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Fund Raising for Academic Libraries: What Works, What Doesn't?

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Introduction

During the recent recession, academic libraries in the United States of America have had to endure significant budget cuts. Funding continues to go down at the same time the cost of materials and staff continues to increase. This has created an untenable situation of annual reductions to acquisitions budgets and the layoff of library staff. Not surprisingly, academic libraries have looked at other ways to fund their budgets. One of these is an increasing emphasis on fund raising.

Turning to fund raising, though, poses many questions. What works for raising money for an academic library? What doesn't work? How does this differ from other kinds of fund raising in higher education? The library literature is not deep on the topic of library development (Wedgeworth, 2000) so it can be difficult to discover what is being done successfully in the field. Further, library directors often do not like fund raising work. As Riggs and Sabin (1988) wrote, "A lot of directors indicate that public relations and fund-raising are soft areas" (p. 137).

Most large academic libraries employ one or more professional fund raisers known as academic library development officers to seek external funds. This qualitative study presents what academic library development officers perceive as being successful methods of fund raising. It also presents what these individuals believe does not work.

Literature Review

Alkin (1992) wrote, "The increasing size, diversity, professionalism, and activism of private philanthropy have made it a powerful actor in education during the twentieth century" (p. 1001). However, this status took time to reach these heights. There can be no certainty when the first philanthropic action was taken on behalf of an institution of higher education in the United States. However, three clergymen from Massachusetts are recorded as having raised 500 pounds for Harvard College, Yale College, and William and Mary College in the 1600s (Gurin & Til, 1990).

The first significant voice supporting philanthropy towards higher education was that of George Whitefield. Whitefield was an English preacher who toured what would become the United States of America in 1739. He was a major figure in the religious Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s. His many sermons advocated charity for a variety of causes, among them, educational institutions such as Harvard and Dartmouth (Cutlip, 1965; Gurin & Til, 1990).

The first collegiate alumni society was founded in 1821 at Williams College (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990). Other private institutions followed, although it would be at least 70 years before the first public university alumni societies formed (Dolibois, 1977). These alumni societies provided colleges and universities with a new way to solicit funds from their graduates. The fundraising potential of these associations was substantial. As an example, Harvard University successfully completed an alumni fund raising drive in 1905 generating a total of \$2.4 million (Cutlip, 1965). In 1891, the Kansas University Endowment Association was formed at the University of Kansas with the direct intent of getting funds from alumni (Worth, 1982). Legon (2005) noted that the earliest collegiate foundations were established to "facilitate land acquisition and, eventually, to accept private gifts" (p. 3).

Large research universities developed in the United States of America between the late 1800s and 1920. These institutions of higher education could not have developed and thrived without support from American society. The Morrill Act of 1862 gave land to each state to develop new institutions of higher education (Grub & Lazerson, 2005). Public support of higher education was a clear goal of Americans at this time (Carrigan, 1988). As noted, for example, John D. Rockefeller gave \$600,000 in 1889 to help establish the University of Chicago (Cutlip, 1965).

The decade of 1919 to 1929 was referred to by Davis (1985) as "the golden age of fund raising" (p. 16). Private industry gave substantial amounts of money to build colleges, libraries, churches, and other institutions for the public good (Cutlip, 1965). The stock market crash of 1929, which started the Great Depression, brought this level of financial support to a halt. Much of the private wealth of the United States was lost and this directly translated into less giving for philanthropy.

Changes in state and federal laws before, during, and after the Great Depression ultimately helped to reignite the philanthropic drive in the United States. In 1917, Texas became the first state to allow corporations to make charitable donations. By 1941, 30 states had had changed their statutes to allow for corporate philanthropy (Davis, 1985). In 1935, the Internal Revenue Service changed the Revenue Code to allow a 5% deduction for corporate philanthropy (Cutlip, 1965). The overturning of the common-law rule in the 1950s eliminated all legal barriers to corporate philanthropy (Davis).

World War Two saw the United States shift into a war economy. The focus of fund raising was to find ways to pay for the war effort. During this time period, the power of the mass media was harnessed to drive much of the fund raising by the government with radio being used extensively (Cutlip, 1965). After the war, the 1950s and early 1960s saw a greater increase in philanthropic investments than in personal income or the gross national product of the United States (Cutlip). Higher education thrived as the GI Bill allowed soldiers to go to college and then it continued to grow as Baby Boomers came of age (Elliott, 2006).

As higher education prospered in the post-World War Two era, many within higher education, particularly at public institutions, came to think of government funding as a principal means of support. As the American economy grew to unprecedented heights, government could indeed generously support college and universities. As a result, public institutions grew lax in their efforts to

raise private funds.

Despite the growth in higher education during this time, philanthropic giving to higher education reached a 10 year high in 1966 and then went into a decline due to a stock market slump (Geiger, 1993). This decline began to reverse itself slowly in 1974 but economic conditions in the United States kept fund raising for higher education down (Williams & Hendrickson, 1986). Once the economy recovered in the early 1980s, fund raising for the academy boomed (Geiger).

In the last two decades, higher education has lost substantial public funding as both state and federal governments have had to struggle with budget deficits. Legon (2005) noted:

As elected leaders attempt to balance state budgets and come to grips with declining discretionary funds, the new financial realities facing higher education become clear. To address state trends, many institutions and systems are increasing tuition and cutting expenses. The cuts...are having significant effects on issues of access and global competition, making it more difficult for higher education to achieve its mandate. (p. 4)

Brinkman and Morgan (2001) posited, "higher education has been drawing down on what was once a large reservoir of trust" (p. 428). In essence, buyers are starting to doubt that higher education is worth the cost. Those losing trust include different levels of government, parents, and students. Heywood (2006) reported that parents are more concerned with paying for college costs than they are with retirement. He noted that parents often say, "Too bad about retirement savings; my kids are going to college" (p. 10). Some students, however, do not get into college. Of 900,000 college-qualified high school graduates from low and moderate income families in 2002, over 500,000 were denied access to higher education by either being prevented from enrolling due to lack of proof of ability to pay or they simply did not attempt to enroll (Fitzgerald, 2004).

