handout, and a handy toolkit article entitled "Engaging New and Active Library and Friends Volunteers."

At the conclusion of the workshop, an optional tour of the library was conducted by Hall (see separate article). "For many, it was their first visit to the Charlevoix Library, and they expressed their admiration for the beauty and care of the building, and how fortunate Charlevoix is to have had the foresight to save such a wonderful facility," Hall said.

Grants & Awards

Friends of the Hart Area Library Are Awarded a Harriet Larson Founders Grant



The Friends of the Hart Area Public Library are the most recent recipients of the Harriet Larson Founders Grant, which is awarded to Friends groups up to twice annually that are in the early years of operations or are looking to breathe new life into their organization.

The Hart Friends were founded in 2023 and are focused on building momentum through the expansion of their membership base. Their application for the grant specified that they plan to use the \$550 grant to support a membership drive.

The drive will include the purchase of a bulletin board to showcase current volunteer members at various events and reusable signs to promote events, such as their upcoming puzzle competition and their new Annual Gift Basket Fundraiser.

"Harriet Larson was one of the founders of FOML, and it was remarkable what she was able to accomplish with a financial boost from associates who also believed in the cause of libraries," explained Joe David, FOML president. "It's that kind of 'helping hand mindset' that lies at the heart of this grant program and that gives us great joy in supporting the mission of the Friends of the Hart Area Public Library."

The Charlevoix Public Library: If Walls Could Talk

Editor's Note: How many times have you found yourself in an intriguing building with a rich history and wondered aloud, "If only these walls could talk"? Well, that observation has come up a couple times recently as FOML has taken it's "Talk About Friends" workshop on the road to places like the Charlevoix Public Library and the Novi Public Library, which have very different, but equally interesting, origin stories. We would like to share their stories with you in this two-part series titled "From Humble Beginnings."



This is a view of the front courtyard of the converted school that is now home to the Charlevoix Public Library.

The size, beauty, and history of the Charlevoix Public Library was on full display as "Talk About Friends" participants entered its front door. And, it only got better for those who took a tour of the stately edifice under the guidance of Steve Hall, president of the Charlevoix Friends group. Here's a sampling of what Steve shared:



Custom wood cabinets add to the charm of the spacious building.

"Back in 2004, the old building, which began as an elementary school in 1927 and ended as the middle school in 1999, was facing demolition. At the same time, the Charlevoix Public Library was in search of a larger facility to help expand its offerings to the community.

"Enter a determined group of citizens and Friends of the library who were intent on saving the structure to serve as the community's new library. They joined together to raise \$2 million to help fund the renovation and successfully secured a 20-year bond for reconstruction costs.

"The new library opened to the public in 2006, and, in many ways, it is equal parts library and museum, with numerous irreplaceable items from its school day roots, such as gymnasium bleacher seats, the clock that rang for passing times between classes, and Batchelder tiles that surrounded drinking fountains. Even an old fireplace, that had been hidden in the kindergarten room, was restored to be the centerpiece of the Belvedere Reading Room.

"Wood-framed black and white photos of old Charlevoix line the second-floor walls, allowing a look back at the community, the building and the people in the 19th and early

The converted gymnasium creates an almost cathedral-like atmosphere for browsing the shelves of books and for quiet reading space for library patrons.



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Charlevoix Library

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20th centuries. And, even while the library's inspiring past is obvious to visitors, the utilization of its considerable space is even more impressive.

"Today, one wing is devoted almost entirely to children, with a Youth Activity Center for kids' concerts, storytelling, special events; plus 'Grandma Geri's Garden,' where kids can play and make music on kinetic instruments. It also houses a Game and Activity room and a "Library of Things," which offers diverse items that can be checked out at no charge to patrons.

"The Pew-lves room on the first floor, in what was the old gymnasium-auditorium, houses the adult collections, along with numerous reading nooks, study rooms, and a quiet mezzanine. Just beyond this area are Community Rooms A & B, which provide gathering space that can be used for Town Halls, Lifelong Learning events, concerts, and much more.

Whether a visitor or a resident, it's fairly obvious that you're always welcome in Charlevoix's "Living Room" – the Charlevoix Public Library.

**Happy
holidays to
you and
your loved
ones!**



FOML Officers

President – Joe David (Cascade Branch of Kent District Library)

Vice President – Jill Sodt (Mott Community College)

Treasurer – Sue Johnson (Novi Public Library)

Secretary – Bryonna Barton (Eaton Rapids District Library)

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