

INTERNATIONAL
LITERACY
ASSOCIATION

Service Project Kit: Build a Little Free Library®

International Literacy Day
8 September 2015



Make a Big Difference With a Little Free Library®

Our theme for this year's International Literacy Day is "The Power of People: Start a Literacy Movement." Our goal is to inspire you to make a difference in your school, your community, or the world at large—and to understand the power of collective action.

That's why we've partnered with Little Free Library, an organization that's a perfect example of what happens when just one person starts a global movement.

For the unfamiliar: A Little Free Library is a "take a book, return a book" gathering place where neighbors share their favorite books and stories. In its most basic form, the Library is a book exchange whereby anyone can stop and pick up a book (or two) and bring back another book to share.

Founder Todd Bol, the son of a former school teacher, built the first Little Free Library in Wisconsin in 2009 to honor his mother and to promote literacy in his community. Just six years later, Little Free Library is a thriving nonprofit organization. Its network of libraries has grown to more than 25,000, spanning from Iceland to (you guessed it!) the Philippines, our focus country for ILD 2015. In fact, Bol says, the Philippines was home to some of the first international Little Free Libraries—and that Libraries on the islands are often found on the back of bikes!

Use this service-learning component to take your ILD celebration to the next level. By building a Little Free Library, you're encouraging not only students to read, but also as many people as there are books on your Library's shelf.

Share your Little Free Library photos using the hashtag #ILD15!



Thank you for your involvement in International Literacy Day!

Little Free Library® is excited to partner with the International Literacy Association to help you learn how you can promote literacy in your community.

By getting involved in this service project, you are now a very important part of the Little Free Library movement. Your contributions make the world a better place, one book exchange at a time.

Books have the power to change lives—they inspire, they challenge, and they teach. I'm sure you have a favorite book—one that made you laugh or cry, one that introduced you to something new, one that you love and wish everyone could read. By sharing a Little Free Library with your community, you also share incredible books that can leave a significant and lasting impression in the lives of the people who read them. And that's a big deal!

I encourage you to think about your community and all of the ways it would benefit from having a Little Free Library. Talk to your teachers, your parents, your friends, and your neighbors and tell them why you need a Little Free Library. And then get going! You'll find a lot of great information on our website: littlefreelibrary.org.

I can't wait to see all of the ways you make our world a better place!



Todd H. Bol
Creator and Executive Director
Little Free Library®



Getting Started on Your Little Free Library®

The mission of Little Free Library is not only to bring books to every corner, but also to bring communities together through reading. One person started a movement; tens of thousands are working together to keep it going.

Students can also use this service project to deepen their studies. Whether writing a letter to local businesses asking for sponsorship, creating a press release for a newspaper, or discussing with classmates the books that *must* be in the Library, the possibilities to strengthen core literacy skills are endless. (See page 7 for a few ideas.)



Here we've included some of the important steps and considerations for launching your Library. Best of luck!

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION. To make sure your Little Free Library gets a lot of patrons, you'll want to pick a highly visible location with a lot of foot traffic. Consider ease of access for borrowers as well as those who'll be responsible for stocking up and maintaining the Library.

In addition, you'll want to keep in mind that the location of your Little Free Library must conform to local zoning laws. Learners ages 10 and up should have no problem researching them; younger students may

need more assistance. Little Free Library offers some tips for checking with local government on their website at littlefreelibrary.org.

BUILD YOUR LIBRARY. There are two ways to approach this project: building your own Library or purchasing a kit from Little Free Library. Either option will require you to create a budget for the project. If you choose to build your Library from scratch, you'll need to factor in the cost of materials, which can run anywhere from US \$15 to \$150.

There is also a one-time payment of US \$34.95 per Library to receive a steward's packet of support materials and an official charter sign and number for your Library. That charter sign is the marker that shows the whole world that your Library is officially a member of the network; the charter number allows your Library to be listed on the World Map, along with other benefits, including a monthly e-newsletter and the opportunity to buy new books for the cost of shipping and handling. Don't forget to factor in installation costs (wooden post, mounting sleeve, hardware, etc.) that will typically run US \$30. For sample plans to build your own Little Free Library, and to get complete installation instructions, visit littlefreelibrary.org/builders/.



If you decide to purchase a Library through littlefreelibrary.org/product-category/library/ (prices start at US \$174.95), your steward's packet and one official charter sign are included. You will, however, still need to factor in installation costs.

SPREAD THE WORD. Launch your Little Free Library in style! Hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony with refreshments and a book exchange. Reach out to local media to tell the community about this new resource. Ask the public to donate books to keep stock fresh and full. You'll be surprised at how much support you'll get!

