

Fifty Years of Friends

by Robert Vitz



The Friends of the Public Library
of Cincinnati & Hamilton County

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BOOKS ARE OUR FRIENDS...

It is not often that an individual or organization can make a substantial, meaningful contribution to a community, but that's exactly what The Friends of the Public Library has done over the last 50 years. Whether sponsoring an Irish dance troupe, providing prize incentives for a summer reading program or purchasing rare books, The Friends has been there to answer the needs of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County by providing much-needed funds and materials.

Since the Library receives its operating revenue from public tax dollars (and cost increases seem to constantly outstrip revenue increases), there are strict limitations as to the expenditure of those funds. In today's environment, that leaves a gaping hole that The Friends is able to help fill with revenue generated through monthly and on-line book sales, memberships, gift shop sales, gifts and grants. Additionally, in-kind donations of gently used books to schools and other community organizations contributes to The Friends' mission of helping make information and knowledge accessible to the community.

Much has changed over the last 50 years, but one thing has remained constant - the steadfast resolution of The Friends to the well being of the Public Library and the citizens of southwestern Ohio and surrounding areas. Thanks go to the countless numbers of volunteers over the years that have made The Friends, and the Public Library, the wonderful institutions that they are.

Come along and read the story by Robert Vitz that documents the journey of a fledgling organization that started in 1957 and has evolved into a dedicated group of civic-minded individuals determined to make a difference in the community on behalf of the Library that they cherish and love.

Jeffrey P. Waltz
President
Friends of the Public Library
October 2007

Fifty Years of Friends 1957-2007

The rains came down hard on that April afternoon when 34 “public spirited citizens” gathered in the Trustees’ Room of the Main Library to organize the Friends of the Public Library. Alice Plaut (convention of the time always referred to her as Mrs. Jacob M. Plaut), head of the Library’s Art and Music Department, later described them as “gallant souls who braved puddles and downpour” to launch an organization which she had so vigorously supported. John T. Nolan, Jr., a member of the Cincinnati Library’s board of trustees, and his mother, Mrs. John T. Nolan, Sr., aware of a similar organization in Detroit, had promoted the idea among a small group of acquaintances, particularly Eugene S. Duffield, an executive with Federated Department Stores, and Richard R. Deupree, Jr., an attorney with Dinsmore & Shohl. Nolan convinced his fellow board members to provide a loan of \$500 to establish a “Friends of the Library” group, and Joseph S. Stern, Jr., an executive with the United States Shoe Corporation, contributed \$1,000 to “get things started.”¹ And, so, on April 22, 1957, those “gallant souls” met to define their mission and elect officers. They shared a belief that the Public Library was “an important factor in the cultural life of the community,” and that its “friends” should help interpret the Library to the community.²

Electing officers became the first order of business. Richard R. Deupree, Jr., served as the first president, ably supported by vice-president Joseph S. Stern, Jr., treasurer Mrs. John T.

Nolan, and secretary Mrs. Stanley Rowe, Jr. William T. Earls, Mrs. Addison Lanier, Eugene S. Duffield, and Ernest I. Miller, the head of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, rounded out the first board of directors. Others who attended the meeting included Harry J. Finke, Jr., Oliver M. Gale, Woodward Garber, Mrs. Virginius Hall, Mrs. Fred Lazarus, Jr., Mrs. Bertrand L. Smith, Jr., and, of course, Alice Plaut. The members agreed to “spread interest in the Library,” “encourage gifts and bequests,” and “provide interesting and varied programs” with which to stimulate support for the century old institution. They set individual memberships at \$5 per year (equivalent to approximately \$50 in 2007), with club and organization membership at \$15. Those who contributed \$25 or more were to be recognized as “Sponsors.”³ Alice Plaut sent out a note to library staff encouraging them to join the fledgling organization, and in October President Deupree addressed an open letter to prospective members, encouraging them to join as evidence of their “friendly concern for your library.” Librarian Miller kindly loaned the clerical services of Miss Eugenia C. Rhein of the Library’s administrative staff.

As befit this group of mostly socially prominent citizens, the Friends’ first event was a “Founders’ Tea,” held in September at the Main Library. Sixty-five members attended. They sipped tea, admired a display of books recently donated to the Library, and viewed an exhibit showing how similar groups in other cities functioned. The following month, as reported in

John T. Nolan



Shown at the first general meeting of the Friend held January 6, 1958 were, from the left, William T. Earls, Stanley Rowe, Jr., Alice Plaut (Mrs. Jacob M.), Walter F. Foreman, and Melissa Lanier (Mrs. Addison).



Examining some of the valuable gifts to the Library from the Friends of the Public Library in 1961 are, left to right, Ernest I. Miller, Librarian, Alfred A. Moore, secretary of the Friends, Hall C. Park, treasurer, and Joseph S. Stern, Jr., former president.

the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, the Friends made its first donation to the Library's collection, a history of the American Jewish Committee, titled *The Pursuit of Liberty*, and a two-volume edition of *The Papers of Louis Marshall*, one of the founders of the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, the Friends made its first donation to the Library's collection, a history of the American Jewish Committee, titled *The Pursuit of Liberty*, and a two-volume edition of *The Papers of Louis Marshall*, one of the founders of the American Jewish Committee.⁴ These books were presented to the Friends by the American Jewish Committee to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the organization's founding. Warming to its mission, the newly formed organization held its first public program in January 1958. The previous August, the board had asked Joseph Stern to contact Senator John Kennedy of Massachusetts about speaking "in a non-political vein" at the first meeting. Although Stern had been a classmate of Kennedy's at Harvard, he apparently was unable to get the senator—perhaps it was that political restriction. Instead, Dr. Louis R. Gottschalk, professor of modern history at the University of Chicago, spoke on "The United States and Lafayette," a topic timed to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the Frenchman's birth. The Main Library presented a Lafayette exhibit loaned by the French government. By this time membership had reached 549, including 74 sponsors, 17 clubs, and 15 business firms.⁵

At its first annual meeting, held in April 1958, Dr. I. M. Levitt, Director of the Fels Planetarium (Franklin Institute, Philadelphia), presented to the membership a lively talk on "Satellites, American and Russian," a most timely post-Sputnik topic and one which fit neatly into the International

Geophysical Year. And while the United States had not yet successfully launched a satellite, a nice local connection was that the rocket engines used in the country's developing space program came from the General Electric Evendale plant. In conjunction with this theme, the organization sponsored an exhibit at the downtown library of 3-dimensional displays created by junior and senior high school students on the theme, "Satellites in the Space Age."

