

Friends Trends

A PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE JEFFERSON PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Kudos to us all!

Big Book Sale another huge success

by Annette Centanni

We did it again! Another successful sale for the Friends!

The adrenaline rush at 10:00 AM on opening day of the Big Book Sale is always a phenomenon to be experienced first-hand, if possible. This autumn's sale, held from October 29-November 1, was no exception. Over 350 customers were lined up all the way across the front of the Pontchartrain Center. When the doors were opened, bedlam was unleashed as they teemed in, jockeying for the best fiction/non-fiction buys in over 70 different categories.

Enthusiasm for the semi-annual event seems to stem from a number of sources. Customers love the variety of books offered at reasonable prices. They also are attracted to the positive atmosphere of the sale and the helpfulness and goodwill of the nearly 100 volunteers. This fall, they were even entranced by the soothing music the Pontchartrain Center provided!

Some facts and figures about the Sale in a nutshell include the following:

- Of the 1,500 boxes taken to the sale, 1,000 were sold or donated.
- 500 boxes were taken back to the Center for re-evaluation and re-sorting.
- Teachers from 20 schools received 70 boxes of free books, including sets of encyclopedias, on the last day.
- About 100 volunteers helped with the sale, setting up, cashiering, working on the floor with customers,



The "mad rush" on Thursday, the first morning of the book sale.

and breaking down the sale at its conclusion.

- Over \$2,000 worth of rare and collectible books was sold.
- A holiday-themed books/items table, made possible through the generosity of Barnes and Noble, nearly sold out.
- Hundreds of VCR tapes, records, CDs, DVDs, and cassettes were sold.
- Cashier receipts totaled a whopping \$56,172.90.

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Friends Holiday Party for the Library Staff

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

at 1:00 PM

East Bank Regional Library

We find good homes for used books.

Friends of the Jefferson Public Library

(a member of the association of Library
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Foundations)

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Mission

The Friends of the Jefferson Public Library is an independent, nonprofit organization of civic-minded volunteers. We support the Jefferson Parish Library by promoting library awareness, providing needed unbudgeted items for all its branches through fund raising, and participating in literacy programs.

Address and Phone

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Friends Trends

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Online sales a growing presence

Amazon sales keep listers busy, net \$ for Friends

by Annette Centanni

In addition to the two yearly Big Book Sales, the Friends at the Sorting Center have formed a fun offshoot group which sells valuable books, CDs and videos online at Amazon.com. Brain child of Joan Demers, retired UNO instructor of microbiology, and her husband Rick, retired Bell South engineer and current numismatist, this group has evolved into a well-oiled machine which last year generated \$27,000 for the Friends. The saga of how Joan and her cohorts truly turn “trash into treasure” is a fascinating one.

It all began in 2006 when Joan, a sorter who had recently sold her teaching texts online, began talking about how much more the Friends could make if they started a “small” online enterprise. The Board was skeptical, but acquiesced. Joan began checking books on her own home computer, and was joined by Marie Breerwood and Sue Hellwig who took boxes of books home. Beginning as a brave one-woman show, Joan set up an Amazon account, began testing the waters, then selling. When the first book she listed sold for \$10, she announced her victory. It had been one she had fished out of the trash: unsellable at a Book Sale, but apparently rare enough to attract someone online! In mid-summer, 2007, Rick had the Board’s permission to set up a computer donated by Peg Phelps, and the business was launched. After the “trash” incident, Friends began to take notice. They readily agreed that EVERY non-fiction book possibly had untold value, and needed to be checked before it was unwittingly sold for \$2 - \$3 at the Sale.

The scene grew more complicated daily. At first, ISBNs had to be entered into the computer by hand. At this point Sue stepped forward as Joan’s first permanent convert, and quickly became Chief Checker, utilizing Amazon, Abe, and Bookfinder to separate books worth listing from those not, and feeding them to fledgling listers. At this time, there were only Joan and Anna Campos. These two hearty

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Online Sales

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souls at first lived in fear, as an error could be fatal to Friends' growing reputation with Amazon. Checkers and listers were overwhelmed with work from the beginning; then a scanner was purchased so that books with bar codes could be checked in seconds. A number of Sorters jumped on this opportunity to join the effort, and readily learned how to work with the temperamental little beast. Folks in Sorting became attuned to, "Oh, Yeah!" screamed out by the scanner, and grinned when they heard how much another treasure could be sold for. In the meantime, however, books without bar codes still needed to be computer checked by hand; Sue never needed to worry herself over job security!

By this time, of course, Joan had become an expert at teaching recruits, printing packing labels, wrapping books and running them to the post office in the timely manner required by Amazon. Her life (or Rick's) has never been the same since.

At present, anyone who wanders into the computer room (now ROOMS, with 5 computers) is in danger of being recruited as a lister, packer, or checker, never to be seen in Sorting again. Listing, in particular, is not a job for the faint of heart. It's been known to produce a quirky high that leads to serious addiction, brought about by selling a really expensive item. Joan's cowbell has become well known as the signal that a book worth more than \$50 has been sold.