The funding crisis in higher education has demonstrated that philanthropy is still an important part of funding higher education in the United States. If public funding and tuition cannot cover all operating expenses, then other means of revenue must be found and philanthropy remains a large part of this. Heyns (1994) wrote, "Publicly supported institutions are continuing to depend on private support to supplement traditional funding sources... Dependency on voluntary support such as gifts from alumni, friends, and corporations is growing" (pp. 37-38). Thus, it is critical to better understand the role of development and the successful strategies used by development officers.

Methodology

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach based upon interviews with library development officers from academic institutions. Participants were identified by using the list of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) members. ARL is an association of 123 of the largest research libraries in the United States and Canada. Participants were identified via an e-mail sent to all ARL library development officers in academic libraries asking them to suggest the best development programs within ARL. Out of 123 ARL libraries, 80 were selected to receive the e-mail. The remaining 43 were not included as they were not academic libraries (being special or public libraries) or because it was impossible from their websites to determine who their development officer was at all or even if they had a development office. In addition, several institutions had vacancies in the development position resulting in their exclusion from the study.

A small number of programs frequently selected by ARL library development officers had their library development officer invited to participate in this study. Selected participants were contacted by e-mail with consent forms faxed to them in advance of interview dates. Nine were selected to participate. One individual declined due to a family emergency. Eight agreed to participate and they returned the signed forms via fax.

Data Collection Procedures

Each participant was called at a mutually agreed upon time. The participants were reminded that participation was voluntary, that there were no adverse consequences for refusing to participate, and that his/her identity would remain confidential. The researcher requested permission to record the interview to ensure the participants' responses were accurately documented for later analysis. A speaker phone was used to better facilitate the recording of the interviews.

The study participants were asked a series of questions relating to their perceptions of fund raising for academic libraries. These included:

1. Please describe your institution for me. Probes: What is the size of your institution? How large is the library? Who does the library development officer report to at the institution? How old is the library? How many faculty/students use the library?
2. Describe for me the process of identifying donors, in particular for large gifts?

Probes: Do you get donor lists from a centralized office? Do you purchase donor lists for the surrounding community?

1. What methods have you found work best when approaching donors for large gifts?

Probes: Do your strategies differ for large gifts versus smaller gifts? What type of recognitions are available for donors?

1. What methods work best when trying to build up a base of smaller donors?

Probes: What percentage of your fund base is comprised of smaller donors? What is considered a small donor relative to a large donor?

7. Which well regarded development practices do not work as well in libraries?

8. What do you see is different in development work for academic libraries than for other parts of academia?

9. What are the greatest challenges of your position now? What do you see as the greatest challenges of the future? How has the field evolved? What barriers are in place? What works to your advantage or disadvantage?

10. What else should I be considering to better understand the role of development in libraries?

In addition to recording the interviews, the researcher kept field notes during the interview process. By necessity, this was selective as not everything could be written down. The written notes were used to record key points made by the participants in the study and used later to help in the transcription process.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected began as the researcher recorded insights during the interviews. In addition, key points were marked and summarized immediately after each interview was concluded. An assistant was hired to transcribe the interviews and place the data in Microsoft Word documents. After each transcript was finished, the researcher checked for accuracy by listening to the tapes while reading the transcript. Transcripts were sent back to each participant for a member check to make sure that the transcripts were accurate as well.

After the transcription process was completed, the transcripts were uploaded into the NVIVO7 qualitative data program for coding and analysis which also allowed for easy organization and access to the data. Reading the transcripts, the researcher looked for recurring statements and coded them in the smallest interpretable units that relate to the research questions being studied. As a result, the data were coded in sentences or paragraphs, with some sections being coded multiple times. As the initial themes emerged, they were compared and contrasted in the same interview and across different interviews.

Findings

The whole development process for the academic library depends on the ability to identify likely donors. Three key areas emerged from the participants in regards to what works for identifying donors. These include outreach, dealing with a lack of graduates, and donors. Different tactics can work with different people at different times which prompted one study participant to say, "So you know it's just, it's just, it's a process, and you never know, you just never know."

Outreach

One way to find new donors is to perform outreach activities. This might entail buying a list of potential donors or holding events. The first approach was not a technique used by participants in this study. As the participants explained that their institutions of higher education did not provide them with the names of top prospects very often, the researcher expected to hear evidence that the library development officers purchased lists of potential donors from outsiders. This was not the case. Every participant in the study indicated that they did not purchase potential donor lists from outside of the university. One participant remarked, "We've never purchased like arts and cultural lists and things of that nature. I've never found them valuable."

One successful outreach method that participants talked about for getting potential donors was to sponsor events. In particular, events that were held in the library were discussed frequently as a means to get prospects interested in giving to the library. If a potential donor heard a speaker, toured a collection, or had a free meal at the library, the donor may be persuaded to give the library some attention. One participant noted, "You identify the donor or potential donor and then you check them out by inviting them to an event." This method also can be used to stay engaged with current donors and help solicit additional support from them.