By the end of the first year, the Friends had settled into a comfortable routine: a members only tea in the fall, with a display of the organization's gifts and purchases, and often accompanied by an educational film, then a winter session, open to the public and held in the evening at the Main Library, and, finally, an open spring annual meeting, usually held at the Cincinnati Art Museum, that served as a business meeting. Both the winter and spring sessions featured prominent speakers, which included in those early years Pulitzer Prize winning poet Mark Van Doren, Civil War historian Bell I. Wiley, Senator Ernest Gruening of the recently-admitted Alaska, Aline B. Saarinen, who spoke about her late husband, the distinguished architect Eero Saarinen, and Lionel Trilling, a Columbia University professor of English literature who spoke on James Joyce.

As one of its principal goals, and as it gradually built up its own financial reserves, the Friends purchased items which could not be obtained through the Library's annual operating budget. In November 1957, at the suggestion of Ernest Miller, and no doubt warmly supported by attorney Deupree, the Friends obtained a first edition of Sir William Blackstone's



For the Friends annual Collector's Choice exhibit at the Main Library held in December 1963, selected items collected over 60 years by William A. Earls were featured. Shown are, from the left, Mr. Earls, whose son William T. Earls was a former Friends president, Catherine M. Kilcoyne, Head of the Art and Music Department, and Alice Plaut, Friends Executive Secretary.

4-volume *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765-1769), priced at \$475. The *Commentaries* edged out "Giant of the Renaissance," a film about Leonardo da Vinci, and a facsimile of *Codex Resta*, a seventeenth century collection of drawings. The Blackstone was soon joined by first editions of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (London, 1859), Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (London, 1811), Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (London, 1861), and Galileo Galilei's *Dialogo . . . due massimi sistemi del mondo* (Florence, 1632), the latter three acquired by Alice Plaut on the first of several authorized trips to Europe to make purchases for the Friends. To honor the memory of former librarian Chalmers Hadley, the Friends purchased a fine copy of Joseph Addison's *Works* (London, 1761). All things considered, this was a most impressive beginning.

By 1960 the organization had acquired a copy of the *Giunta Bible* (Venice, 1511), as well as a first English edition of Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (London, 1620), a 17th century French illuminated manuscript, *Heures Royales* (Paris, ca. 1699), and first editions of John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690) and Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* (London, 1687). For its fifth anniversary year, 1962, the Friends purchased a magnificent copy of the Fourth Folio of Shakespeare's plays (London, 1685), presented as the library's 2,000,000th acquisition. In addition to books, the Friends purchased films, usually finely crafted, award-winning documentaries on history or art, for the Main Library's Films and Recordings Department. One of the most popular was "Americans on Everest," a National

Geographic Society production that told the story of the 1963 American expedition which included Cincinnatians Barry Bishop and Richard Emerson.

The Friends has always found energetic leadership. Beginning with Richard Deupree, Jr., and continuing through the current president, Jeffrey P. Waltz, these men and women have consistently pushed the organization forward, often in challenging new directions.⁶ Early board presidents, however, usually served only two years, so continuity was most frequently provided by a volunteer executive secretary, who handled the day-to-day business. No executive secretary brought greater love and support to the Friends than its first, Alice Plaut. She had been a driving force in the organization's founding, and while her goal of 1,000 members in the first year proved chimerical (that goal took ten years), she never ceased promoting the Friends as one of the great support organizations in the community. In her position she handled most of the arrangements for meetings, teas, speakers, and displays. She sent out annual letters to individuals and clubs seeking new members and financial support; she insured that Friends' activities received notice in the society columns of local newspapers; and she even arranged for her son, James Plaut, deputy United States Commissioner for the Brussels World's Fair, to speak at the 1959 winter meeting. Conscientious and full of good ideas, no other individual did so much to make the Friends successful.

Plaut was born in New York City, the daughter of Dr. Bernard Sachs, an eminent neurologist. After graduating from Bryn Mawr College, she met her future husband, Jacob

Plaut, a native Cincinnati, while living with her family in Switzerland. The Plauts eventually settled in Cincinnati where they reared three children. She joined the library staff in 1935, and at the urging of Chalmers Hadley, she enrolled at Columbia University to obtain a degree in library science. At age 50, and now a grandmother, Alice Plaut returned to the Queen City to become head of the Public Library's Fine Arts Department (later Art and Music). When she retired in 1958, at age 70, she was determined to make a clean break. "There will be no suggestions or advice from me once the doors close. Of course, I will visit the Library. But I shall keep my hat on." ⁷ She visited often, no doubt with hat on, and devoted her considerable energy to promoting and developing the Friends.

In 1962, at the suggestion of board member Simon Lazarus, Jr., the Friends spun off the Young Friends of the Public Library, as a way of connecting high school students to the Library. It is best remembered for *The Seven Hills Review*, a literary journal edited and designed by students, which first focused on book reviews by members but soon expanded to include more creative writing, primarily poetry. Students also designed the covers. Assisted by library staff in the Fiction Department, these ambitious young people selected entries and produced two issues a year. The Public Relations Department helped with layout and proofreading, while the "old" Friends paid for the printing. ⁸ Young Friends convened periodically on Saturday afternoons at the Main Library to meet a local celebrity and enjoy refreshments. At their first session in spring 1962, Gordy Coleman, popular first baseman of the Cincinnati Reds, drew an enthusiastic crowd, and later sessions brought Wayne Embry, captain of the National

Basketball Association Cincinnati Royals and David Barrie, director of Edgecliff Academy, who spoke on "Big Surprises in Shakespeare." Barrie's talk brought a standing room only crowd. Local humorist and radio personality Dick Perry, who spoke on "My 43 Years as a Teen Age Failure; or, How Not to Write the Great American Novel," was a big hit as well. In 1969, when the Young Friends sponsored a film and book festival for teens, almost 800 young people belonged to the organization, and 10 years later membership had soared to 1,400. As teenage interests changed, however, membership in the Young Friends declined in the late 1970s, and while the Friends continued to support many Library-sponsored youth and children's activities, the Young Friends stopped meeting some time in the 1980s. *The Seven Hills Review* continued in print until 2002 when it shifted to an online publication for three years; in 2005 it was replaced by a teen poetry contest, "Random Acts of Poetry," held in April (National Poetry Month) and sponsored by the Friends. ⁹

In 1965, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the new Main Library building, the staff organized "Machine Tool Week," and the Friends, in the spirit of the occasion, used its financial resources to purchase several books on early machinery, including one by Albrecht Durer, *Etliche Underricht zu Befestigung der Stadt, Schloss und Flecken* (Nuremberg, 1527), a treatise on medieval fortifications. That same year, Librarian Ernest Miller informed the Friends' board that there was a growing shortage of trained librarians and suggested that the Friends might want to fund an annual scholarship for someone to attend library school. The board soon established the Friends of the Public Library Scholarship, at \$1000, but it was not until 1973 that the first recipient (and apparently the



The Friends 10th annual meeting was held in 1968 at the Cincinnati Art Museum.



