



# **The State of the Friends**

## **San Luis Obispo Friends of the Library**

### **Report on Business Impacts of the**

### **Covid Pandemic,**

### **March 2020 – December 2022**

For over 40 years the San Luis Obispo Friends of the Library has raised funds to support the SLO Library's programs, collections and facilities.

In March 2020, just after the close of our largest and most successful Annual Book Sale, which raised over \$20,000, the Corona Virus struck and abruptly shut down our normal operations: the Library closed in mid-March, which shuttered the Friends Bookstore; book donations, the foundation of our primary fundraiser, were no longer accepted at the Library; our key book sale venue, the Veterans Memorial Building, was no longer available; and distancing requirements precluded not only large gatherings, but most activity bringing people together.

### **Friends Response**

The Friends Board switched to Zoom meetings and began crafting fundraising plans that would meet several criteria: 1) minimize costs; 2) adhere to Covid protocols; 3) maximize the return on volunteer hours; and 4) be sustainable, since it was unknown how long the Corona Virus would continue. We were determined to continue supporting the Library!

Since the March 2020 Annual Sale had depleted our stock of books, we began a temporary volunteer-staffed book donation pickup service. Community response was strong. Pickup requests resulted in thousands of donated books.

### **A New Fundraising Effort**

In April 2020, one of our volunteers (Mary French) offered to place on eBay some items that hadn't sold at the Annual Sale. The result was eye-opening! They sold for more than they would have brought at the sale. Thus, our online sales fundraising was launched under Mary's diligent and resourceful management. Through December 2022, eBay sales raised \$23,543 – our most successful fundraising project. *(Note: We are currently redesigning our inhouse eBay sales process to address new tax implications.)*

## **Back in the Bookstore Business**

The Library gradually opened to the public, first through curbside-only service, and then “Grab and Dash” time-limited visits. In June 2021, the Library fully opened. Library staff proposed a new location for the Friends Bookstore - and we co-designed a new self-service Bookstore featuring adult and children’s books, most recently published and in “like new” condition, for very modest prices. The Bookstore opened in August 2021, on the Library’s first floor.

Through December 2022, Bookstore sales total \$8,489. We count on the Bookstore to be a steady income source with very few costs, and thank Board Members Sue Keller and Cheri Jump for designing and managing this project.

## **It’s Sale Time Again**

After planning, then cancelling, several sales due to Covid surges, we held our first sale over two days in the Library Atrium in July 2021. Customers were enthusiastic at the “Welcome Back!” sale, calling friends and urging them to “Come on down”!

As pandemic concerns eased over time, we developed an expanded sale held in October 2021 in the Community Room adjacent to the Library. To maximize this still modest-sized venue, we were open for 6 days, adding fresh stock each day to encourage repeat visits. In October 2022, we used the same venue for a 4-day sale, bringing total sales from the two events to \$10,662.

## **Another New Fundraiser!**

Capitalizing on a new decorating trend sweeping the nation, we put a bold foot forward and launched a “Books by Color” shop on [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) in January 2022. Hardcover books are stripped of their jackets, grouped by color and sold in sets. Significantly, they bring a higher price than if they were sold to read...sometimes a much higher price! We’re going to ride this wave as long as possible. Thank you to Board Member Bronwyn Rafferty for developing and managing this project.

## **Self-Improvement**

During the last two years, the Friends have undertaken several core projects that have been on our to-do list for some time. For example, we engaged a web designer to develop a fresh new website that is more user-friendly and less repetitive. Note: for information on accessing our eBay sales, our Bookstore hours and pricing, and/or our Etsy shop for Books by Color, please go to our website, [slofol.org](http://slofol.org). You can also access the website via our new QR Code.



We also increased our focus on volunteer outreach and development. We are fortunate to have on our Board of Directors, a “volunteer champion”, Dawnna McDougall. She has reached out to potential volunteers, encouraging them to become involved in our activities that best “fit” for their skills and areas of interest. She always makes them feel welcome and appreciated. The volunteers that Dawnna brings into the Friends are the future of our organization, and they have made us a better organization.

## **The Bottom Line - Support to the Library**

Over the last eight years, the Friends have provided \$272,600 in funding to the Library, as well as helping secure an additional \$38,920 in grants. Our funding supports Adult and Children’s Programs and Audio Visual Collections.

The Covid pandemic strongly affected our available income, especially during the lengthy closure of the Bookstore and the Friends decision to not conduct large sale events that could compromise public health. In Fiscal Year 20-21, we were able to fulfill the Library’s request for \$34,000, but we ended the year with a \$25,857 deficit.

However, in FY 21-22, our income almost tripled, thanks to cash donors, online sales, membership dues, Bookstore sales, and the resumption of public book sales. We granted the Library’s \$17,000 funding request, and ended the year with net income of \$8,444.

In this current FY 22-23, we have fulfilled the Library’s request for \$20,000. We plan to reactivate and expand our online sales to sustain income growth, and we’re seeking creative ways to increase our income and trim costs, to help the Library meet the community’s current and future needs.