Holding events also allows the library to further educate potential donors who do not understand the needs of the library. A study participant stated:

I think that they want some kind of engagement as well

and I think events are a great way. For a library, I feel we've got a little extra educating to do and so they've got to come in and sort of understand us before they're going to give to us. So we do some events when people are in town and on campus and that's been a great way, so that we do turn around and get some great gifts.

Some of the events held for potential donors that were brought up in the interviews were for individuals or small groups. This was usually reserved for prospects that had the potential to give a larger gift. This was described in detail by one study participant:

Something else we do is called private views where we identify prospects. We are aiming for high-end prospects. We invite them to come to a private view in special collections where they, you know, small group of 10-12 people and we bring them in. The head of special collections does a show and tell and afterwards we have a reception. These small events like this give us the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations. We've been able to find some really good donors out of those events.

It was also noted in one interview that sometimes events are held for anyone in the general public with hopes that a donor can be identified and later cultivated. A study participant described an event, "We offer alums muffins and coffee on alumni day and bring them into the library and hand out some propaganda." The library called the event "Breakfast at the 'brary."

During the interviews, a wide range of events were spoken about. These included author talks and book signings, films, luncheons, exhibits, speakers, friends' book sales, and private tours. Obviously, these events help the reputation of the library on campus and can stimulate the use of library resources by patrons. However, library development officers also used these to find potential donors.

The participants in the study repeatedly noted that their libraries held several events. The number and breadth of events was pointed out by some participants as a big difference from fund raising elsewhere on campus. There was a belief that units (particularly colleges) held fewer events. One participant complained, "We do events, more than we should."

Another participant went into detail about this by saying:

I would say we're forced to do a lot more events. It's different than what you're asking, but along the same lines. I guess what I'd do more of here than I wouldn't do if I were somewhere else like in a typical school. I wouldn't have as many events and I wouldn't spend as much time on marketing in pieces like that maybe? Because I have to get my word out about what I'm doing. I have to do more events because of the nature of this friends group we have and the fact that they're annual supporters and we have a community here who expects some programs that you wouldn't necessarily do in higher education fundraising? So maybe you do a few things more than you would do in others?

As a whole, events were noted by participants as a good outreach method even though there was some belief that the library might be overdoing this aspect of outreach.

No Direct Graduates

Academic libraries have a major issue in regards to locating potential

donors given their lack of an apparent built-in constituency. As a participant noted, "Another thing is the fact that we don't have alums." Although in theory all graduates of an academic institution used the library, few major or minor in library science. Hence, the vast bulk of college graduates do not see the library as the source of their degree. This removed an obvious source of prospects for library development officers that were available to development officers in the schools and colleges on campus. The participants described how they were not given access to the best prospects. One participant in the study noted, "A lot of the top prospects of the campus are already allocated." Another complained in the same vein, "If I can find people, the university doesn't usually stop me, but for them to give me names does not happen very often."

The library is not given a lot of assistance in identifying alumni due to competition with colleges and schools that do have alumni. However, the university was fine with the library identifying prospects on its own. As one study participant remarked:

The library has a real problem because the library serves everybody, but then when it comes to fundraising, all of sudden, everybody's taken off the table. They're already claimed by all the other schools and programs and the library, generally, has to create its constituency one person at a time.

This same person though described his creative approach to uncovering additional donor prospects. The participant elaborated:

We did what I call guerilla fund raising. I used to joke that you'd hide behind a tree and you'd wait for a fat merchant to go by. When you heard the jingle of his purse, you jumped out and grabbed him. It was sort of like that in the sense that, because people were claimed by other schools, you had to very subtly sort of cultivate a relationship with somebody, get them interested, get them involved without the other school knowing that you were, like, after this person. Only once you just about, you know, that you have sold the person that the library was the center of the universe would you go to the school and say "oh by the way, Sally Smith has come to ten of our events and she wants to join our board and she just sent us a check for \$10,000 and we'd love to ask her for a big gift."

Although some might think this approach is unethical, it was effective for this participant.

In reflecting on the how library development is different than development in other areas, participants directly referenced the lack of graduates from the library versus from various colleges. One participant noted, "We don't have any alums so we don't have the function of alumni relations to be doing that engagement work for us. It works in the other units but it just doesn't work for us." Another commented, "I think other units have opportunities to work with their own alums in ways we can never really anticipate."

However, other participants rejected using this as an excuse for poor fund raising results. As one participant pointed out, "One of the strengths, I think, that the library has is that it is absolutely core to the mission of the university...you know there are other things that universities do that are not necessarily core to the mission." He specifically mentioned how the library was more core to the university than athletics and believed that was a bonus when fund raising. Academics are the reason for the existence of colleges and the library supports this mission directly, as opposed to areas like athletics.

One study participant was annoyed by her colleagues at other institutions who used the no alumni excuse. She specifically targeted the

Academic Library Advancement and Development Network (ALADN):

When I go to ALADN, I think that library development officers somewhere in the culture have kind of a hang dog attitude, "oh poor libraries." When you've got an attitude about that, it's difficult to fund raise. How hard is that to come to work? I think, I think that that's a wrong-headed attitude and I think it's perpetuated at ALADN. I haven't gotten involved in the organization enough to make any noise about that, but I do think it is. I mean there are other units here at the university that don't have alumni. The graduate school doesn't have alumni, but they don't say "oh poor me," so I think library development staff need to get over that.

Perhaps the library has no direct graduates but the study participant did not believe it was a valid excuse for poor fund raising results.

