

Autumn 2001
Volume 1, Issue 2
Archives Seeking Support

Promoting Volunteerism

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One of the prime concerns of small non-profit archival repositories is locating necessary support for projects. Limited staff and funding can keep Archives from accomplishing goals. Following our first newsletter on collaboration, which also provided a list of grant opportunities for small organizations, this edition of our newsletter focuses on how organizations can successfully implement volunteer programs.

How to Attract Volunteers

- Work cooperatively with area repositories to develop interest in archives and historical projects
- Define your role in the community and prepare to verbalize why your work is important
- Survey the community to determine what they think about your organization - Determine if it is

necessary for you to change community perception of your work

- Brainstorm a list of projects that can be accomplished with volunteers - Work to recruit help for specific tasks and to establish committees to reach specific goals
- Ask each volunteer to recruit two new volunteers - Do not neglect to approach someone because he has offered assistance or has refused to help in the past - encourage businesses to support your goals
- Use three types of marketing approaches: 1. Personal contact - members, friends of current volunteers, acquaintances, staff relatives 2. Targeted marketing - flyers, e-mail, listservs, phone campaigns 3. Mass marketing - notices in newspapers, radio, television spots, web page
- Through outreach, demonstrate that you are organized, serious, and passionate about what you do and about history - Look at the community and those who use your archives as partners in preserving history and seek to give them a stake in your success

How to Keep Volunteers

Archives volunteers can be skilled workers looking for a challenging opportunity or individuals looking for a chance to serve, an educational opportunity, or a place that will offer them a sense of community. Though each organization seeks volunteers to further its own goals, the needs and desires of each

participant must be taken into account for a volunteer program to be successful. Frustrated volunteers who feel that their tasks are too difficult or as if they are not a valued part of the organization will not remain committed to your institution.

Prepare for volunteers by creating a list of projects, providing a clean workspace, and ensuring proper training and supervision. Make volunteers feel welcome and as if they have a stake in the organization. Allow them to participate in the decision process regarding their role. Create an organizational chart that includes volunteers and discusses how important it is for them to reach their goals for the continued success of the organization. Create a plan for volunteers by listing the types of duties to be performed, what experience / training is needed to accomplish specific tasks, and create specific achievable goals for each volunteer.

Show interest in the work of your volunteers. Give them room to work through a project in their own way without too much interference. Ask for their advice and opinions on issues of importance and keep them informed about developments. As a supervisor, remain upbeat about the organization and all that it accomplishes. Do not focus on negatives.

Continually show your appreciation for volunteers. Even organizations with limited funds can do this. Be sure to praise volunteers for a job well done. Hold an appreciation party. If you don't have funds for a fancy bash, hold a potluck party on a beautiful day on the front lawn. Create certificates of appreciation on a computer. Tell classes who visit you about how volunteers help keep your organization running. Ask the students to create pictures showing their thanks to volunteers.

Be patient with your volunteer program and give it a chance to grow. Happy volunteers will attract more volunteers. A great source for more information on this topic is: Shar McBee's book: *To Lead is to Serve: How to Attract Volunteers and Keep Them*, 1994.
www.sharmcbee.com

Web Sites with More Information about Volunteerism

Check out these excellent sites with useful tips and information for recruiting volunteers:

Beyond Recruitment - <http://www.nald.ca/FULLTEXT/Clo/cover.htm> - "An Online Workshop About Recruitment & Maintaining Volunteers in the New Environment" from Community Literacy of Ontario and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

Energize - <http://www.energizeinc.com/> - information for volunteer management

Museum Marketing Tips - Volunteer Recruitment and Recognition - http://www.museummarketingtips.com/links/links_vol.html - links to articles and tutorials about recruiting volunteers.

Service Leader - <http://www.serviceleader.org/> - links to volunteer management information

Volunteer Recruitment—Tips from the Field - <http://www.txserve.org/mgmt/volrec/> - information on preparation, recruitment, keeping volunteers, and a bibliography.

*See our web site for links to more information of value to libraries, archives, and museums:
www.mannon.org/archives/links.htm*