Pictured in 1970 with some members of the Young Friends which he began is, second from the left, Simon Lazarus, Jr.



The *Seven Hills Review*, showcasing the literary work of area teens, was published by the Friends from 1963 until 2002.

only recipient), David Muse, headed off to school. Two years later he returned to work at the Madeira Branch. In 1966 the Public Library sought a bond levy in order to construct an addition to the already cramped eleven-year-old building, and this opened up a new opportunity for the Friends. Members publicly supported the levy and individually contributed over \$2,000 to the campaign fund, eliciting a nice thank you letter from Librarian Ernest Miller, but at the November polls the levy went down to defeat. In 1967 the Friends celebrated its tenth anniversary with an exhibition in the Main Library's Tower Room of members' prized works, as well as a display of books purchased by the Friends.¹⁰ More importantly, the organization reached the 1,000 member milestone.

The decade of the 1970s witnessed numerous changes in the growing organization. First, there was something of a changing of the guard. Following the death of Ernest Miller, James R. Hunt became the new library director in 1971, the same year that John Diehl took on the duties of president of the Friends; in addition, Alice Plaut, who had been slowing down, died in 1972. Catherine Kilcoyne, who had succeeded Plaut as head of the Art and Music Department, now succeeded her as the Friends' executive secretary. To help fill Plaut's shoes, and as a reflection of the Friends' expanding role in the community, Eugenia C. Rhein and A. Jayne Craven, both of the library staff, volunteered as financial secretary and assistant to the executive secretary respectively. Rhein, known as Jeanne, devoted her life to the Public Library, serving four head librarians as administrative secretary, and Craven, another long time of the library staff, served as Head of Art and Music from 1974 to 1991. Kilcoyne, herself a 42-year veteran of the Library, retired in 1973 and spent the next



Alex Haley, renowned author of *Roots*, spoke to a capacity Friends audience in 1970.

13 years “running” the Friends. Her tenure, added to that of Alice Plaut, gave the Friends almost 30 years of energetic and capable direction. When Kilcoyne died in 1986, the positions of executive secretary and assistant executive secretary were eliminated. Dianne Schuetz of the library staff then handled the routine financial affairs of the Friends until her retirement from the Library in January 1998.

October 1971 brought public controversy, part of the culture wars of that turbulent era. A small right-wing group, the Constitutional Heritage Club, and an off-shoot calling itself The Real Friends of the Library, attacked the Library’s selection policy. In February 1972, they launched a petition drive to pressure the Common Pleas judges to appoint a library trustee “who will not allow the distribution of material of a pornographic, revolutionary or subversive nature or material which in any manner might result in social or psychological harm to members of the community.”¹¹ The Friends board’s initial response was to ignore the hue and cry; “the less said the better,” according to the minutes. In June of the next year, however, Librarian Hunt appealed to the board to support the Library’s position publicly. Citing “harassment” of library staff, he requested that the board urge members to attend an open meeting between the Library board’s law committee and representatives from the Constitutional Heritage Club, scheduled for June 23, and show support for the Library’s book selection policy. The board voted unanimously to do so.¹² Friends’ president John Diehl, emphasizing the “public” in Public Library, sent a strong letter to the membership denouncing censorship by “a small group of zealots” and enclosed copies of a

cogently argued editorial by Walter Friedenber, editor of the *Cincinnati Post*. Although for several more years the Constitutional Heritage Club continued to push for a board member more in touch with its views, the Library weathered the storm.¹³

June 1972 also brought an even more important change to the Friends. James Hunt suggested that books discarded from the Library collection be turned over to the Friends for sale, with the proceeds to go to the Friends. The board happily embraced the idea. Fountain Square was chosen as the site for the sale, and Sarah Kahn volunteered to organize the event, set for the following June. Advertised as “Great Depression Prices,” Friends’ volunteers and library staff brought over 4,000 new and used books to Fountain Square where enthusiastic buyers descended in droves on the three tables used; over half the books sold the first day and the scheduled five-day event had to be shortened to three days. Proceeds totaled \$2,916.61. At its next meeting the board voted to hold the sale again the following year, along with a request that members donate their own unwanted books. The Fountain Square location and the first week in June soon made the Sale a much-anticipated annual event in the city, organized by Sarah Kahn’s experienced hand for the next six years, and each year brought more books (as well as records and other materials) and increased profits.¹⁴ The Friends had found its calling.

With an increasing source of income, the Friends soon took on its most ambitious financial project to date. Plans for an addition to the Main Library finally materialized and in 1975 the Friends optimistically agreed to raise \$100,000 towards the



Pictured in 1970 are two long-time Friends directors and past presidents, John Diehl (left) and Stanley Shores.



Helping to sort books for the first Friends Book Sale held on Fountain Square in June 1973 are, from the left, Chairman of the Book Sale Committee Mrs. Louis E. Kahn (Sarah), Mrs. Stanley Rowe, Jr. (Louise), Mrs. James McB. Garvey, Jr., and Mrs. Simon Lazarus, Jr. (Harriet).

project. This led to the establishment of the Signature Wall where library supporters could purchase for \$100 a brick with their own signature or commemorate the name of someone else. Library board president John T. Nolan, Jr., purchased the first brick. The \$100,000 goal was reached in 1981.

When the nation celebrated its bicentennial in 1976, the Friends sponsored "A Salute to American Composers, 1776-1976," with pianist Sister Margaret Dilling, RSCJ, entertaining an attentive noontime audience at the downtown library. The Friends also joined with the Cincinnati Historical Society in the printing of 1,000 copies of Benjamin Drake's and Edward D. Mansfield's *Cincinnati in 1826*, the 150th anniversary of the book's original publication. One hundred copies were hard bound and numbered, and ten of those, with a special binding, were auctioned off by local celebrities as a fund raising venture. Although the amount raised proved disappointing, it revealed the organization's increasing emphasis on money-making projects.