Another problem with having no direct graduates was that alumni who were potential donors generally did not understand how libraries work. This required the library development officer to put a lot of effort in educating prospects. As a participant said, "Libraries are very complex entities. And it's hard to explain to a layperson what our needs are beyond books." Another participant, in more detail, noted:

I think there's a lot of misconceptions out there about the relevancy of libraries. We see this with visitors we have, even older alums who you'd think would have a respect. They've utilized libraries. They aren't necessarily as technologically savvy as younger alums, will come into the library and say "I'm surprised this is still here. I thought everything was online." So I think just overcoming these misconceptions. I said the relevancy, the value, a library adds to a university is one of our biggest challenges.

Another participant related a similar misconception that required an educational effort. He said, "They see the library as a utility, you have heat, light, water, library service. It's just like a given, and why should I have to think about what the library needs?"

The traditional sources of donors in higher education, alumni, are often unavailable to library development officers. A lack of direct graduates means the library has to find other ways of attracting this alumni without directly contacting them or finding donors who are not alumni in the first place.

Donors

Working with donors is, of course, a highly important aspect of development work. Without donors, the fund raising process screeches to a sudden and dramatic halt. In many cases, current donors are helpful in finding new donors. Sometimes donors self-identify and walk right through the door. At other times, donors must be actively sought by tasks such as database searching.

One theme emerged from this study that showed a highly successful approach to identifying donors for the academic library. Current donors are also one of the best sources for finding new donors. People who like the library and can afford to make large donations also know people who may also like the library and be able to support the library financially.

A common tactic of development officers in this study was to put their major donors on library boards. These boards are advisory and allow the donors to have input on library issues and do service work for the library. In addition,

these boards also allow the library to identify other potential donors. As one participant said, "I would say that the best way we have had success there has been through our board of advisors...they have been the ones to introduce us to that very top echelon of prospects." One participant elaborated, "There are advisory groups and friends groups. We've got a couple of project groups, a foundation advisory board, and another group...in special collections." Leveraging the current donors aided in recruitment of new donations.

Identifying prospects using current donors also helps get around the problem of the library having no graduates and thus have access to a smaller pool of potential donors. Many of the members of these library boards were not alumni and they knew likely prospects who also may not be alumni. As another participant noted:

A lot of the very top prospects of the campus are already allocated. We very rarely have any access to, sort of, the university's top people and have had to find our own. So our board has been identified and with that in mind they are really strategically placed to help us identify a donor base and fundraising is their mission.

It is likely that good prospects are out there that the university has missed and current donors can help identify them. Another study participant said:

It was actually a trustee who identified that donor and let the senior vice-president know that the donor might be interested in the library because he had heard that donor in other venues talk about his positive experiences in the library when he was a student.

Academic libraries can also use volunteer boards as a form of donor cultivation that will get prospective or current donors to start or continue giving. Every participant in this study mentioned volunteer boards in some capacity during the interviews, either relating to identifying donors or in cultivating donors. Library boards of all kinds (friends, advisory, foundation, etc.) can be used to find new donors and keep current donors actively engaged with the library. As a study participant said, "Our strongest continual large donors are those that have been here and understand us and many of them have become board members." This appears to be a very successful practice in soliciting donations.

For all the work library development officers do to find donors, sometimes they get lucky. On occasion, a donor will walk through the door with no prompting and say, "I want to give you money." One study participant who benefited from such an encounter related:

So a gift of \$250,000 to name it. That's classic, classic, but he self-identified. He just walked in the door. I don't think he'd ever made a gift to the library like that. So that's why it's exciting. You never know. You never know where things are going to come from.

Another study participant noted that smaller donors are often self-identified and that this often leads long-term to bigger gifts. The study participant related:

You always hope and sometimes have self-identified donors. People who start giving, your best ones are the ones who are giving to the library. However they found out about that, but the annual people who give you \$100, \$250 and you've just gradually worked with them in a very traditional fundraising

capacity. Over time they've given more and you've started building a relationship and they've started giving major gifts.

Another topic that was discussed is that it is difficult for the library to appeal to the emotions of potential donors. Giving to the library does not fund scholarships for needy students, does not fund research into laboratories on campus seeking a cure for cancer, etc. One participant said in regards to funding students, "In other units that I've served, scholarship support is something I always thought was easy to sell. It's easy to make a case for need-based scholarships. You know we don't have that vehicle to offer." The library does not offer scholarships, and getting an emotional appeal to fund book collections, a new building, or other worthy library endeavor is hard.

One study participant put this into the broader context of fund raising:

I've often heard it said, and I think it's true that people give money to save lives or to change lives. Usually a lot of giving has a strong emotional component. You know it's the starving baby or the hurricane or the flood and so on, and that kind of giving is important. I used to work in that area and I happen to be working in an organization that was one of the few American organizations working in Cambodia when all of a sudden Cambodia opened up and people realized that there had been a large scale Holocaust there. There was a tremendous outpouring of concern and just literally millions of dollars came in, like what happened with 9/11 and the Red Cross. There's a lot of emotional giving. Small donor giving that's emotional, that isn't going to work for the library.

Another area of challenge that was cited was the growth of development efforts on campus and by other competing non-profits. It seems as though everybody has a development officer these days, which is different than it was a few decades ago. As one participant stated, "You see high schools, you see grade schools, and it seems like everybody's got a development officer and everybody has a need. I just think that there's more competition." Another participant said:

I think it's become so much more competitive. I mean, I see it now as we start bumping into competition within our own library development organization. Sometimes I'm competing more with other colleges. Libraries that now have a sophisticated development program, but also within our own state, a historical society, and they are becoming much more of a challenge for us, so it's very interesting.

