

Striking a Motivational Chord: Composing Strategies to Revitalize Friends Groups

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Agenda

- Overture: Introductions
- Setting the Stage: UAB Libraries Context
- Reading the Score: Literature Review of Friends Groups
- Building the Crescendo: Recent Successes
- The Next Movement: The Future of the Reynolds-Finley Steering Committee
- Encore: Q&A

Overture: Introductions



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Historical Collections



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Setting the Stage

UAB Libraries Context

Institutional Context

- Rooted in several founding institutions
 - Medical College of Alabama (1859; moved to Birmingham in 1945)
 - Birmingham Extension Center of the University of Alabama (1936)
 - University of Alabama School of Dentistry (1948)
 - The University of Alabama at Birmingham founded (1969)
- UAB Today
 - Located in Alabama's largest metropolitan area, with 1.1 million residents
 - Largest research institution in Alabama
 - Largest single employer in Alabama
 - Manages one of the top 5 largest hospitals in the U.S.



UAB Libraries History

- 1936: Birmingham Extension Center Library opens
- 1945: Medical College Library founded
- 1948: School of Dentistry Library opens
- 1951: Consolidated Medical Center Library opens
- 1958: Reynolds Historical Library opens
- 1971: University College Library (now the Mervyn H. Sterne Library) AND Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences open under separate administrations
- 1998: Historical Collections joins Lister Hill Library administration
- 2014: All UAB Libraries united under the inaugural Dean of Libraries

Historical Collections Timeline

- 1946: First item donation to what would become the Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences
- 1958: Reynolds Historical Library established
- 1958-1970s: Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences collection held by Reynolds Historical Library
- 1971: Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences opens
- 1975: Reynolds Historical Library and Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences moves to ground floor of Lister Hill Library
- 1992: UAB Archives established as a unit in UAB President's Office
- 1996: UAB Archives, Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences, and Reynolds Historical Library form Historical Collections
- 1997: Reynolds Historical Library and Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences moves to 3rd floor of Lister Hill Library
- 1998: Historical Collections becomes administratively part of Lister Hill Library
- 2012: UAB Archives moves to 3rd floor of Lister Hill Library; AMHS exhibit space closes
- 2014: Finley family donation led to current name: Reynolds-Finley Historical Library
- 2014: Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences and Mervyn H. Sterne Library merge to form UAB Libraries
- 2019: Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences opens temporary museum space on 1st Floor of Lister Hill Library
- 2024: Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences temporary space closes; Dennis G. Pappas Historical Collections Gallery opens

Historical Collections at UAB Libraries



Reynolds - Finley
Historical Library

UAB Archives



ALABAMA MUSEUM
OF THE
HEALTH
SCIENCES

Reynolds-Finley Steering Committee

- Formed in 1978 to support the Reynolds Historical Library
- Steering Committee existed before the Friends of Reynolds Library was established
- Significant early growth: more than 100 members by early 1980s
- Three members from 1981 roster are still members as of 2026
- Early discussions centered on role of the Steering Committee
- By mid-2010s, Steering Committee show declining participation and institutional neglect

Reading the Score

Literature Review of Friends Groups

History of Friends Groups

- First friends of an academic library was at Harvard in 1925
- By 1930, friends groups appear at Columbia, Yale, Princeton, and Johns Hopkins
- Active friends groups are difficult to track
 - Economic climate
 - Relationship with library administrators
 - Personalities

Discussion: Friends Groups Purpose

- Take a few minutes to turn to your table or a neighbor and discuss:
 - What purposes can a library friends group serve in an academic setting?
 - What have you seen work well—or not work well—at your own institution?

Purpose of Friends Groups

- Fundraising
- Financial support
- Advocacy
- Outreach
- Community engagement

Volunteer Motivation Theories

- Values
- Understanding
- Social
- Career
- Protective
- Enhancement

Discussion: Motivation Theories in Practice

- How do these different motivation factors (*Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Protective, Enhancement*) show up in library friends groups?
- Consider:
 - Which motivations seem most prominent among your members?
 - How do these motivations shape participation, engagement, or leadership?
 - And where might there be gaps between what motivates volunteers and what your friends group currently offers?

Friends Groups Challenges

- Structural and Organizational Challenges
- Donor and Volunteer Issues
- Sustainability
- Labor and Time Investment

Discussion: Friends Group Challenges

- What challenges have your friends groups encountered?
- OR what challenges could you envision facing a friends group if your library had one?

Building the Crescendo

Recent Successes

Efforts to Revitalize the Steering Committee

- Reaffirming the role and reinstating quarterly meetings
- Specific projects engaging Steering Committee
 - In Memoriam virtual exhibit
 - Narrations of ENT: The Dennis G. Pappas History of Otolaryngology virtual exhibit
 - Narrations of ENT virtual exhibit opening event

Fundraising for Historical Collections Gallery

- Vision
- Strategies and approaches
- Outcomes

Dennis G. Pappas Historical Collections Gallery



[Virtual tour of "Health in the Time of Marcel Proust" exhibit created by the Historical Collections and Digital Services teams in UAB Libraries.](#)



The Next Movement

The Future of the Reynolds-Finley Steering Committee

Reynolds-Finley Steering Committee Future

- Questions for Steering Committee Meeting
 - Mission:
 - What is the purpose of the Steering Committee?
 - What should be the mission of the Steering Committee?
 - Membership:
 - Who is not at the table that should be?
 - What is the process for growing our members? How do we decide membership?
 - Activities:
 - What kinds of activities do you all want to be involved in? Examples include, but are not limited to, fundraising, community outreach, sharing information with your networks about Historical Collections, advising on the history of medicine – need to rework that phrasing,
 - What are your suggestions for future directions for the Steering Committee?
 - Open Discussion:
 - What are we missing in these questions?
 - What additional thoughts and comments do you have about the Steering Committee?

Next Steps for Administrators

- Consider motivation strategies in how to engage Steering Committee members
- Propose a mission statement for the Steering Committee
- Establish criteria for adding new members
 - But respect the contributions of longstanding members
- Involve Steering Committee members in Historical Collections programming thoughtfully

Encore

Q&A

