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Being Earnest With Collections--Materials Gifts in Libraries: Same Old, Same Old? Maybe Not

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uttering one word. I cannot tell you how many times over the years upon entering a customer's office and seeing scotch taped to the wall a watercolor imprint of a child's hands with the message "I love you mommy." That same type of person is apt to have many family pictures, as well. What that tells you is that this person can't wait to tell you about how wonderful their kids are. Speaking about your kids and theirs is always a good way to get to know one another.

In the absence of pictures of children, many people will have photos of recent vacations. "Where was that a picture of you taken?" Re-counting similar vacation experiences is always a good discussion ice breaker.

Money

For some people, a neatly kept office with expensive artwork on the walls is the image they want to convey to every visitor that enters. Upon entering this domain, you instinctively know that this person is serious about making a deal that will be most advantageous monetarily to their organization. Moreover, it is quite unlikely that there will be extraneous papers scattered about and that their desk will most probably be neat.



It's a good guess that this type of person may be a good negotiator and will probably be the most difficult in creating "small talk" before the meeting.

Self-Preservation

Self preservation is the instinct to act in your own best interest to protect yourself and ensure your survival. A person who practices self-preservation will probably work in a minimalist environment. That means there will be very few signs around this person's office to indicate anything personal about them. By noticing who they are, the wise salesperson will tailor their presentation to allay the fears of this person and show them how the product will ensure their survival.

The bottom line is that lurking behind **recognition, romance, money and self-preservation** is fear. Fear of not being recognized; fear of not being loved; fear of losing money; and fear of not being protected.

A good salesperson, upon entering the prospects workplace will immediately read the room, understand the person with whom they are dealing and tailor the presentation to fit the needs and personality of the person on the other side of the table. The conversation in speaking to a person that is ruled by romance for example, is a whole lot different than speaking to a person ruled by money. It's not a good idea to

have a "canned" presentation for everyone because every person has different ways of looking at a situation. An understanding of the surroundings creates an understanding of the person.

In 1970, **The Five Man Electrical Band**, a Canadian rock group from Ottawa, had a hit record called "Signs." In the song, they bemoan the number of signs all around them. In sales, the more signs that are noticed by the salesperson can spell the difference between a successful or non-successful encounter with a prospect. 🐾

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Being Earnest with Collections — Materials Gifts in Libraries: Same Old, Same Old? Maybe Not



by **Steve Carrico** (Acquisitions Librarian & Collections Coordinator, University of Florida Libraries) <stecarr@uflib.ufl.edu>

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Column Editor's Note: I recall when I first started as Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development at the **University of Central Florida** in 2006, one of the first trouble areas I had to address was gift receiving and processing. Since that time my thoughts on the importance of gift materials and the value they can have for academic libraries has moved from one extreme to another and settled somewhere in the middle. At first my thought was to make the review process and final disposition of gifts as efficient as possible. The focus was on keeping selection well focused and only adding gift materials that would have been purchased, while finding alternate ways to move unwanted gifts out of the library. We looked at ways to increase the amount of money brought in from the sale of gift books through library book sales and commission from a local dealer. Believing

that if we were going to spend time in review and processing that we could at least offset some of the expense.

In 2008, I collaborated with **Kelli Getz**, Assistant Head of Acquisitions at the **University of Houston**, and we looked at various ways to make sense of gift receipt and processing. We gave a presentation at the Acquisitions Institute in 2009, where we presented on, among other things, ways to increase sales and commission from gift materials. It seemed to be going well for a couple of years and then we experienced the fallout from the economic woes that seemed to reduce gift receipts and that was combined with new directions for utilization of space within the library, and staff reductions. It was during this time that my philosophy began to change and I became more focused on finding ways to eliminate or drastically reduce gift receiving.

However, there was always a concern about telling potential donors that the library is not interested. So, we continued to accept gift materials with the idea that we would do so while also being quiet about it. Now that I am at the **The University of Alabama** I find that the same old issues of concern are once again coming to the forefront.