In addition, as more and more non-profits get into the development business, the competition is forcing the different players to become more sophisticated. One participant reported:

I got an MBA after my first job in fund raising because I realized this is an unsophisticated business really, that is getting more sophisticated. It's the evolution of it, acting more like a business, knowing that there's always an art to it. It's not all science by any means. But putting business knowledge and some of the things that happened in sales and in the business world into development is a good thing in general. So, I think that's one of the biggest changes and just the growth of it, I mean, people realize how much of a money maker it is.

A final theme that emerged is that many academic library development officers are taking advantage of modern technology to consult donor databases to find potential donors. There are a variety of software packages that make

predictions on who is likely and capable of giving. This differs from purchased lists in that the university will input their own data into the software to help identify donors while a purchased list is bought from an outsider. Some of these programs are homegrown and specific to the institution they are created at while others are commercially available and used by multiple institutions. Several of the participants in this study claimed their institutions were using a donor database program called Sunguard, DSR. These databases can be used to track alumni and other potential donors by what degrees they have, their marital status, their likely income, the neighborhood they live in, and if they have given in the past. This can allow development officers to look for donors who are the most likely to give and can give large gifts.

All of the institutions the study participants worked at in this study were large and had a huge pool of alumni. Successful academic libraries had more access to a larger pool of donors and a greater ability to get these donors. This can, paradoxically, result in there being too many potential donors to vet. One study participant said:

The other thing that I should mention to you is that if you take our population, we have an alumni base of about 280 or 290,000 living alums. Let's imagine that 10%, roughly 30,000 people have been identified as having major gift capacity and we're always researching to find more. If you take that 30,000, what you'll find is that probably only about somewhere between 3,000 and 6000 are actually assigned to a gift officer and the rest are just sitting there. Realistically a gift officer can probably only manage a portfolio of about 200 people and multiply the number of gift officers by 200 and you find that 80% or 70% of your prospects are not going to end up assigned to a gift officer. That leaves a lot of territory for us to explore and to build up our own base.

Such a large number of potential donors in a database can be a blessing but it also means many good prospects will probably be missed. As one of the study participants noted, "We don't have the money to segment every little thing." Some institutions are hiring extra help to find ways to crunch the database. One participant said:

For folks that are floating around in the database that haven't been claimed, the university recently invested. I'll just say for the sake of simplicity, a consultant to come in and do some predictive modeling and some regression analysis and assign what is known as EVI scores. And these scores kind of give you a sense of what is the individual's level of activity or relationship strength with the university. My associate director and I have been going through that list starting first with alumni that are in the database who attended the university's former graduate library school.

Using donor databases was a first step which often leads to the other identification methods discussed in this section. Those who the database predicts may be good donor candidates can be invited to events, given private tours, appointed to library boards, etc. It makes the job of identifying prospects easier even if it cannot by itself actually tell if a prospect will actually work out.

Getting new donors can be a challenge. However, several approaches have worked for participants in this study. These include using current donors to identify new ones and searching donor databases. Sometimes, the library just gets lucky as a donor walks in and says, "Can I give you my money?"

Once potential donors were identified, the library development officer needed to cultivate them to encourage them to give money. Once a donor gave

to the library, continued contact with the donor by library staff resulted in more (and perhaps) larger gifts in the future. Three themes emerged from the interviews in how study participants cultivated donors successfully. These included listening to the donors, recognition, and persistence.

Listening to Donors

Donors usually do not give money at random. When they donate, it is for a cause they believe in. Hence, it is very important for a library development officer to listen to potential donors to find ways to match their desires with library needs.

During the interviews, this was touched upon by all of the study participants. As one participant said, "It's really just building relationships and you know, telling your story." Another summarized, "I think it's all about relationships. It's all a process. Every donor's different. You have to match the gift with the donor's interest and so you just have to be a very good listener."

Another study participant spoke on this:

There's an old saying that goes around in fund raising, the passion question – what is their real passion. How do they want to transform something with their money? Asking them to get involved and be there. I think it's a combination of their engagement and really getting down and listening to their needs. When you have that you tend to get the bigger gift.

Another participant summarized this more simply. She said, "My role is just to facilitate the gift, so it's a matter of matching the donor's passions with the institution's goals so if you can facilitate it, it's a beautiful thing."

Sometimes the way the donor wanted to contribute did not always match what library staff may have wanted. One study participant said this caused him more work and annoyed some of the library staff. He noted, "I think when it boils down to what my biggest challenges are that my donors are C students. They're not the scholars that my library people are used to dealing with." He explained, though, that by listening he could find an appropriate way to match the donor with the needs of the library. He said, "They want things fast. They just want the basics. That's who we are our getting the biggest gifts from."

The theme that emerged here was that donors wanted to contribute to projects that interested them. They did not know how their wants could be accommodated by the library. However, if the library development officer (or other library staff member) listened carefully, they could often find a way to match these donor desires with library projects. One of the study participants summed this up by referring to this process as being donor-centric. She noted:

It depends on the individual and it depends on their interest. You have to be donor-centric, okay? So for example, we may have identified a donor and we may find out in conversation that they have a particular interest in the collections, but maybe a subject area within the collections. Or we may find out that they have a particular interest in technology. Or we may find out that they have a particular interest in how the library is supporting research and teaching with faculty, okay? And I believe it has to be very donor-centric.

Helping the donors give in the way they want to was mentioned repeatedly. The idea of being donor-centric came up with another participant as well who said:

Getting to a more donor-centric view and people are getting more sophisticated. So a combination of things. I think that's a good for libraries in general. I think if we get donor-centric where we really listen to what the donors want. We put things on the table, and we don't try to pigeon hole our donors and say "well here's what we need more money for and of course you're going to get to this."