The Friends became more racially diverse during the 1970s, a reflection of changing social issues in the country. In 1970 it had brought Alex Haley, author of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and soon to be better known for his seminal book *Roots* and the highly acclaimed television series based on it. He spoke on "Black Heritage: A Saga of Black History" for an enthusiastic, capacity audience, and that same year Mrs. Lois Conyers, an African American, was invited to join the board of directors. Nine years later she became president of the organization. The board also provided funds to support the Library's Negro Week programs, and when Martin Luther

King, Jr., Day was established, the Friends annually supported a commemorative program. For the organization's 20th anniversary, in 1977, the Friends joined the Japanese-American Citizens League in hosting "An Evening in 'Old Japan.'" Members celebrated, amidst a display of lovely Japanese kimonos, in the Huenefeld Tower Room, and the Main Library joined in by providing an exhibit of Japanese books and prints from its collection, along with a showing of films on Japanese art in the Children's Room.

The Friends also found ways to recognize its own. In 1973, display cases honoring Alice Plaut and Ernest I. Miller were purchased, the latter a joint effort with the Library's Staff Association. The board also discussed commissioning a portrait of Plaut and placing it in a proposed Friends "area" of the planned new addition. Apparently, this idea was dropped. Two display cases were provided for the collection of Samuel Johnson material given to the library by Simon Lazarus, Jr. In 1985 Sarah Kahn, whose egalitarian vision had been instrumental in keeping dues modest and book prices low, resigned from the board. In a tribute to her many contributions the Friends provided \$2,500 for a Sarah Weil Kahn Trust Fund, to be used for the purchase of dictionaries that would be added to the fine collection acquired by her husband, business leader and philanthropist Louis E. Kahn. It also established a Distinguished Citizens Award, the first recipient to be Sarah Kahn.¹⁵ At the suggestion of James Hunt, the Friends provided "memento boxes" for each retiring member of the library staff, and every year those library staff who volunteered many hours in support of the Friends received small cash bonuses. In 1987, when Robert Rodger,

head of the Library's Public Relations department, retired, the board voted to give him a \$2,000 gift in appreciation of his many contributions to the Friends.

In the late Seventies, clouds appeared. Memberships in the Friends began to decline, and the board experimented with new types of activities. It was determined that visits to other libraries might prove attractive in boosting membership, and so an evening trip in 1978 to the libraries at the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College was organized. Unfortunately, heavy traffic in exiting the university's parking lots led to a late arrival at Hebrew Union College and a closed library there. The following year a spring trip to see the Library of Congress and the new wing of the National Gallery of Art met with general satisfaction; however, neither trip proved successful enough to continue the idea. William T. Earls, chairman of the membership committee, made several proposals designed to bring in new members. First, he called on each board member to "secure ten new members;" second, he had membership forms placed in each bag at the June Book Sale; and, third, he secured the mailing lists from over 30 organizations and created a computerized "master list" to be used for a mass mailing to over 12,000 people. Results proved disappointing. By 1980, memberships had dropped below 600, and a note of panic crept into board discussions. To offset declining revenues, the board raised dues, with individuals now paying \$10, families \$15, while sponsor and donor levels remained the same. In the meantime, Earls continued to refine his computerized list. And then the situation turned around. A successful campaign in 1982 bore fruit and over the next four years memberships climbed to 1,156. Everyone breathed more comfortably. Another problem

involved the size of the board of directors. Difficulties developed in getting board members to serve as officers; several had already served in leadership positions and others lacked the time. It became evident that a larger board was needed, and over the next two years 12 positions were added to the board, easing the strain on the "old timers."

In 1986 the Public Library faced a funding crisis. The burden of the new addition's operating costs, coupled with the elimination of the state intangibles tax, which had provided revenue since the 1930s, left the library scrambling to retain adequate state support. The Friends expanded its mission by stepping in with \$10,000 to help retain a lobbyist in Columbus for two years, a situation that resurfaced some years later when the Library faced even more serious budget cuts.¹⁶ Programming by the Friends also began to change. The lectures and teas that had worked during the organization's early years failed to reach a younger generation.¹⁷ Teas disappeared, and the board dispensed with the traditional speaker at its general meetings. Instead, more funds went into assisting the Public Library's own lively community involvement, particularly music and dance programs. The annual St. Patrick's Day and Veterans Day programs received significant financial support, as did various events at branch libraries. The Friends underwrote celebrations for branch anniversaries, starting with the Hyde Park Branch's 75th, as well as dedications for the new branches. It even contributed a small amount of funds for purchasing basic supplies for the public such as paperclips and scotch tape. The Friends, pushed by Ruth Keefe, chairperson of the program committee, supported the "Salute to Scholars," an annual recognition of local high school valedictorians,¹⁸



The Friends first book sale on Fountain Square held in June 1973.



Friends president Lois Conyers is shown in 1979 with students from Ayer Elementary School who bought a commemorative brick for the Signature Wall to help support construction of the Main Library addition.

as well as the popular Summer Reading Program. It also provided financial assistance for moving the Louise Nevelson sculpture, “Sky Landscape II,” formerly on Seventh Street in front of the Federated Department Store office, to the Main Library’s Walnut Street plaza. And when the Library established the John T. Nolan, Jr., bi-annual lecture in 1985, the Friends funded the receptions. Thus, when the Friends celebrated its 25th anniversary in October 1982, the event came at a particularly important time in the organization’s development for it both reflected the accomplishments of the past and hinted at the organization’s many new directions. The month-long celebration included a poetry reading by Nikki Giovanni, a rousing noontime performance by the Queen City Brass, an elaborate display of some of the fine purchases given to the Library, and a well-attended capstone luncheon featuring local author Stephen Birmingham who spoke about his personal experiences in writing.

As the plans for the Main Library’s new addition began to take shape, the Friends board devoted much attention to space for the Friends. Very early in the planning stage, Librarian Hunt had suggested to the board that the new addition might have a “Friends of the Public Library Auditorium,” and then asked if the Friends would help in the financing. The board enthusiastically passed a motion to that effect. Later, as plans became more detailed, some board members pushed for a “boutique” or “tea room.” Hunt now envisioned a store “patterned after the shop in the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts in New York City.” To Hunt, such a store would provide a “visible daily reminder of the existence of the Friends of the Public

Library.” It could also serve as “a hospitality center for members and prospective members,” he wrote in a letter to Charles Westheimer, president of the Friends.¹⁹ During the next year board members spent considerable time discussing the merits of the various possibilities, but eventually they decided on a more traditional book or gift shop in which library-related items would be sold. Helen Heekin and Susan Tew volunteered to co-chair a shop committee, but, as plans progressed, it became apparent that a paid manager would be necessary.