During a recent talk with **Steve Carrico** I was reminded that the **University of Florida** had also experimented with different policies and procedures related to gifts. Having worked many times with Steve over the years I knew that he had put much thought into how to better manage gift receiving and processing. I am delighted that my friend and colleague agreed to provide a nice overview of the recent steps taken at **UF** to address gift receiving. I am sure **ATG** readers who are

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themselves struggling with what to do about gift materials will find some best practices in this article. — MA

Material gifts have always been problematical for academic and public libraries. A search of library literature reveals dozens of publications that address the pros and cons of accepting, processing, and selecting in-kind gifts. A highly attended *ALCTS E-Forum* in 2011 attests that many academic librarians still wrangle with the topic of in-kind gifts, notably the relevancy of donations, the disposition of unselected items, donor relations, and costs associated with processing gifts.¹ It must be made clear, *material gifts are not free*, as there are costs associated with every aspect of adding gift items to a library collection, including staff and selector time, cataloging, and the overhead associated with stack shelving and maintenance. Clearly, libraries of all types continue to evaluate their in-kind gift policies and workflows and wonder if material gift operations are worth the trouble.

Many of the same issues regarding in-kind donations came up in 2013-2014 at the **University of Florida (UF)** when the Smathers Libraries held library-wide forums to craft new vision statements. Included in the strategic directions are two sets focusing on content acquisitions and collection development.² The libraries' official collection policies were last revised in the 1990s, created in an era of *Just in Case* approach to building large print collections in academic libraries, and were deemed outmoded for a variety of reasons for many subject disciplines. The new vision statements provide a framework to continue to employ the traditional *Just in Case* philosophy to build on Smathers' preeminent holdings — such as Latin America and Florida History — while emphasizing the libraries' commitment to the *Just in Time* collection approach through several ongoing use-driven acquisition plans. During these somewhat heated debates to draft new collection objectives, the libraries' policies and procedures for material gifts were addressed.

In fact, the entire material gifts program at the Smathers Libraries was put under scrutiny and many questions posed. Should the Smathers Libraries continue to accept in-kind gifts? Should the libraries accept and add print books and other gifts by targeted area or areas (Special Collections) but not for predominantly online supported disciplines (STEM)? If a library-wide gifts program is allowed to continue, should the general acceptance and selection policies become more restrictive?

The Smathers Libraries (**University of Florida**) have always had a strong gifts program with a long tradition of donor support. Many of the libraries' most recognized and preeminent collections were begun or significantly enhanced by gift materials. Nevertheless, unless a library only accepts materials preselected for collections, the assumption is most material gift donations will not be added

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to collections. In fiscal year 2012-13, a total of 3,694 out of 14,967 monographs received as gifts at the Smathers Libraries were selected for collections — approximately 25%. While this percentage of gift monographs cataloged for library collections is comparatively high for an academic library, this selection does not include the thousands of assorted gift items received (serials, CD/DVDs, etc.) that rarely go into collections. Overall, to manage a large gifts workflow requires a significant amount of effort by staff and collection managers.

One reason for a certain *laissez-faire* attitude to accepting in-kind gifts was the ex-

istence of the Smathers Libraries Bookstore. This store was located in the heart of campus and sold unselected print books and other items to the UF community. The store enabled staff to routinely accept large in-kind donations as the store was stocked by unselected materials. Staff had trained students to post books for online sale using the vendor **Alibris**, and between the two revenue streams the program's overhead was funded in a large part by accepting large materials gifts. Yet, based on the statistics and anecdotal evidence, it was clear that far too often the libraries were accepting donations

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that were clearly outside the scope of a research library; what is worse, often the libraries were making onsite pickups of in-kind gifts both on and off campus without really reviewing the offer. The selection process had become very loose and unrestrictive; it was much too easy for collection managers to add large amounts of materials using the *Just in Case* approach.

In January 2013 the Smathers Library Bookstore was closed and staging and storage areas for gift materials were reduced substantially to make room for more user space. Without a library bookstore to channel the overflow of unselected materials, the libraries simply could not afford to accept wholesale gift in-kind donations. A review of gifts records for several years showed the libraries had been the beneficiary of many excellent donations, including archival and rare materials. Ultimately the decision was to keep a material gifts program intact, but to comprehensively revise acceptance and selection criteria across the libraries.