The listing of a book is complicated, and requires a discerning eye to note each book's good points and flaws, then creative advertising to present it in the best possible light. Pricing is a delicate judgment call, as Friends strive to give customers the best possible prices without sacrificing profit. Weight and postal rates must be considered. Also, when a book's price becomes too low for it to be a profitable sale, Joan pulls it from the inventory and sends it back to Sorting to be packed with the others.

There are currently over 1200 books listed and shelved in order according to their probability of



A view of the shelves containing the most popular Amazon books.

being sold (Amazon's ranking system adapted to the Friends' needs). One very rare Disney volume with intact dust jacket, the only one of its kind listed anywhere, is listed for \$499.00! Joan will really peel that cowbell when it is sold! The projected sales for the current year far surpass last year's sales.

The current listers number up to 6 at various times; 2 regulars help Joan with the packing, and a few more recent recruits help on demand. But more bodies are always needed to carry out the myriad details that Joan seems to be always attending to. Books need to be packed and mailed even on weekends. Joan has come to be well known by postal workers at every office in the area, as sales can average up to 60 books per week. The 4.9/5.0-star rating Friends maintains with Amazon attests to her and her staff's dedication to duty, excellence and Herculean efforts.

To view what the Friends have to offer, go to the Home Page by typing in, "Friends of Jefferson Public Library," and click on "Buy Books Online." Then, click on "Click Here to Buy Books Online Through Our Amazon Store" at the bottom of the page. You will find the entire inventory, with color pictures of many items. If you double-click on the description under the photo, you will see the listers' comments on the condition of each.

Kudos

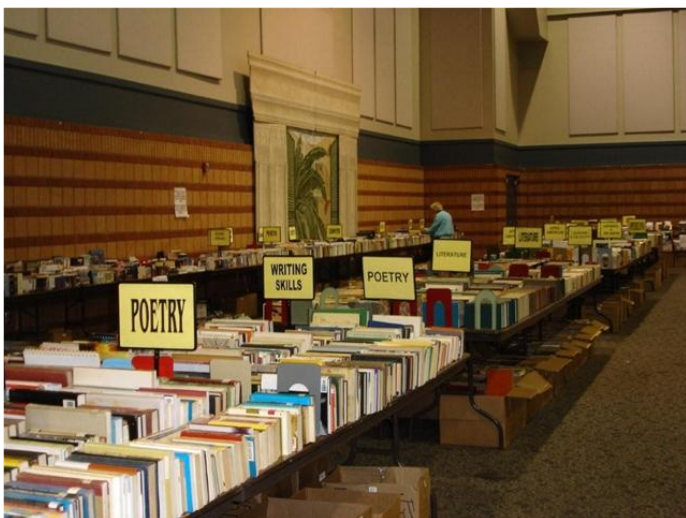
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- Expenses totaled \$16,153.05.
- Profits totaled \$40,019.85.

In the 20+ years the Friends have sponsored the sale, in excess of \$1,000,000 has been donated to the library for use in the purchase of library items not provided for in their annual budgets.

The bottom line is always more than just dollars and cents, however. We, as Friends, should be very proud to be part of such a noble enterprise. In addition to all of the facts and figures above, many wonderful books are being continually recycled into the grateful hands of our customers at reasonable prices. We have the additional year-round benefit of having the opportunity to meet and work with other like-minded book-loving people, both customers and volunteers. A Big Bonus in being a Friend! Kudos to us for this, too!

A view of the books before the sale began.



Borders book drive provides 679 books for Jefferson Parish Library System

by Anna Campos

The Friends of the Jefferson Public Library received 772 new books, thanks to the generosity of customers at the Borders Books at 3131 Veterans Blvd.

The managers of the local store contacted Lisa Conescu, a volunteer with Friends, and said they had selected our organization to be the nonprofit that benefited from their book drive. So, for six weeks during August and September, each customer was asked, “Would you like to donate a book to the Friends of Jefferson Public Library?” Each weekend during that time, volunteers from Friends sat at a table in front of the store to encourage and explain the book drive. Lisa states, “Borders encouraged shoppers to enjoy making their selections from any department in the store, including the Bargain Books. Sometimes when customers came in with a Borders coupon, they used it to buy us a book.”

When the book drive ended, 21 boxes of new books were delivered to the East Bank Regional Library—772 books in all. Their total value was \$3994. All but 93 books will be added to the library’s collection; the remaining books will be sold by Friends.

Because this year’s book drive was so successful, tentative plans have been made to hold another book drive next August.

If you do not wish to receive future issues of Friends Trends, address an e-mail to friendsjpl@yahoo.com. Use “Unsubscribe to Friends Trends” in the subject line.

General Meeting notes

by Anna Campos

The Friends Fall General Meeting was held at the East Bank Regional Library on September 23, 2009. Lon Dickerson, Library Director, reported on the renovations that are underway at the Harahan, Old Metairie, and Westbank Regional Libraries. Other renovations are in the works as well, financed by over \$1,000,000.00 in post-Katrina grants and donations.

After the business meeting, members were treated to a performance by the Whistling Man, Terry Rappold. Terry won the International Grand Champion Award at the International Whistlers Convention in Louisburg, North Carolina. With musical and sometimes vocal accompaniment, he whistled such favorites as “When the Saints Go Marching In,” “Just a Closer Walk with Thee,” “Ave Maria,” and many more.

Refreshments provided by the members were served after the meeting.

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