

## **Little Free Libraries + Public Libraries**

### *Using Little Free Libraries in Your Public Library's Outreach Strategy*

Starting a Little Free Library (LFL) network can be a wonderful complement to your public library's overall strategy. Goals and outcomes can include:

- Sharing more books and improving literacy in your community
- Raising public awareness for your public library, such as services, resources, and events
- Extending your library's community outreach services
- Expanding volunteer engagement and recruitment

Once you have determined your key goals for starting a book-sharing box initiative, follow the steps below. Please note that starting and sustaining a Little Free Library network is an iterative process, so rather than list a one-size-fits-all roadmap, we've broken down the steps into three categories - preparation, selecting products, and sustaining your libraries. Keep this guide handy - you may need to revisit specific sections later on in your Little Free Library journey.

## **Preparing For Your Little Free Libraries**

### **Choose Your Stewards:**

Decide who will be the steward or stewards who will monitor and service the Little Free Libraries. Some of the basic responsibilities of stewards include:

- Attach the official Little Free Library charter sign to the library box
- Add the Little Free Library's location to the world map and include a photo
- Share the Little Free Library on social media platforms and/or in the community
- Stock the Little Free Library with books
- Perform maintenance, when needed
- Act as the point of contact for the Little Free Library

These are the basic tasks associated with stewardship, but public libraries usually regard their Little Free Library network as part of their community promotion activity. Please note that there can only be one primary steward - the person who acts as the point of contact and can set up a steward account on behalf of the Little Free Library, the stewarding tasks can be shared depending on the size of the planned network and available resources.

Some public libraries use staff as their stewards, while others recruit volunteers, such as from local Friends of the Library groups or highly engaged patrons that regularly come to visit the Little Free Library.



### **Select Your Locations:**

Choosing where your Little Free Library boxes will be placed is critical to the success of your program and will help you meet the goals you have set for your LFL network. Some things to consider:

- Is there good foot and/or bike traffic in the area?
- Is book access needed in this location? Consider its proximity to a public library branch, local schools & community hubs, and public transportation.
- Will the Little Free Library be visible during the day to those that pass by?
- Is the library in a location that you or a member of your team can regularly check on it and restock it?
- Is the area well-lit at night?
- Will the Little Free Library be accessible to all patrons, such as those with mobility issues and children?
- Will patrons be safe from surrounding traffic while they visit the Little Free Library?
- If the library will not be placed on your own property, do you have the proper permissions to install the library? You may need to check with local municipalities for any zoning restrictions.
- Did you call 811 to check for buried wires before you dig a hole for the library post? You may need to coordinate with city/county officials to coordinate that the installation of the library will be safe and not interfere with buried utilities.

## **Choosing and Purchasing Little Free Libraries**

### **Choose Your Products:**

#### **Libraries:**

In order to find the right library for you, you'll want to consider three aspects: Material, Style, and Size.

- Material
  - Wood libraries are more customizable (can be painted) and are usually less expensive
  - Composite libraries require little to no maintenance for years
- Style
  - Assembled libraries arrive built and ready for installation
  - Kit libraries can be assembled with a group of volunteers and are less expensive to ship
- Size
  - Two Story libraries can hold more books
  - One Story (Cottage) libraries are better for children's books



Recommendations: Double Door Cottage Unfinished (Personalization + large book storage) or any Composite Two Story Shed (low-maintenance).



### Charter Signs:

If you purchase your library box from us, it will come with a charter sign on it so there is no need to purchase one. However, if you build your library or would like to register existing library boxes, you will need to purchase a charter sign to register it. Purchases of 4+ charter signs receive a 10% discount.

### Posts/Installation Methods:

You'll also want to consider *how* you'll be installing your LFL's. For most installations, we recommend our Post Kit, available in wood or composite material, which only takes minutes to assemble and install. It's also quite easy to install, requiring just a 2 - 3 foot hole to be dug (be sure to call 811 before digging!) and no concrete stabilizer is required. Only common household tools are needed - a shovel, a drill, and a level.