In September 1983, the board signed Mrs. Christy Connelly, a veteran of retail operations at the Cincinnati Zoo, to a three-month contract to get the shop operating, and \$10,000 was allotted as start-up funds. Two months later, using cast-off library furniture and display cases, the Friends’ Shop opened in a narrow space near the Walnut Street entrance, with a special members-only opening and reception on November 1. Despite a burst water pipe and lack of heating that first winter, the enthusiasm of Connelly and the loyal volunteers made the shop a successful venture.²⁰ In December the board extended Connelly’s contract for another three months, followed in March by a one-year contract. Indeed, Christy Connelly managed the shop for 10 more years, not retiring until 1995, when Elaine Michael took over the operation. One of Connelly’s duties was purchasing items, and she often combined her own world-wide vacation trips with buying ventures to enhance the shop’s various offerings. In addition, she provided the idea for the popular bibliophile tote bag that displays the word “library” in 12 languages. Her outstanding work as Friends’ Shop manager and active participation in



Longtime Friends directors shown in 1993, from left to right, are Ruth Keefe, Dan Keefe, Genevieve Pennington, and Timothy Heile.

the Museum Store Association earned for her the President's Award from the association in 1992.²¹

The Friends' Shop proved financially successful from the beginning and, in addition, provided a much welcomed visible presence in the Library for the Friends. Its revenues, coupled with the annual book sale on Fountain Square, allowed the organization to expand its support of the Public Library, and by the late-1980s the organization had settled into a new routine, one that would seem familiar to today's members. The board continued to purchase items for the Library's collection, but de-emphasizing rare items and responding more to requests from library staff that would strengthen existing areas of the collection. Of special significance, at the urging of Charles Westheimer in 1983, the Friends funded a re-printing of *Ye Gigglampz*, a weekly magazine of satire and criticism, written and illustrated by Lafcadio Hearn and Henry Farny, which ran for nine issues in 1874. Jon Christopher Hughes supplied a fine explanatory essay; Westheimer guaranteed to cover any financial loss to the Friends. The following year *Ye Gigglampz* received an "Award of Distinction" from the American Museum Association in its publications competition.²² In 1987, spearheaded by Monica Nolan, the Friends helped purchase a facsimile copy of the *Book of Kells*, a 9th century Irish illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels;²³ two years later it provided \$10,000 to acquire the 507 volumes of the *American History Collection*. Other significant purchases included 128 volumes of *The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1891), microfilm of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1900-1990, for the State of

Indiana, a four-volume facsimile reprint of the *Gutenberg Bible*, which included two volumes of commentaries, and a copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, illustrated by prominent artist Robert Motherwell. The board also authorized the spending of \$75,000, over a five year period, to assist in the purchase of the 1920 United States Census (a total of 10,666 reels of microfilm), a wonderful addition to the Library's genealogical materials.

Friends' support for the Library soon went far beyond additions to the collection. Increased attention went to program needs, as the Library further expanded its role in the community. Money went to each branch library, as well as Main, to assist with the popular Summer Reading Program. Black History Month and Martin Luther King, Jr., Day programs received assistance; support went to the annual Bookfest, complete with its popular banner competition, which drew thousands of school children to both Main and the branches; and the Friends made possible many of the musical performances held in the Main Library's atrium, most notably programs commemorating important anniversaries in the lives of Bach, Handel, Scarlatti and Mozart. In 1988, when Cincinnati celebrated its bicentennial, the Main Library hosted an exhibit of "Hidden Treasures," which included contributions from the area's libraries. The Friends helped out by funding the reception at the exhibit's opening.

Extending its support even further, the Friends provided welcome assistance to many other aspects of the Library. On April 13, 1982, it stepped in to fund much of the dedication ceremony and reception for the new addition, now known



Book Sale Committee co-chairs Betsy LaMacchia (left) and Mary Lu Aft welcome volunteers to the Newton & Dana avenues warehouse in January 1996.

as the South Building. In 1985 it contributed \$3,000 to reconstruct the insides of a piano so that it could be used in musical performances; two years later the organization set aside \$2,500 for a new sound system in the Main Library. In 1992 it purchased a 12'x 40' backdrop to create a "more formal setting" for programs held in the atrium; the backdrop also helped screen library customers busily using the newly-installed CINCH online cataloging system. When board member Jeanne Schmidt noticed the ageing globe in the History Department, it led to the purchase of a fine replacement. Friends funded the acquisition of a copier for large, fragile documents for the Rare Books and Special Collections Department, receptions for various library events, and "Holiday Happenings," a series of programs celebrating various holidays each December. Friends' money paid to transfer Oscar Treadwell's radio programs, "Jazz with O.T.," from reel-to-reel tapes to cassettes and later onto CDs, and the frame for the official portrait of Librarian James R. Hunt came courtesy of the Friends.²⁴ Largely as a result of these successful actions, in 1990 the Friends received a coveted Post-Corbett Award in the volunteer organization category for its "wide programming efforts for children and adults." As emcee Nick Clooney stated at the ceremony, "The Friends of the Public Library are friends to us all."²⁵

During the 1990s, the Friends continued to find new ways of supporting the Public Library, and another physical addition to the Main Library, built across Ninth Street in 1997 and dubbed the North Building, provided wonderful opportunities. With the Children's Department, now the

Children's Learning Center, moving into this new structure, the board authorized \$39,000, over three years, for the purchase and installation of a magnificent saltwater aquarium. Later, it funded the storybook-themed mural, designed and painted by Cincinnati Art Academy students, that spans the curved entrance and welcomes children and adults alike to the Learning Center. When the addition had its formal opening in January 1997, the Friends underwrote the cost of two open houses, public tours of the new facility, a preview dinner on the "bridge" over Ninth Street for 108 people, and the dedication ceremony at which Friends' president Genevieve Pennington "presented" the aquarium. The new addition also allowed the Friends to move its shop to more spacious quarters on the mezzanine.