Another participant had an idea on how to do this, "One, I think, is trying to make acquisition endowment sexy, to make it compelling, to get donors interested in doing acquisition endowment, you know, what we used to call books funds."

Getting to know the donor proved to be a good strategy for participants in this study. Knowing the desires of the donors allowed for more success. It also allowed the participants to better know the desires of the donors and use this to become donor-centric.

Donor Recognition

An important part of donor cultivation was showing gratitude to the donor. There were many ways to acknowledge gifts from a simple thank you, either in print or in a Web publication, name plates on library building furniture, and naming a collection after the donor. Thanking donors was a key to future success in fund raising and the academic library development officers noted this need.

The simplest way to recognize a donor was to thank them for their contribution to the library. As one study participant said, "Everyone who gives gets an acknowledgement letter either signed by me or signed by the university librarian. Every gift gets acknowledged and stewarded that way." Sending out thank you letters or calling to say thanks can help make the donor feel valued and hopefully encourage them to give in the future.

Recognition was noted by other participants in the study as well. One replied, "I think that the fundamentals work best which is prompt acknowledgment and trying to say thank you three or four times and then keeping those small donors informed of what you're doing." Another noted, "If somebody makes a \$1,000 gift, I'd call them on the phone, just say thanks and then we'd do the regular letters. Oh, everybody gets an acknowledgement letter."

Another technique to recognize donors frequently mentioned by study participants was publicly giving donors naming rights to small items such as books or putting their name on plaque. As a study participant said, "Well there's the usual stuff. There's the plaques, bookplates, putting your name over the door if you make a big enough gift." This approach was used for the donors who had not reached major giving status yet but went beyond donating just a few dollars.

Another way that libraries have recognized donors was by putting a recognition for a donor on the Web. Gerding (2005) wrote about how libraries were beginning to use the Web for fund raising. Two of the participants in this study were definitely involved in using the Web to raise money. However, the most common examples used were about using the Web to recognize donors. One study participant elaborated. He said:

We are a library that pioneered web-based recognition and we've systematically gone through not only our current gifts but we've started going back through old gifts all the way back to,

like, to 1842 and creating web pages that talk about the gift. If the class of 1842 created a book fund, what do we do with that money, how do we spend it, and so on. We have a pretty elaborate electronic stewardship program, and now we're working on what we're calling e-book plating, which is that we put donor recognition right in their record for the particular item that's been purchased. You can also run a search on the donor, so for Sally Smith you can go into her catalog and say "show me all the books that were bought by the Sally Smith fund."

Another study participant also talked about this. In regards to putting donor recognition on the Web, he said:

We'd have a picture of the donor, the donor and their daughter, the donor and their grandchildren, and put it up there. We'd have a quote from them about why they gave to the library. You know that kind of thing. Then we print it out in color and stick it in a picture frame and send it to them. A lot of older people the web doesn't mean that much to them, but younger people it means a lot to them. But with the older ones we'd discovered that if you print it out and stick it in a frame, they think that's just wonderful. Then you could show it to them on a laptop and they think that's sort of fascinating.

Without question, the area of donor recognition most mentioned by study participants pertained to the big donors. Donors who gave small or medium size donations were mentioned as has been noted above but it was the "big cats" that the library donors spoke of the most when they talked about recognition opportunities. It was clear from the responses that the library development officers put most of their efforts into cultivating and recognizing the large gifts.

A study participant said:

Our major gifts begin at \$25,000 and therefore we recognize donors that achieve that level of giving with a one-time gift or cumulative giving. We recognize them as library leaders. We invite them to an annual reception, and we have the luxury of having a high-profile individual on our board who's kind of a university icon. Those folks kind of bestow these awards on our donors and that makes a huge difference. We are now in the midst, in the early stages, the silent stages of a new campaign. We have just recently instituted some higher levels of giving. The next level, it would go from \$25,000 to \$100,000 to \$500,000 to a million. And then we are also recognizing those folks who have made, who have put the libraries in their estate plans.

Major gifts are defined differently at different institutions. Some required a much larger contribution to be considered major than do other institutions. This level received more donor perks. Another institution had a level twice as high. A participant said, "A major gift at [name of institution] is, the level is \$50,000, at the library, you can set up a library endowment at 25. It does allow us to attract kind of a different type of donor than other units might." Although different institutions had different definitions of what constituted a major gift, all of them found various ways to recognize the big donors.

Stewardship often came into play when these big gifts are given. The large gifts inspires library development officers to keep the donor well informed, involved, and hopefully encouraged to give more money in the future. A participant noted:

We're mandatory I would say, recognizing our donors and

sort of related to stewardship we have a policy here that every donor who has given an endowment or \$100,000 or more. We have mandatory stewardship. We must write them a letter and tell them exactly what the impact of the gift was over the past year, what it's done for us. We have to personally visit them or at least try to visit them. That's part of what we at least have to do every year.

By acknowledging the big gifts and communicating with the donor the impact of the gift, the library was helping to set the stage for future donations from the donors. Another also spoke of this:

We do stewardship reports for our endowment donors where they receive on an annual basis, a detailed stewardship report that lists all the items we're able to purchase with funds from their endowment, also the current spending amount, what's the balance of the endowment, and what's available to spend. We do stewardship lunches or dinners after they establish the endowment. The university librarian and I will take them either to lunch or to dinner, whichever they choose. Then they hear from us annually, they get invited to all our events. I think we do a really good job with stewardship and because there is someone on my staff who is dedicated to stewardship and major gifts.