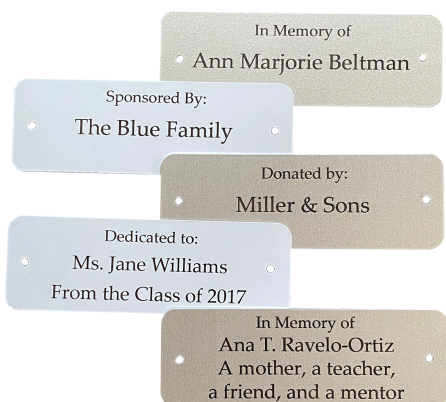
We also have screw-on legs, so libraries can be used indoors or for installations that are moved frequently, and a step stool post if your Little Free Library is frequented by kids! Or, you can fabricate your own method of installation!





### Branding Options:

We encourage you to add branding to your LFLs. If you'd like to display your library's logo and name on the libraries you choose to install, you can customize each charter sign with up to three lines of custom text. You can also receive a standard charter sign plus a branded tribute plaque.



### Secure a Quote

We are happy to provide you with a custom quote. Public libraries that purchase 4+ libraries receive a 10% discount, plus free custom signage - additional savings of \$50 per library. Choose from branding options above.

This is the information that you will need to supply to Little Free Library:

- Products and Quantity Needed
- Shipping Address, Email, Phone
- Payment Method (CC, PO, Check, ACH)
- Tax Exempt status number

You can submit your request through our [purchase order form](#), or by emailing us at [customerservice@littlefreelibrary.org](mailto:customerservice@littlefreelibrary.org). Once we have received your information, we will provide you with a quote that can be used to secure the proper funding or create a purchase order.



## Sustain Your Libraries

### Book Supply and Maintenance:

A critical component of running a Little Free Library network is defining the process for book re-supply and maintenance. Books can move quickly from Little Free Libraries, especially at first - community members are excited to receive quality books! Books often don't return to the library in the same quantities that they are taken, especially those selected by the youngest readers. As such, we recommend that you develop a book re-supply plan to sustain your library for the long term.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Does your Public Library ever have discards or books that get withdrawn from circulation? Could you use these to stock your library?
- Could you host a Little Free Library book drive and collect donations at the library to build up a backstock? Could a volunteer host a book drive on your behalf?
- The primary steward will be able to access the Stewards Book Directory, which offers free book giveaways to Little Free Library stewards.
- The [Stock and Support Your Library](#) page for recommendations on places to purchase low-cost books for your library.

### Setting up Steward Accounts and Library Mapping:

When you purchase your Little Free Libraries, they will be automatically registered with our organization. Next you will want to set up your Steward Account(s) and then, after you have installed the libraries in your community, add your libraries to the Little Free Library world map.

- **Set Up Your Steward Account**

Within one to three days of registering your Little Free Library, you will receive an email prompting you to set up your steward account. This email is sent to the person who purchased the library or charter sign. Choose your username and password, confirm your email address, and you're ready to go! If you need to transfer stewardship of one or more libraries to someone else, follow these steps:

<https://littlefreelibrary.org/docs/how-do-i-transfer-my-library-to-someone-else/>

- **Tips for setting up your account**

- Library Name and Charter Number - we recommend using the same naming convention for each of your libraries. This way, they will all show up when searched. (For example, Queen City Book Bank, a literacy organization in Cincinnati, OH, has installed 150 libraries in the Cincinnati area. They're all named "QCB # " on the map, and all pop up when QCB is searched by library name.)
    - Library Location and tricks to finding it, if required
    - Brief description
    - Photo

- **Map Your Library**



Once you have set up your steward account, you have the option to add your library's location to the world map and manage all of its details in real time. **Your library will not appear on the map unless you add it.** To map your library, log in through the [Little Free Library app](#) or [steward web portal](#) using the email and password for the Steward Account, fill in your library's information, and set its **Map Status** to **Mapped**. You may remove your library from the map at any time.

- If you would like us to map your library(ies) for you, please let us know and we will help you!
- **Access Steward Resources:**
  - All stewards have access to the Steward Resources section of the steward portal. There you can find:
    - Book Directory and Discounts
    - Resource Downloads
    - Tips for community building
    - Access to volunteer support
  - In addition, we've created a selection of resources specifically for public libraries, such as mapping support, the ability to make announcements to our steward lists, and downloadable templates to help you steward your libraries!

Now you are ready to build community, inspire readers, and expand book access for all! Please email us anytime at [support@littlefreelibrary.org](mailto:support@littlefreelibrary.org) if you have any questions or need support!