The continued success of the Fountain Square Book Sale, supplemented by occasional "mini-sales," a Collectibles Sale, and sales at various branches, not only generated revenues but also encouraged the donation of more used books. The problem of storage space became acute. For years the Friends had sorted and stored books on the upper floor of the North Cincinnati Branch (renamed the Corryville Branch in 1997), but plans to renovate the branch and the need for the Friends to become less dependent on the Library called for a change. In December 1995, after considerable searching, book operations were moved to a rented warehouse at the corner of Newton and Dana Avenues. The first "warehouse sale" soon followed. Organized by Betsy LaMacchia and Mary Lu Aft, its success, despite "sleet-slick roads," made it an annual winter event.



Book sale volunteers pictured at the Friends warehouse on Dana & Newton avenues in 1999 are, from left, front row kneeling: Alene Rice, Marilyn Moll, Mary Lu Aft. Middle row: Ruth Zabel, Miriam Zabel (apron), Ann Dodge, Betty Stewart, May Westheimer, J. Richard Abell, Lucille Hudson. Back row: Paul Throup, Lynn Throup, Marcy DeCourcy, Friends Executive Director Anne Keller, Jennifer French, Peg Kahn, Connie Elsaesser, Tony Waker, Jules Freedman, John Flanagan, Eunice Abel, Keith Stewart.



Pictured on stage for the Friends-sponsored Bookfest program, held in April 1994 at the Main Library, is author/illustrator Fredrick McKissack.

Mary Lu Aft represents one of the unforeseen benefits of the Fountain Square Book Sale. A native of Iowa, Aft was invited by May Westheimer, her neighbor and a long time supporter of the Friends, to spend some time at the sale in 1987. "I volunteered for one day," Aft recalled, "but I found myself coming down every day. I couldn't stay away, and that's the way it has been."²⁶ From a "one day" volunteer, she became a co-chair with LaMacchia of the book sale committee in 1989, member of the board of directors in 1990, and in 1998 began a five-year stint as president of the Friends, two years before being selected by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* as one of its Women of the Year. Another important Friend at this time was J. Richard Abell. When Abell retired in 1993 from the Public Library where he had headed the History Department for the past 30 years, he threw his energy into the Friends, serving on the board of directors and eventually as vice-president. He advocated programs that would involve Friends' members in learning about other community institutions, and in 1999 he organized "A Friends' Educational Adventure" that involved an evening visit to the Lloyd Library and the Cincinnati Fire Museum. Unfortunately, his untimely and tragic death turned the evening into something of a memorial to his many contributions to the organization.

The Friends' various special book sales, now numbering about a dozen per year, have also brought the organization closer to the region's diverse population. What started as an organization largely managed by socially prominent men and women, and by library staff, both active and retired, now increasingly reflected a wide range of race and class, and to a great extent this is due to the book sales which have become the public face of the Friends. As volunteer Eileen Driscoll

phrased it in 1996, "It is really a wonderful sight to see such a cross section of the city . . . so intent upon books and their possibilities to enrich lives and expand horizons. Young, old, rich, poor, conservative, trendy, self-effacing, assertive, African-American, Appalachian, Celtic, saris, successful suits: they all came and, for the most part, left with arms full."²⁷ Success, however, also brought its own complications, and when financial secretary Dianne Schuetz retired in January 1998, the board investigated a change in the administration of the organization. Three months later, it hired Anne Keller, former head of the Library's Public Relations Department, as "Friends Administrator." That same year Mary Lu Aft informed the board that the warehouse was "full" and asked for "ideas." In 2001 this finally resulted in a move to the present warehouse location at 8456 Vine Street, site of the former Peerless Furniture Company in Hartwell. At about the same time Elaine Michael resigned as manager of the Friends' Shop in the Main Library, replaced by Ken Hughes.²⁸

During the past decade, the Friends has increased its financial support of the Public Library. The expansion of book sales, the opening of a booth at the Duck Creek Antiques Mall in 2003, sales of "interesting and curious items" on the Internet handled by Jules Freedman, and membership growth, now securely above 2,000, have allowed the organization to provide assistance even as the Library itself has struggled with shrinking budgets and rising costs. The Friends purchased numerous items for the collection, highlighted by a rare first edition of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and a fine copy of the first English edition of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.²⁹ Among other interesting and



Attending the unveiling on January 16, 2005 of three historic stained glass windows, restored with Friends funds are, from left to right, retired Library directors James R. Hunt, Robert D. Stonestreet, and current Executive Director Kimber L. Fender.

valuable acquisitions by the Friends were “The New Map of Cincinnati & Vicinity” (1884), Alice Balterman’s artist book, *Napoleon*, and a folio size King James version of the *Bible*, illustrated by artist Barry Moser.³⁰

Support for traditional programming continued to increase, as did support in more unusual ways. In 2004 the Friends began helping to underwrite the Library’s annual “On the Same Page” program, a community wide initiative started in 2002 to encourage residents to read the same pre-selected book. The following year the organization helped finance the Library’s “Library Card Challenge.” This initiative to increase the number of students with library cards was so successful that it received the John Cotton Dana Award from the American Library Association. And when three large stained glass windows, originally in “Old Main,” the 1870 building that housed the Library until 1955, became available, the Friends contributed \$10,000 towards their restoration and mounting in honor of Library Director Robert D. Stonestreet’s retirement. They are now on display in the Main Library. In 2003, under President Patricia King’s leadership, the board agreed to give \$100,000 to help launch the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Foundation, and since that was also the year of the Library’s sesquicentennial, the Friends contributed a significant amount for the writing and publishing of John Fleischman’s *Free & Public: One Hundred and Fifty Years at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*. When the library suffered an 8% budget cut in 2002, Executive Director Kimber L. Fender, who had succeeded Stonestreet in 1999, asked the Friends for help. The board responded by increasing its funding for the lobbyist in Columbus and

sponsoring a rally on Fountain Square to demonstrate civic support for the institution, which drew over 500 people. In other words, when the Library requested support, whatever the reason, the Friends have answered the call.

Now fifty years old, the Friends of the Public Library can justly celebrate its half century of achievements. It has ably supported the Public Library, providing funding for those needs which either legally or financially lay outside the institution’s operating budget. Through five library directors it has been a quiet friend. Surely, Alice Plaut, a true bibliophile, could never have dreamed that the Friends would provide a saltwater aquarium or a decorated pig (part of Cincinnati’s Big Pig Gig in 2000) for a library, but she and the other founders would have recognized the commitment, energy and dedication that continue to infuse the organization they so enthusiastically started. The seeds planted by those 34 men and women in 1957 have grown into a powerful support group that has helped the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County remain one of the most progressive, community-centered, and user-friendly libraries in the nation.