Another technique in recognizing big donors was an appeal to their ego. Large gifts funded endowments and also resulted in rooms and buildings being named after the donor. The name of the donor will live on long after the donor's death. A study participant said:

The library is about as close as you're going to get to in perpetuity. It's a great place to make a legacy gift. You know there're some donors who want to fund the latest cutting edge research or whatever, and that really attracts them. They're not thinking about whether their name will be on something 50 or 100 years from now, but if you create a library acquisition endowment fund, it's a permanent endowment. Like the class of 1842, that endowment will be here 100 years from now and it will still be helping students. I think that's one of the areas that the library can really play up, is the notion of legacy. You'll be remembered. Your gift will be remembered. Your memory will be kept alive at the library, whereas a lot of gifts 25 years from now, nobody's going to even know it's happened, except a thank-you was printed on a donor roll 25 years ago.

Despite the large number of study participants who indicated that their libraries offered donor recognitions, there was some resistance to doing this. One study participant claimed, "We got away from any benefits. We don't tell people they get anything for their gift except for our thanks. We thought the whole benefit thing was just too time consuming and not worth it." Another said of recognitions, "We don't do a whole lot except we are in the process of building a new building so we do have some beautiful naming opportunities and have two buildings actually that have provided us that. That's been the recognition we've given."

Although libraries appeared to be using donor recognition in different and varying ways, many still used the "thank you" as a way to communicate with and honor their donors. This technique made the donor feel good and helped to lead to future donations.

Persistence

Another successful technique used by the participants in this study related to persistence. If you keep coming back to a current or likely donor, the odds increased that the prospect would give money. Potential donors, who might be offended by this approach, were probably not likely to donate in the first place, so this method might be time-consuming but it was not necessarily risky.

Those who gave a small gift even once were more likely to be big donors than those who have never gave to the library. As one participant responded, "Small gifts lead to large gifts so our strategy is to pay attention to people." Another participant noted this can take a lot of time:

So our goal is to move those people through the pipeline to get the lower-end donors to give more. That's why we have an active series of programs, so we can bring them in the library, show them the resources, show them the services that we provide, and cultivate them for higher annual gifts with the ultimate goal to move them into major gifts. We understand that this is a long process. Here at [name of institution] they've done the research on this and the data shows that it can take 20 years for people to move from an annual gift to a major gift.

Four of the study participants talked directly about the importance of persistence during the interviews. They indicated that their institutions had the patience to wait long-term for major gifts. One said, "It's persistence. I've had a couple in the past years that literally, through persistence, I got in front of them." In one case, this participant tried eleven times before successfully getting an appointment with a donor who gave a million dollars. The participant concluded this story, "I think persistence is there and I am just a big fan of being face-to-face and building a relationship."

Another participant talked negatively about another approach that ignores persistence. He called it the car salesman approach. He said:

So you just like put it right up front like "hey are you in the market for a new car?" You know that kind of thing. You don't spend two years dancing around. You go straight to the question, and given that we have 30,000 prospects and we're only getting to 20 or 25%, maybe that's a more effective way to do it, to just go out there and see who is interested and spend your time on people who say "yeah, I'd consider doing something for [name of institution]. It's always been in the back of my mind, come talk to me." Well that's pretty good. You've already screened the person in the sense and you haven't spent two years wining and dining them. So that's another approach. It's not one I'd want to do, because I never wanted to be a car salesman and I like building up relationships, developing a sense of friendship and collegiality with my donors, and that has sustained me in the job. I probably wouldn't have done fund raising if I couldn't have done it my way.

The reluctance of this participant to abandon persistence and go for a quick "ask" seemed consistent with the responses of the other study participants. All of them mentioned a variety of strategies for working with donors, including getting them involved in library boards and listening to the desires of the donors. None of these approaches was a quick solicitation of a donation and they allowed for relationship building.

Persistence was a successful strategy for many of the study participants. Given enough time, many small donors become large donors. Long-term donor relationship building ultimately can lead to more successful and larger asks.

What Works, What Doesn't

The responses of the survey participants demonstrated that many of the development practices used in other parts of the academy also worked in libraries. Many of the participants argued that there is little difference between raising money for an academic library than there is in raising funds for a college or school. One participant claimed, strongly, that everything that worked in development out of library could work in development for libraries. However, several techniques were highlighted more frequently than others by study participants, indicating that some of these development practices work better than others for academic libraries. These included putting donors on library boards, holding events, persistence, and recognition.

One phenomenon that was brought up by study participants was the idea of the self-identifying donor. It is not surprising that libraries were receiving donations from self-identified philanthropists. After all, many of the major library donations in American library history were from these sorts of people. It is likely that the first couple of communities selected by Andrew Carnegie were shocked as well as surprised when he approached them and offered money.

What is harder to tell is how common this phenomenon of self-identified donors is amongst academic libraries. All of the library development officers interviewed worked at prestigious private or public institutions with good reputations. The sixth and seventh prerequisites of Cook & Lasher (1996) deal with to the perceived reputation and quality of the institution. Donors are more apt to give to successful institutions rather than institutions which are having difficulties as the donors want their names associated with successful endeavors.

Does this mystique bring about the self-identified donor hoping to be associated with a particular institution or did other development activities practiced by the library draw them in? Would the same donors have also given the money to a small state school with a lesser reputation and shorter history had the state school practiced the same development methods? The participants in this study were all employed by prestigious institutions and it could be that, just like the frequency of self-identified donors, the practices they highlighted do not necessarily translate as well to less well-regarded institutions. As both Wedgeworth (2000) and Martin (2002) noted, big and successful libraries were more likely to engage in and be successful at fund raising.