Getting Started on Your Little Free Library® (continued)

SPEAKING OF SUPPORT... The teams responsible for the construction, installation, and maintenance of your Little Free Library can consist solely of a class of students and its teacher or can be expanded into a community-centered committee that includes school representatives, local philanthropic and service groups, and government officials. Ask your group members which option they prefer. If they opt for outside assistance, consider having them create a form you can send home to families that asks them about applicable skills. It's likely there's at least one weekend carpenter in the bunch!

You may also want to write to local businesses and ask for a donation of building supplies or money with which to purchase those supplies (or one of the kits from Little Free Library). Consider having the donations recognized in some way on the Library itself—it's easy to build in an area that lists your donors/volunteers and thanks them for their efforts.



Post your progress and tag ILA at [@ILAToday](#) and Little Free Library at [@LtlFreeLibrary](#) on Twitter. Share your photos to Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest with the hashtag #ILD15.

GET INVENTORY. It's safe to say the books are the most important part of a Little Free Library—without them it's simply a Little Empty Box! Here are some ways to collect books:

- **Hold a book drive.** Spread the word in your school or community that you need books for your Library. They can be new, but gently used are even better. Designate a particular place on one day or set up a bin in a high-traffic area for a few weeks.
- **Have a fundraiser.** Bake sales, car washes, even a yard sale—anything that's low cost can bring high rewards. Money raised can be taken to a local thrift shop to purchase books for your Library (you'll get way more bang for your buck!). Consider buying extra to have replacement books at the ready. If your fundraiser is very successful, it can help defray costs for building materials, installation costs, or the Little Free Library charter as well.

Getting Started on Your Little Free Library® (continued)

KEEP YOUR LIBRARY GOING. Once the Library is installed, be sure to designate at least one person to be its “steward”—the person (or team of people) who will be sure the Little Free Library is always stocked, clean, and maintained. Reach out to the community via local media, e-mail, flyers, and word of mouth to bring people to the Library and to solicit book donations.

After the Little Free Library is built and planted in the perfect location, make sure it is used and supported! The average Little Free Library cycles through anywhere between 20 and 100 or more books per month. Stewards should keep an eye on inventory, but sometimes a mystery patron will restock with fresh books. Other organizations may donate books directly to the founder of the Library. What’s important is that supporting the Library doesn’t fall solely on one steward’s shoulders. A Little Free Library is a gift to the community *from* the community.

Here are some strategies for continued support:

- Communicate from the start that this is an effort for the common good—giving offers as much satisfaction as taking.
- Thank people in writing and in person. That’s why having a Library-building event or welcoming party can be so valuable. Keep a suggestion box or notebook in the Library so that anyone can offer comments, recommendations, or requests.
- Use book plates where donors and sharers can tell why they contributed the book and what they value about it. You can design and print your own or download them at littlefreelibrary.org/download-templates/. Remember, it’s not just the content of books but the memories and thoughts books generate that matter.
- Build a backup reserve of books by involving book lovers—book clubs and discussion groups, people who have big home libraries, friends of public libraries, used bookstores, and folks who will thoughtfully patronize thrift stores and yard sales. The more people on your support team, the better!
- Follow littlefreelibrary.org/ourblog/ for additional tips on maintaining your Library.



Little Free Library® in the Classroom

In addition to spreading literacy in the community, work on a Little Free Library® can be parlayed into classroom lessons. Here are some ways to use this project to strengthen literacy skills.

CREATE A BOOK LIST. Every reader can share a book he or she believes should be on a Little Free Library shelf. If your class is small, allow everyone the opportunity to contribute a title. If space is limited, have students booktalk their favorites to convince their peers which ones need to be purchased or requested in donations.



RALLY SUPPORT. Whether your students write letters requesting donations from local businesses or opt to do a face-to-face pitch, learning how to ask—and get results—can be a valuable learning experience! For those who prefer writing versus speaking, ReadWriteThink.org's [Letter Generator](#) is a great place to start. Students can use the site's [Persuasion Map](#) to strengthen their appeal.

INVITE PUBLICITY. Write a press release for the local newspaper, radio station, or television station. Invite the press to cover your ribbon cutting. Another option is to use ReadWriteThink.org's [Printing Press](#) to create a brochure

or flyer that can be distributed around the community. Little Free Library offers a sample flyer at littlefreelibrary.org/stewards-friends/how-to-information/.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR COMMITMENT. Create and give presentations about your Little Free Library to other groups in the community (Scouts, other schools, church youth groups, the Rotary, etc.). Use tools like [Animoto](#) or [iMovie](#) for visual appeal. You can then share these multimedia projects on social media (don't forget to hashtag them #ILD15!).

