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Middle Managers and Major Gifts: Fundraising for Academic Librarians

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Abstract

Purpose: Share successful strategies for mid-level management academic librarians and archivists for raising major gifts from individual donors

Design: Demonstrate growing need for fundraising in university libraries and participating in fundraising activities as an increasing expectation of librarians; provide case studies of successful fundraising by librarian and archivist including their work with donors and collaboration with development professionals; conclude with suggestions for maintaining donor relations

Findings: Fundraising is increasingly rapidly as an expected activity of librarians but a slowly growing part of their education. More literature is also needed on the topic. Successful fundraising is dependent on clear definition of fundraising goals, effective communicational and other interpersonal skills, continuing donor follow up and regular collaboration with development staff.

Value: Librarians and archivists can apply to their own fundraising needs the experiences narrated in the case studies of two successful major fundraising efforts utilizing a team-based approach to raising major gifts from individual donors

Keywords: Fundraising, donors, middle managers

Paper type: Case study

Supporting the Changing Library

In today's economic climate, universities (and libraries within universities) receive much less government funding than in the past; yet, changes in the way scholars create and disseminate information have resulted in increased expectations for innovative technology and services. State appropriations alone can no longer sustain today's academic library. Bringing in funds to support operations, renovations, and other projects for a university library has traditionally been seen as the domain of the dean or library director, typically in partnership with development staff. Librarians and archivists must take on a portion of this role and bring in external funding to support the core mission and operations of the library, enable new service models, create innovative learning spaces, and support new collecting initiatives.

Currently, there are few best practices or guidelines available for librarians in middle management positions to use in navigating their new role as fundraisers. While training in development activities is slowly growing, it is still a minimal part of library science education. The authors seek to share their experiences with fundraising in a large academic research library in order to demystify fundraising for librarians and archivists. The case studies illustrate the successes that can be gained by emphasizing the institution's mission, values, and strategic plan; the goals of the fundraising project; and the impact it will have on the library and its patrons.

The case studies represent successful efforts by a librarian and an archivist, in collaboration with the library dean and director of development, to acquire major lead gifts from individual donors for new projects.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Library Renovations and Capital Campaigns - the Purdue Management and Economics Library

The redefinition of a 21st century student-centered business library began in 2005 with a vision document created by key stakeholders and customers of the Management and Economics Library (MEL):

In the twenty-first century, MEL, working as a dynamic partner with its major constituents, will increase information literacy by:

- (1) Providing access to and delivery of information to its constituents, regardless of location or time.*
- (2) Providing training and guidance to its constituents in the access and use of all information sources.*
- (3) Providing an open environment for promoting continuous learning. This community environment will provide access to and guidance for the use of the totality of information that affects the learning process of our constituents.*

The multi-phased renovation project began in 2007 through collaboration with the Krannert School of Management and a Krannert alumni visit with one of their prominent donors. The dean of the school made an unannounced visit with the donor one morning and asked the librarian to provide a vision for the 21st century library. The librarian was able to articulate a concise vision in less than 5 minutes, based on the three vision outcomes listed above. As a result, the donor provided \$500,000 to begin phase one of the project to renovate the library. The total project cost estimate was \$4.2 million and this gift provided enough funding, along with campus restoration funds, to finish the first phase, which included a corporate quiet study space and a state of the art instructional classroom. The resulting newly renovated learning space, completed in 2009, became a campus showcase attracting many potential donors and an opportunity to host several events and tours.

Purdue University President France Córdova, in a meeting with a major donor, noted the donor's passion for libraries and his expression of interest in the library renovation project at Krannert School of Management during their first meeting in 2009. This encounter led to a meeting between the donor and the Dean of Libraries that resulted in a two-hour discussion with the donor acknowledging the central role the Libraries played in his quest for academic excellence throughout his college career.

During homecoming weekend in 2009, the development officer asked the head librarian to provide a tour of the newly renovated first phase of MEL. The head librarian later attended a university dinner with prominent donors, where she was seated at the table of the major lead donor prospect, Roland G. Parrish. The following morning the head librarian gave a tour of the

library facility. This gave her the opportunity to present the overall vision for the library, including the additional two renovation phases needing to be completed.