The Friends gave a \$100,000 gift as the initial donation for the Library Foundation in July 2004. Pictured, from left to right, are Development Director John Reusing, Library Executive Director Kim Fender and Friends Directors Jeff Waltz (Vice President), Patricia King (President), and Jay DeWitt (Secretary).



Christy Connelly in the original Friends' Shop.



The current Friends' Shop, located on the Main Library mezzanine.

Endnotes

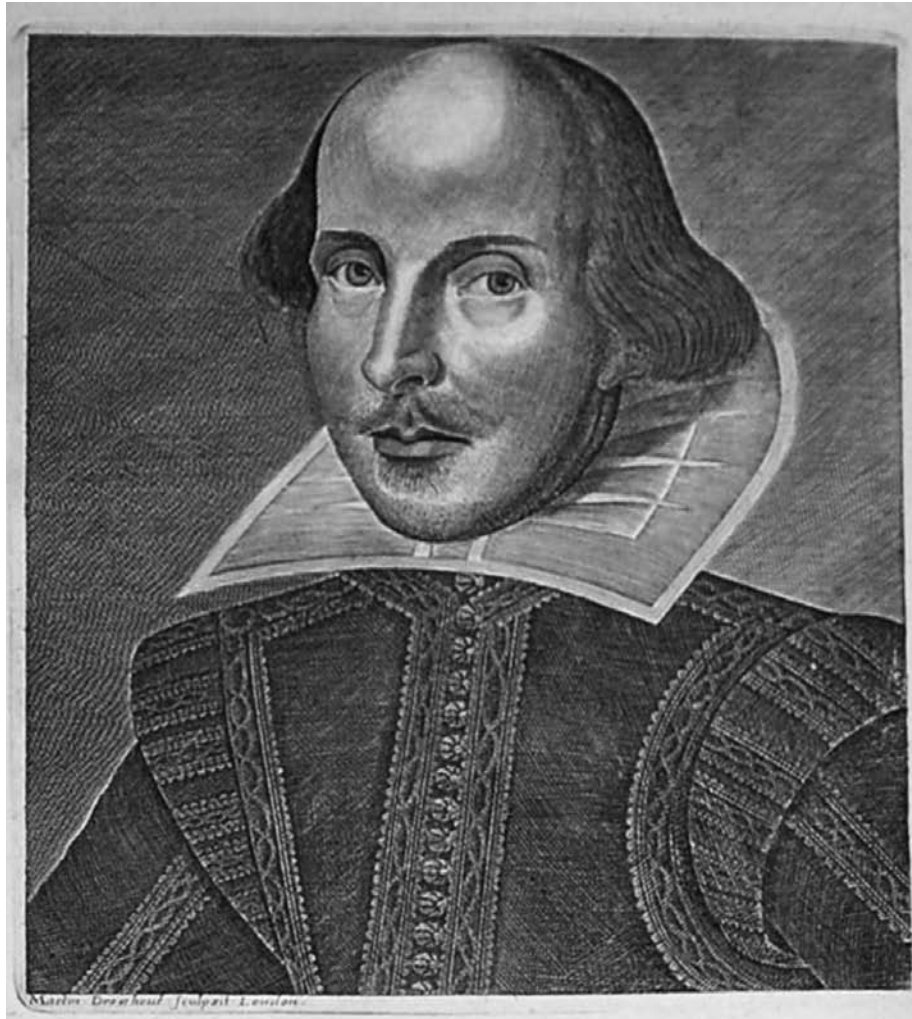
1. "Addendum to Minutes of First Meeting of Friends of the Public Library, 1957," located with Friends of the Public Library, Minutes, 1957. In his lively history of the Library, John Fleischman described these first members as mainly "bibliophiles;" see Fleischman, *Free and Public: One Hundred and Fifty Years at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, 1853-2003* (Wilmington OH: Orange Frazer Press, 2003), 107.
2. Friends of the Public Library, Scrapbook #1, located in the Friends of the Public Library office. Unless otherwise indicated, information on the Friends comes from these scrapbooks, numbered 1 to 23, which include newspaper clippings, Friends' mailed material, and a variety of ephemera; or from the organization's minutes, also located in the Friends' office. Although Plaut in later interviews mentioned that 38 people attended the first meeting, the official minutes of the Friends places the number at 34.
3. Initial sponsors included Mrs. Charles Dickson, Walter Huenefeld, Mrs. Louis I. Kahn, the Honorable Robert S. Marx, the Honorable Murray Seasongood, and Mrs. Rudolph H. Wurlitzer.
4. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 31, 1957, 48.
5. Lafayette came in for further recognition in 1975, the 150th anniversary of his stop in Cincinnati. The Marquis and Marquise de Chambrun, (he, a descendent of Lafayette as well as a grandson of Maria Longworth and George Ward Nichols) were the guests of honor. Mayor Theodore Berry, who proclaimed Tuesday, May 20, "Lafayette Day" in the city, presided over the "Lafayette Day" program held at the Queen City Club.
6. For board presidents see the list of names at the back.
7. *Cincinnati Post and Times-Star*, "All Week Magazine," December 6, 1958, 3.
8. Anne Keller, current executive director of the Friends, provided this information in an e-mail to the author, February 10, 2007.
9. For information on activities of the Young Friends, see the appropriate Scrapbooks as well as issues of *Guide Post*. A survey of material in The Seven Hills Review reflects the many social changes in the nation during the period, as well as the traditional themes of youth.
10. Friends of the Cincinnati Public Library, "10th Birthday Celebration Exhibition," (Cincinnati: Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, 1967).
11. "Battle of the Books," *Cincinnati Post*, February 2, 1972, 1.
12. Fleischman, *Free & Public*, 122. Librarian Hunt did re-write the library's selection policy, but the only book removed from the collection was Cecil Brown's *The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger: A Novel*. When the book was later re-published in the 1970s, the library reacquired it; currently two copies are available at the Main Library.
13. See *Cincinnati Post*, June 17, 1977, 8; and *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 8, 1978, E-13.
14. In its 15th year, 1987, the Book Sale generated over \$29,000, a ten-fold increase since its inception, an impressive accomplishment even with the double-digit inflation that developed in the Seventies. In 1990 the Sale brought in almost \$40,000, and in recent years it has averaged over \$50,000. The year 2006 saw the sale shifted to the Main Library atrium, a change necessitated by the reconstruction of Fountain Square. The success of the 2006 sale has now made this change permanent.
15. This award is no longer given. Sarah Kahn, whose "enthusiasm for books" was well known, remained active in the Friends and only a week before her death was at her accustomed post in the Friends' warehouse sorting books; see *Cincinnati Post*, March 17, 1999, 14A.
16. These lobbying efforts succeeded in maintaining the Library's state funding at a satisfactory level. In 2005-2006 the Friends again provided financial support to help retain former State Senator Richard Finan to work against the proposed Tax and Expenditures Limitation amendment which would have seriously reduced Library revenues.
17. Among the more prominent lecturers before they ended were Thomas Schippers, music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (1971), Fernando Belaund-Terry, former president of Peru (1972), and Anna Chennault, widow of Lt. General Claire Chennault of World War Two Flying Tiger fame (1980).
18. The "Salute to Scholars" program lasted 14 years, ending in 1999
19. Hunt to Westheimer, September 5, 1980, included with Friends of the Public Library, Minutes, September 12, 1980.
20. Based on a telephone conversation with Mrs. Connelly. June 6, 2007.
21. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 14, 1990, E-11; "Friends of the Public Library Gift Shop Manager Christy Connelly Receives President's Award," *Guide Post*, 68 (July-August, 1992), 18.
22. The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County at that time owned the only complete set of *Ye Gliglampz*, so it was most appropriate that the Friends pay for this re-printing which represented some of the early work of two of the city's more famous artistic residents. Six years after the re-printing, Lafcadio Hearn's grandson and his wife were welcomed by the Library, and in later years the Friends acquired for the Library two of Hearn's books, along with Elizabeth Wetmore's *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn* (Boston and New York, 1906).
23. On March 18, 1990, the Friends sponsored an official reception to present the book to Librarian James Hunt. Organized by Monica Nolan, and tied to St. Patrick's Day, about 650 people turned out for the ceremony, a tribute to the significance of the book to the local community. Both the *Enquirer* and *Post*, as well as television stations WLW and WKRC covered the celebration, which included the very popular McGing Irish Dancers.
24. The Friends also established the James R. Hunt Trust Fund in honor of Hunt's retirement. This fund was used for a Catacoustic Consort performance of German Renaissance music, held in 2005.
25. Sponsored by the *Cincinnati Post*, these awards are named for J. Ralph and Patricia Corbett as a tribute to their many wonderful contributions to the Greater Cincinnati area.
26. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 5, 2000, Supplement 2:2. Aft still can't stay away; she remains very active in the organization as a director and chairperson of the book sale committee, and she can be found many mornings at the Friends' warehouse sorting books.
27. This wonderful description of a busy moment on Fountain Square was placed in the board minutes of July 26, 1996.
28. In 2005 Hughes became warehouse manager and Martha Totten took over management of the Friends' Shop.
29. The Huckleberry Finn volume tied in very nicely with the Samuel Clemens's short residence in Cincinnati in 1856-57, while the de Tocqueville complemented a previously purchased French edition.
30. For a complete list of the books given to the Library by the Friends, see the latest edition of *The Book of Treasures*, printed by the Public Library.