In summer 2013 the Smathers Libraries created a new gifts policy that is designed to be more restrictive in acceptance and selection of material gifts, however the preeminent collections — as noted in the libraries' strategic directions — are allowed more freedom to

build holdings with gifts. Most of the identified preeminent collections are part of the libraries' Special & Areas Studies Department (S&AS) which has its own strict policy for gift materials; in most cases, the gifts program complies with S&AS policy. The new general parameters for accepting in-kind donations now require staff to conduct interviews of potential donors to aptly judge if the materials offered are suitable in scope, condition, and worthy of acceptance. If a donation is over a certain size, selectors are required to visit onsite to affirm its value to the libraries. New parameters for selection include a limit of volumes to be cataloged at one time to avoid wholesale adds to holdings in the *Just in Case* style of selection.³

The success of these tighter parameters is evident in the statistics of print monographs donated and selected for collections. In fiscal year 2013-14, 2,625 of 7,551 monographs received as gifts were selected for collections — approximately 35%. When compared to statistics from the previous year, the number of gift monographs accepted by the libraries decreased, while a larger percentage of the books were selected. Statistics since 2014 are charting a similar pattern: less gift materials being accepted with a higher percentage being added to collections. Meanwhile the gifts program continues to sell unselected materials despite not operating a store, selling the finer quality books online while routing the bulk to a local bookseller. Revenues garnered from

sales have declined, but the gifts program is now managed by a half-time staff employee so the overhead has diminished as well.

If nothing else, the new gifts policy with tighter parameters has reduced workflow and improved the efficiency of book selection. Yet, through trial it has been determined the new parameters are not carved in stone; many times gift donors are important faculty, deans, or cash donors that mandate the libraries accept out of scope or unwanted in-kind gifts, despite the restrictions. In a sense, for library staff the new acceptance parameters are really akin to *guidelines* than actual rules. Fortunately, at the Smathers Libraries the new guidelines seem to be working. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **American Library Association.** (2011) "Current Issues in In-Kind Materials Donations," Sept. 21-22, 2011, hosted by Stacy Gordon and Heath Martin. <http://www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/upcoming/e-forum/092111>.
2. **University of Florida Smathers Libraries.** (n.d.) "Strategic Directions, UF Libraries 2014-2017." <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00004144/00001/1thumbs?ts=3>.
3. **University of Florida Smathers Libraries.** (2015) "Gift Policy." http://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/gifts-exchange/gift_policy.

Charleston Comings and Goings: News and Announcements for the Charleston Library Conference

by **Leah Hinds** (Assistant Conference Director) <leah@charlestonlibraryconference.com>

How exciting! **Katina** asked me to start writing a regular column on the **Charleston Library Conference** as a way to keep everyone up to date on the latest developments, deadlines, and news. Although it feels to me like the **2015 Conference** just wrapped up, February is when the "core planning committee," **Katina**, **Beth Bernhardt**, **Tom Gilson**, and I, start gearing up our brains for the yearly planning process so this is the perfect time to start the column.

The 2015 attendee evaluation results have been compiled and distributed to the board of Conference Directors (<http://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com/about/conference-directors/>).

Thanks to all of you who took the time to turn in your comments! Our first conference call has been scheduled to discuss the evaluations, make recommendations for changes based on attendee feedback, and brainstorm ideas for plenary speakers, panel topics, and a debate premise for 2016. If you have ideas for topics, suggestions for speakers, or any comments or feedback that would be helpful in our planning, please feel free to contact any of the Conference Directors at the link above, or email me at <leah@charlestonlibraryconference.com>. We'd love to hear from you!

We are pleased to announce our new Conference Philosophy and Code of Conduct that will take effect immediately, and which is posted on the **Conference Website** at <http://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com/conference-philosophy>. The **Charleston Library Conference** is an inclusive, professional conference. We respect free speech and invite diverse perspectives and opinions. We hope that this new philosophy and code of conduct

will meet the goal of making all of our attendees feel welcome, valued, and comfortable.

A call for preconferences and seminars will open on the March 4, with a proposal submission deadline of April 29. These in-depth learning sessions range from a half day to two days in length, and will be held from Monday, October 31, through Wednesday, November 2. We are seeking proposals for hands-on, practical workshops that will offer a deeper, more thorough look at topics related to collection development and acquisitions. One specific request from the 2015 evaluations was for an advanced preconference that would be helpful for mid-level to executive/director careers. Other ideas included interpretation of usage metrics and how they relate to the real world and marketing your library. We are also open to proposals for post-conference sessions to be held on Saturday afternoon, November 5. For more information, visit <http://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com/preconferences/>.

In addition to preparations for 2016, here is also some helpful information to wrap up from the 2015 conference. 2015 videos are now available on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/CharlestonConference>

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