The already completed phase one of the renovation project served as an advantage, providing a visual example of the progress and sparking an in-depth discussion about the need for developing student centered collaborative learning spaces for the 21st century library. Keying in on the donor's passion for libraries and the importance the library played during his academic career made it possible to address today's student needs for new technologies and the need for both collaborative learning and quiet study spaces. The relationship between the head librarian and the donor took a full academic year to develop and negotiation over time resulted in the naming of the Management and Economics Library for Roland Parrish.

Phase two of the renovation was completed in 2010, and the major gift and new library name Roland G. Parish Library of Management and Economics were announced in January, 2011. A celebratory reception was held with over 200 people in attendance showcasing architect renderings for the final phase to be completed in December 2011. The librarian's involvement in the space planning process, assistance in writing funding proposals for the remaining funds needed, and work with all stakeholders to ensure the function of the space met their needs were instrumental to the success of the project. Thus far, the space, not yet fully renovated, has drawn so much attention, the librarian has been asked to participate in other campus initiatives impacting student learning and learning spaces on campus.

Case Study 2: The Purdue Women's Archives Collecting Initiative

The Women of Purdue initiative was established by the University in 2003 as a subcommittee of the steering committee for The Campaign for Purdue. Now known as the Women for Purdue, it was established to encourage and celebrate women's philanthropy. In 2006, Judy Schumaker, Director of Libraries Advancement, initiated the library's participation in the program. A day-long event for the Women for Purdue Libraries was coordinated, with presentations and remarks by the Libraries administration and librarians. In addition to inviting women donors to the Libraries, a select group of women who had supported the University's overall Women for Purdue initiative were also invited, including alumna and trustee, Susan Bulkeley Butler.

At the event, the Libraries Archivist gave a presentation on women in Purdue history. Having sought to create an exhibit on women who had influenced the University, the Archivist had realized that there were very few resources available in the University Archives that documented the roles of women. Her presentation featured many influential women she had discovered through her research, but for whom little documentation was available in the Archives. The Archivist's concern that women were being left out of Purdue history resonated with the audience, who could perceive the need to document the roles women had played to tell the true story of the University.

Following the day of presentations, the Women for Purdue Libraries gathered that evening for a meal at the home of the Dean of Libraries. Susan Butler commented to the Dean, and to the Director of Advancement, that she had attended the Archivist's presentation and wanted to do something to help document women in Purdue history. Butler, the first professional female

employee hired at Arthur Anderson & Company in 1965, later became the first female partner of Anderson Consulting (now known as Accenture) fourteen years later. As a Purdue alumna who had broken ground for women in business and witnessed first-hand the difficulties women often faced in receiving recognition and support in their careers, Butler is passionate about advancing women and recognizing their contributions.

Butler had given generously to the University many times in the past, but had never been a donor to the Libraries. She became engaged in supporting the library's desire to recognize women in Purdue history and was interested in a naming opportunity. The Dean and the Director of Advancement discussed this with the Archivist, and a plan was formed on the spot to write a funding proposal to create a Women's Archives, named for Butler, that would allow the Libraries to identify and build collections in this area. The Director of Advancement and Archivist collaborated on writing the funding proposal, which was later presented to Butler, who supported it with a \$1 million deferred gift. Butler's gift would allow the Archives to create programming centered around women in Purdue and Indiana history, acquire collections of key women's papers, and process and preserve them for research.

The Susan Bulkeley Butler Women's Archives was established in 2006 as a means of documenting the pioneering women who helped shape Purdue and Indiana history. Butler's gift was announced in press releases and at events launching the Women's Archives. However, due to the nature of a deferred gift, funding would not become available until the donor's death. Due to the high level of interest on behalf of the donor and the Libraries to begin making progress on the Women's Archives, the Director of Advancement and the Archivist subsequently worked with the Dean of Libraries to create a proposal for Butler to provide \$100,000 of her deferred gift up front towards start-up costs. This proposal, accepted by Butler, enabled the Libraries to hire a half-time archivist for three years to begin building the collections, preserving and promoting them, and raising awareness for the Women's Archives.

Due to the level of Butler's gift, the announcement of her donation was made as part of the President's Council brunch, an event and special program honoring the top donors to the University. Purdue President, Martin Jischke, made remarks at the event about Butler's gift and the significance it had for increasing diversity at the University. A press release was sent out and picked up by several newspapers, and the story was featured in the University's alumni magazine and the Libraries annual newsletter. For the following Women's History Month in March a reception was held, highlighting the Women's Archives with a special exhibition. The archivist for the Women's Archives created special web pages promoting the initiative. The publicity, attention from University administrators, and events garnered much positive attention for the Women's Archives, raising awareness and encouraging additional gifts of collections and support.