A Friends' Timeline

- 1957—Organizational Meeting, held at the Main Library “Founders Tea”, held at the Main Library.
First purchase for Library: William Blackstone’s Commentaries.
- 1958—First public program: Dr. Louis Gottschalk, “Lafayette and the United States.”
First Annual Meeting, held at the Cincinnati Art Museum.
- 1962—Purchased Fourth Folio of Shakespeare as Library’s 2,000,000th acquisition.
Young Friends of the Public Library organized.
- 1963—*The Seven Hills Review* launched.
- 1967—10th Anniversary Celebration; membership reaches 1,000.
- 1970—Alex Haley lectures to a capacity audience.
- 1971—Tea and Reception for new Librarian James R. Hunt and his wife.
- 1972—Alice Plaut dies; Catherine Kilcoyne becomes executive secretary.
- 1973—First Fountain Square Book Sale; nets \$2916.61.
Reception at Queen City Club for the Marquis and Marquise de Chambrun.
- 1975—Friends agree to raise \$100,000 towards new Main Library addition; established Signature Wall.
- 1977—Twentieth Anniversary Program: “An Evening in Old Japan.”
- 1979—Spring trip to Washington, D.C. to visit Library of Congress and National Gallery of Art.
- 1982—Friends’ 25th Anniversary Celebration.
South Building addition completed.
- 1983—Friends’ Shop opens near Walnut Street entrance in new library addition;
Christy Connelly hired as first manager.
Publish re-print of *Ye Giglampz*.
- 1986—Presentation of Distinguished Citizen Award to Sarah Weil Kahn.
- 1987—Catherine Kilcoyne dies.
- 1989—25th anniversary of *The Seven Hills Review*.
- 1990—Facsimile copy of *Book of Kells* presented to Library.
Friends receive Post-Corbett Award.
- 1991—Robert D. Stonestreet becomes Director of the Public Library.
- 1993—Louise Nevelson sculpture moved to Walnut Street plaza.
- 1996—Friends rent Dana & Newton Avenue building as a book warehouse.
- 1997—North Building addition to Main Library completed; Shop moves to Main Library mezzanine.
- 1998—Anne Keller hired as “Friends Administrator” (now executive director).
Jules Friedman initiates Internet book sales.
Kimber L. Fender becomes Director of the Library.
- 1999—Membership tops 2,000.
- 2001—Friends move into warehouse at 8456 Vine Street in Hartwell.
- 2003—Began selling used books at a booth in the Duck Creek Antique Mall.
- 2006—June Book Sale moves from Fountain Square to Main Library.
- 2007—Begin selling used books on Amazon.

PRESIDENTS OF FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF CINCINNATI AND HAMILTON COUNTY

1957-1959	Richard R. Deupree, Jr.
1959-1961	Joseph S. Stern, Jr.
1962-1963	William T. Earls
1963-1965	Hall C. Park
1965-1967	Louise Rowe
1967-1969	Simon Lazarus, Jr.
1969-1971	Robert H. Allen
1971-1973	John Diehl
1973-1977	Stanley Shores, Jr.
1977-1979	Lois Conyers
1980-1982	Charles I. Westheimer
1982-1988	Thomas F. Rehme
1988-1992	Ruth C. Keefe
1992-1994	Daniel M. Keefe
1994-1998	Genevieve H. Pennington
1998-2003	Mary Lu Aft
2003-2006	Patricia M. King
2006	Jeffrey P. Waltz



Purchased Fourth Folio of Shakespeare
as Library's 2,000,000 acquisition.