



Guide No. 7 Promoting the meeting library

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1 Introduction

Quaker meeting libraries are a vital resource for Friends and enquirers. As *Quaker faith and practice* reminds us, “a well stocked and organised library is a powerful aid to the life of the meeting and its outreach” and those responsible for meeting libraries “will find many ways of making the books within their library accessible to Friends and attenders” (*Quaker faith and practice*, 2015, 13.42). Ensuring that those resources fulfil their potential, sometimes in challenging circumstances, calls for “ingenuity and determination.”

2 Keeping the library visible

Few meetings have the luxury of planning library accommodation from scratch: books may be stored off-site, or tucked away in a little-used room. The greater the physical barriers are to using the library, the more effort is needed to promote it.

Friends are probably most aware of the library if it is located in the meeting room, or a room where they gather for coffee. If your library is in another room, or in boxes at home, it may be less visible. Consider bringing the library to Friends – a table-top book selection or display after Meeting can spark interest. A small wall display in a corridor, or on the main meeting house notice boards will draw people’s attention.

To bring people into the library, the room (if there is one) should be as inviting as possible. Ideally it should be clean and uncluttered. Good lighting, a table and somewhere to sit are also an asset. The room and the stock should be accessible.

The library may become invisible even if the room is well used: changing appearances will remind Friends of its existence (e.g., a varied display of stock, changing notices). Displays, book racks and face-on shelves are good ways to bring books to your readers’ attention. If there is space for a library notice board this can be used to announce new books or invite comments and suggestions. Some meeting librarians put on topical displays on particular issues, to show what resources the library can offer.

Other ways of keeping the library visible include holding events in the room, opening at other times during the week for browsing and borrowing, and ensuring that even where there is no physical library space Friends know what books and pamphlets are available.

3 Keeping the librarian(s) visible

Meeting librarians are one of their library's best assets. Without them, the stock would grow old and stale, some Friends might never know what was in the library, or how to use it, and new members might not even know of its existence. An enthusiastic librarian can help Friends exploit the library to the full.

Talking to other members of the meeting is one of the most effective ways of promoting the library. Some librarians announce new acquisitions at notices after Meeting for Worship, others chat to Friends at coffee afterwards. The librarian knows the stock, and can make recommendations about what is already in the library, as well as new books.

Another way to promote the library is in print. Some meetings publish reading lists and reviews in their meeting newsletters. You might also consider displaying short reviews or synopses of selected books in the library, or elsewhere in the meeting house, as some bookshops do ("readers' picks").

Your library may be catalogued onto index cards, but the internet can be of great service: if your local or area meeting has a website, a library section or page could be added, to offer suggestions for reading, reviews and discussions. Friends involved in blogging or social networking may warm to the idea of discussing new books or topical reading lists.

Special library open days or events can be an opportunity for Friends to find out more about what is in the library. The library has a particularly important role for new attenders: introducing them to it may be helpful, particularly if it has a dedicated section of books for newcomers.

The librarian needs to listen as well: inviting suggestions for new books and possible improvements will encourage Friends to feel involved with the library (see also guide 2, Selection and acquisition of stock, for the importance of a clear acquisitions policy).

Organising book boxes from the Quaker Bookshop at Friends House can be useful for assessing potential stock and encouraging Friends to find out about books that may be of interest. The Quaker Bookshop sends out a guide to "Books of the month" in the clerks' monthly mailings (see [Selection and acquisition](#), guide 2, for more information about book boxes).

4 Making good use of library resources – groups, events and reviews

The further you are able to go in encouraging use of the library, the more the meeting will get out of it. Some meeting librarians have set up reading groups to read and discuss a book. Others have organised readings and talks in the library. When you buy new books, you could ask Friends to write a review for the meeting newsletter. The newsletter might even carry a library column.

Study groups may welcome reading lists based on the library's holdings. Depending on the budget, it may be possible to provide materials specifically for a study group, or arrange borrowing from elsewhere. Displays based on library stock or on other sources can also be helpful when members of the meeting are considering a particular topic. Keeping abreast of publications and reading lists that may be available is helpful here.

5 Involving the meeting

Solo meeting librarians may have a heavy task - literally - with little time left over for enhancing activities like writing reviews and organising displays. If the library is run by a committee or group of Friends, things may be easier, but involving the rest of the meeting is still valuable.

Besides encouraging Friends to use the library and inviting suggestions for new books, a good way to involve people is to rope them in to some of the library work. Some librarians organise tidying or spring cleaning days, or workgroups to deal with some particular task: nourished by a picnic lunch this can provide an enjoyable insight into what is actually on the shelves

The children's meeting can be involved too, whether or not their books are organised separately. Younger members of the meeting might enjoy the occasional responsibility of shelving or labelling, and offering their own views on what they are reading.

6 Further advice

For further advice please contact the Library at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Phone 020 7663 1135. Email library@quaker.org.uk.

Join the Quaker Life Network cluster for Quaker Meeting Librarians, for email discussion with other meeting librarians. Email library@quaker.org.uk to register.

Other leaflets in this series to download from <http://www.quaker.org.uk/meeting-librarians>

1. The Role of the Meeting Librarian
2. Selection and acquisition of stock
3. Cataloguing and arranging the meeting library
4. Equipment for a meeting library
5. Disposing of unwanted books
6. Caring for your books
7. Promoting the meeting library
8. Online resources for meeting librarians

Disaster preparedness: guidance for meeting librarians, clerks and custodians of records (Guides for custodians of records, no. 10)

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