Lessons Learned

In the instances described in the above case studies, the librarian's and archivist's enthusiasm and vision for the projects were key to the success of the library's fundraising efforts. Successful fundraising relies as much on the energy, communication, and interpersonal skills of those involved in fundraising activities as it does on his or her formal knowledge of fundraising

methods. Despite lack of training and experience in fundraising, the librarian and the archivist were successful primarily due to their understanding of the importance of fundraising to move their library forward, their willingness to collaborate with the Dean and Director of Development on fundraising, and their energy and enthusiasm for the projects seeking support. Perhaps most importantly, the librarian and the archivist were able to speak clearly about their needs and help donors visualize how their support could transform the library of today into their vision for the future.

The ability to speak persuasively about a vision, without using library jargon, and to encourage excitement in potential donors and help them see what their funds can accomplish is essential to success. Librarians and archivists must be able to communicate clearly to donors, sometimes without advanced warning and with very limited time, what the library stands for, what it does to benefit others, and why its existence is vital to the growth, success, or well-being of its user communities and larger institution. Being able to speak effectively and spontaneously is a skill that may not come naturally to all library professionals, but with practice can be developed. Middle managers should practice and master giving an elevator pitch, a concise and persuasive speech in one or two sentences. When communicating with donors, it is important to be optimistic and energetic about the project. People want to invest in a project that has a high likelihood of success, so librarians and archivists should become comfortable sharing their success stories.

It is also important for the members of the fundraising team to identify fundraising needs and goals well in advance of being presented with funding opportunities. This way each member of the team will be able to speak articulately about exactly how much support is needed, the time frame for the project and how it will impact the organization and the library's patrons.

Building on Success

Donor stewardship and recognition are integral to maintaining good relations with donors that will encourage them to continue to donate in the future. Even the most modest donor wants to feel that his or her gift is being used appropriately and has been appreciated. Following up with donors regularly is necessary for maintaining positive relationships. Reporting back to donors on ways their gifts made a difference is an excellent way to ensure that donors will continue to show interest in future development efforts. At the end of a fundraising campaign donors should be recognized in a variety of ways, since some people prefer public recognition and others prefer giving more quietly or anonymously but appreciate hearing from library staff in follow up letters or conversations about how they have made a difference.

Major gifts often result in donor recognition through naming of a facility or initiative. In the two examples described in the case studies, the gifts resulted in naming of the management library and of the women's archives. Donor receptions, plaques and signage, follow-up acknowledgment letters and ongoing communication encourage positive ongoing donor relations. Gift announcements and receptions for the major gifts in both cases resulted in drawing in hundreds of attendees from around the country.

In the management library, plaques without inscriptions were placed next to the learning spaces throughout the library to indicate other naming opportunities for attendees of the reception and the many visitors who would come in the future. A picture of the first completed phase, which contained the LearnLab, an innovative instructional classroom, appeared in the University president's electronic holiday greeting card.

Some donors may prefer a small, one-on-one lunch allowing for conversation and follow-up on the impact their gift has made. Even anonymous donors want to feel appreciated, and any activity that involves maintaining or increasing positive donor relations represents time well spent in terms of future support. As a middle manager, balancing the expectations of success with other duties is not an easy task. The success of one project will often result in requests for the librarian or archivist to become involved in additional projects, both within the library and the larger university community. Librarians and archivists need to be prepared for these outcomes of their success and work with their supervisors on ensuring that the time they spend on additional projects are in alignment with their performance goals and expectations.

Librarians and archivists should also become comfortable working with the media. As part of publicity surrounding major gifts, groundbreakings, and donor receptions, librarians and archivists will likely be asked to speak with reporters and should be prepared to give statements on the impact of the project. Working with the rest of the team, including marketing professionals within the library or university, will be beneficial in crafting strategic statements that reflect well on the library and university. Major gifts will result in positive publicity and increased awareness of the library, which in turn will result in increased user traffic in the library and increases in requests for tours and interviews. Librarians and archivists may want to work with other staff in sharing some of these responsibilities for showing off new spaces and collections.

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