

# The Annual Appeal Letter

Best Practices, Strategies and Tips  
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# Why Write Letters?

- There's a lot of mail out there!
  - 3.6 pieces of mail from organizations they financially support
  - 4.2 pieces of mail from organizations they do not financially support (prospects)
  - 4.2 email from organizations they financially support
  - 5.7 emails from organizations they do not financially support
- **AND THEY ARE READING IT!**

# The Annual Appeal

## What is it?

- Asks for unrestricted support for the library.
- Generally conducted in October, November December.
- It is not a membership appeal. Be sure that is clear.

## Why do it?

- Keeps donors loyal, invested and engaged.
- Can be a recurring source of unrestricted funds.
- Encourages “upgraded” gifts and legacy giving

# Getting Started

- Campaign Plan Ingredients:
  - What are your compelling stories? Collect stories that are more than testimonials.
  - Who is the letter going to be from?
  - Email or Snail Mail? Both?
  - Decide on frequency.
  - Plan the acknowledgements and follow-up strategies including database input

# Resources you can use:

- Gail Perry – Fundraising Consultant: [Gailperry.com](http://Gailperry.com) – great info and materials
- Mal Warwicl – expert on fundraising direct mail pieces.
- Tom Ahern – internationally recognized expert on donor communications.
- Lisa Sargent Communications – great info on donor communications.

# Your letter campaign

Write it like you are talking to a friend.

# Top Ten Tips

- Allow lots of time to craft your letter. Get input but it should really be written by one person/ one voice.
- Write it from the donors perspective, make them feel special – it is about the donor, not you. Make it personal - personalize the greeting, target donors/donors if you can.
- Base your appeal on the positive impact the donor will have on your library and the tangible/ intangible benefits of their gift.
- Ask for a gift, not support. Be specific!
- Coordinate your campaign/ appeal package, reply envelope, acknowledgement.

# Top Ten Tips

- Keep it simple - use short, punchy sentences. Make it easy to skim, underline or bold important phrases. Make it easy to read visually – lots of white space. Avoid TMI.
- One page is best, but if you need to make it longer to make your case make it easy to read, use bullets, subheads, photos to add interest and to make it easy to scan.
- Create a call to action and a sense of urgency; matching gifts, deadline, budget year/ planning. Make it easy to say yes to giving!
- Have someone who is not associated with the library proof read it
- Create a communication calendar so that the appeal is not the only time your donors hear from you.

# Avoid These Mistakes

- Avoid generic and vague, boring language – “programs and services”.
- Avoid having it organization focused.
- Avoid passive voice.

# Avoiding Boring Words

Add Passion and Emotion!

- Example 1A

Please fund our prison literacy program. Our library had designed a powerful program to serve children of prison inmates and their families by creating on-site libraries in prison visiting rooms, giving books to children to take home and keep, supporting prison's Storybook Programs, and offering literacy seminars for prisoners to help them read with children.

- Example 1B

Your gift helps to strengthen the estranged family bonds between prisoners and the children they rarely see. The books and libraries you fund is important. But most of all your are helping to foster much needed family time, care and attentions – not only for the inmates, but for the children who need their love so very much.

# Your email Campaign

Keep it simple and mobile friendly.

# Some Email Tips

- Be sure it is visually appealing; use creative catchy subject lines
- Make it personal – No Dear Supporter/ Friend
- Demonstrate impact with links to info on your website, annual report, etc.
- Make it easy to navigate the gift online. Less clicks the better.
- Make it easy to share – forward, FB, etc.
- Be sure it is mobile friendly!

# Sample Letters

- Chicago Public Library (email)
  - What works? What doesn't
- Friends of Wilmington Memorial Library
  - What works? What doesn't?
- Friends of St. Paul Library
  - What works? What doesn't?

# Thank you!

- Fundraising and Marketing Wiki – [wikis.westchesterlibraries.org/development](http://wikis.westchesterlibraries.org/development) for curated info and tips on fundraising and marketing. Don't see something your looking for? Call or email – I'd be happy to help.
  - To contact Pat Brigham:
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  - Thank you all for attending this mornings presentation.