One of the most successful strategies mentioned by study participants was getting donor and potential donors appointed to library boards. This can include appointments to Friends of the Library boards (Hood, 1991), as well as general library advisory boards which deal with issues such as fund raising, facilities management, or library policies. This can serve to keep a donor involved with the day-to-day operations of a library. It can also help to identify new potential donors and further educate current ones.

Most of the participants spoke of putting donors on library boards. This also led to a great opportunity to find new donors. Wealthy donors tended to be well connected and they could suggest and introduce a library development officer to colleagues who could afford to donate money and might be apt to do so. As donors got appointed to boards, they suggested other potential board members. Participants spoke of how these library board members helped to find new donors frequently.

Alumni are the best source of new donors (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990). Yet, the library has no direct graduates and almost all alumni are claimed by development officers from other parts of the academy (Martin, 1998). This means libraries have to be creative to find donors. Putting current donors on boards and using their networking to find more donors appears to be a wise and

successful response to a limited opportunity to pursue alumni. It brings in non-alumni donors and also allows others to approach alumni without the library itself running afoul of campus developmental politics. A library is better positioned (and has more need) to create multiple advisory boards by the nature of its mission than would a college or school on campus. As such, it may be used more by academic libraries than areas of the academy with direct graduates.

The lack of direct graduates also explained why events were so important to participants. Karp (2006) wrote that academic libraries need to engage in marketing to educate patrons about how wonderful the library is to the academic community. The marketing of events to potential donors followed this logic. One participant even described holding events as a form of “guerilla fund raising” to “very subtly sort of cultivate a relationship” to get around political claims to a donor from another development officer on campus.

The marketing of events was noted as well by participants. These served to educate potential donors about library needs and also helped the library “check-out” a potential prospect. And based on the responses of the event attendees, appropriate donor cultivation could then proceed. Many events also drew in visitors who were never targeted for donor cultivation as well who were also interested in supporting the library financially.

The frequency of events was one area that the study participants believed they differed from other fund raising endeavors on campus. Several of them shared that they thought the library had more events than other fund raising units. One candidly spoke, “We do events, more than we should.” This reliance on using events to get at donors was probably a response to having less direct access to alumni as potential donors.

Another successful approach used by participants in this study was being persistent. Both Ezzell (1989) and Sherratt (1975) noted it might take a great deal of time for some donors to decide to make a significant financial contribution. As one participant said, “Small gifts lead to large gifts.” Another participant claimed that institutional research showed that it could take twenty years for some donors to move from an annual gift to a major gift.

A long-term cultivation plan worked for academic libraries but it posed difficulties for a library development officer who was evaluated on an annual basis. One participant was very disappointed that the yearly evaluation by central development only measured money raised and the number of meetings attended. Another participant refused to use what he called a “used salesman” approach to getting donation.

Being persistent with donors and giving them time to decide to give helped to maintain the all important good relationship that was required for a library development officer to be successful. In the meantime, the library development officer kept inviting good prospects to events, appointed them to boards, listened to them, and waited for the right opportunity to ask. However, persistence was key. It was acceptable to keep going back to some prospects even if initially rejected or if early gifts are lower than hoped for from the person.

Finally, recognizing donors worked. Cervone (2005) wrote that ego is deeply involved in giving. Clark (1991) believed that how a gift was recognized was just as important as how a gift was asked for in the first place. Gerding (2005) added about how libraries were using the Web to acknowledge donors. The participants in this study seemed to agree with all three of these authors. Many of the libraries covered in this study used donor recognition on books, doors, plaques, and Web pages. Some of the major gift donors had building naming rights dangled in front of them.

Thanking donors let them know that the library appreciated their gifts. If a donation was going towards something the donor believes in and wants to be identified with, it made him feel good long-term. Listening to the donor not only helped to get the gift in the first place but helped to keep the donor feeling good about previous gifts. Donors were more apt to repeat donations in the future. Further, other potential donors would see the gift recognitions of donors and would be more inclined to give if they also wanted to be recognized.

The participants in this study believed that good development practices that work elsewhere on campus worked in the library. Many simply did not believe that good practices that worked in academia would fail for the library. The responses to the various questions indicated that library development officers were following a fairly standard path of donor identification, cultivation, and recognition. Several of the participants felt that academic libraries held too many events but they did not see much difference beyond that one area.

In contrast, this means little of what does work in higher education does not work for academic libraries in regards to development. Telephone and direct mailings have historically worked for libraries (McGovern, 1990; Nichols, 1986) but the study participants did not use these methods or regard them well. This supports Cervone's (2005) findings that these practices were becoming less common for libraries.

Another difference noted by participants concerned scholarships and endowed positions. As no one majored in the library, the library had no student scholarships to fund. This hurt in raising funds in contrast to schools and colleges, which could use donations to directly fund their students. Donors liked to see the faces of undergraduates they have helped. Also, many donors were happy to endow a faculty position in the schools and colleges on campus. The John M. Smith Endowed Professor of Economics was a bigger sell than the John M. Smith Endowed Economics Librarian. Both of these traditional areas of higher education fund raising were less accessible to the library development officer.

Also, the previously mentioned lack of direct graduates impacted how the library development officer had to seek out donors. Alumni were hard to directly approach due to campus politics. This meant that development practice in the library emphasized techniques such as events and advisory boards more than perhaps other parts of campus, but these responses to the lack of direct graduates still fit within the traditional tool box of higher education development work.

Despite the few differences noted above, successful development practices in academia tended to work well in academic libraries. The study participants did not believe their work was all that different for their colleagues elsewhere on campus. With there being so little research on academic library development work, if there were other differences that have been discovered by some libraries, it might be knowledge, which is not widespread in the profession.

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