Fund-raising for Large Public University Libraries

Margin for Excellence

Barbara I. Dewey

Library development and fund-raising is an established and successful practice in today's large public universities. This article examines the large public university environment as it relates to successful library fund-raising. In addition to major areas critical to university library fund-raising, the organization of development on the campus and in the library will be reviewed, including the library development effort's connection to campus administrators and other partnerships, the importance of library director leadership, the role of library staff, the impact of Friends organizations, and special opportunities for successful fund-raising in this environment.

The Setting

Large public universities and the libraries within them are complex and rich entities. Public universities have an imperative to serve their state in a number of ways, and the state has a responsibility to fund these universities. However, in recent years adequate funding has not been forthcoming. In fact, some public universities are state-funded at or below 10 percent. Few public universities are funded above 33 percent. Given these circumstances, how does the public university form an adequate, or at least minimal, financial base? Funding beyond the state must come from a combination of three categories—tuition, grants and contracts, and private funds. Of these three categories tuition has the most flexibility but must be used expeditiously to support the university's core mission of teaching and research.

Public research libraries live within this financial conundrum with added monetary challenges. Obtaining funding just to maintain collections is a tremendous problem given the 8 to 12 percent annual inflation on the cost of scholarly journals. Advancing the library to support the university's aspirations as well as individual faculty's research needs beyond the status quo is critical. Additionally, research libraries must support the university imperative to provide social, cultural, and intellectual experiences for students, most at a critical age in the maturation process.

Public and private research libraries find themselves, in the early years of the twenty-first century, going increasingly digital while at the same time supporting print. The digital environment requires integration of content and technological infrastructure. The print environment also requires a marriage of content and infrastructure, though of a different kind. Digital and print have one thing in common—they require increasing amounts of funding to maintain and advance to the next level. They require all kinds of highly trained, competent staff to make things run smoothly and keep up with numerous technological, pedagogical, and intellectual developments in the academy. This need also requires a steady stream of funding. Given that the state is not going to support all of these needs, either for the university as a whole or the library, other sources of funding are required. Therefore, a strong public research library development and grants program is essential to support the university's research, teaching, and outreach mission.

Terry Latour's 2003 survey of six hundred randomly selected college and universities confirms the importance of fund-raising for public universities and underscores the challenges faced by public versus private university libraries. Ninety-six percent of the public university respondents indicate that they are engaged in fund-raising, but had a 61.3 percent success rate (compared to an 84.6 percent success rate enjoyed by private research institutions).[1] Findings also enumerated four major reasons why libraries are involved with fund-raising, including the rising cost of technology, imperative to do so by the parent institution, limited support of parent institution, and the rising cost of library materials. As we enter the twenty-first century fund-raising is becoming fully integrated into the life of the public university library.

The History and Structure of Public University Fund-raising

The structure of campus fund-raising has important implications for successful library efforts. Understanding the idiosyncratic history of public university fund-raising in general is key to positioning individual campus efforts including for the library. Public university development has evolved in two phases so far in its history that I will refer to as "old boy" and "professional."

Barbara I. Dewey (bdewey@utk.edu) is Dean of Libraries at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Initially, heads of campus development were home-grown products. Their composite profile during this phase was white male, alumnus, possible alumni office background, Greek organization member, and with official or unofficial links to intercollegiate athletics. These fund-raising pioneers came to their positions early on in their careers, devoting their life's work to their university's development effort, particularly in public universities. They were able, over the years, to forge many strategic relationships and successfully cultivate them to donor status. These pioneers comprise the historic memory of fund-raising on a particular campus and have a deep understanding of the past, present, and current donor pool. They work through social, business, alumni, and athletics networks to fund-raise. Fund-raising priorities are often driven more by personalities and interests than by university strategic priorities. Sometimes certain campus units are favored over others for access to major donors because of connections or for historical reasons. Units that may emerge as a high priority for university presidents or provosts are not necessarily part of the historically favored units from a development leadership perspective under the "old boy" phase.

A new era of public university development has been emerging over the last fifteen years. More professional training, research, and work experience from a variety of nonprofit environments has led to increasing numbers of professional fund-raisers. These individuals were trained, through a combination of academic and work experiences, to be fund-raisers and development executives. A composite profile would be an individual, male or female, with advanced academic training in business, law, or liberal arts who rose in the ranks of development work and was recruited for the position from another university or nonprofit agency. These "professionals" come to the position with a business-like, unemotional, and strategic approach to campus development. Typically they use modern technology and new research tools to gain insight into the donor pool. They are more likely to work with campus strategic priorities and try to conform these to donor interests. Innovative methods of solicitation, including Web-based methods, are more likely under this environment as is as openness to donor access based on benefit to the university.

Library fund-raising efforts sometimes suffer under the old boy environment because they have not been among the favored units in the past. Because of the relatively recent surge of library fund-raising activity, longtime development leaders are either unconvinced or unaware of the possibilities for raising significant funds. The library does not follow a traditional alumni-based model, and there can be resistance to paving the way for the library to try different constituencies to expand their donor base.

Regardless of the fund-raising environment, library directors must be tireless in pointing out the priority and the centrality of the library in supporting the university's mission, goals, and aspirations. This work occurs in many different ways, including:

- language about the library in appropriate university documents, such as strategic plans, case statements, general education requirements, and reports;
- stories about the library in campus publications on a regular basis; and
- libraries featured prominently in university campaign case statements and priorities.

Structure of Campus Development

Universities organize their fund-raising efforts in three basic ways—centralized, decentralized, and a combination of the two. The centralized development structure plans and executes the university's fund-raising efforts from one office. Professional fund-raisers report directly to and are paid for by that office although they may work for one or more colleges, including the library. Decentralized development consists of constituent fund-raisers who work in and report directly to a college or unit. They are hired and funded by the college or unit. At most public universities combinations of centralized and decentralized are the norm, with more decentralization emerging as the expectations and intensity of fund-raising increases.

A central development council or board comprised mainly of large donors is found on most campuses. This group meets periodically and, at some universities, is part of the governance process for campus central development. Access to this group is key to any campus unit aspiring to increase major gifts. These individuals have powerful networking capabilities with people of means and can make things happen for university projects they get behind and believe in.

Structure of Public Research Library Development

Library fund-raising occurs within the specific institutional context and its structure normally reflects the university's approach. In the centralized model a fund-raiser is assigned to the library in a full- or part-time capacity and is directed largely by the central development office. A decentralized approach would indicate that the library director hires, directs, and pays for a fund-raiser. In a combination approach (the most common today), a mixture of financial arrangements could occur to support the total library development effort, with joint reporting to both the library director and the central development office. The central development office provides support to the library development director in such areas as research,

legal, annual giving, major gifts, planned gifts, and, occasionally, alumni affairs.

The Fund-raising Role of Library Staff, Faculty, and Friends

Personnel working on the library development effort also include a variety of librarians and staff. Public relations and marketing specialists, business managers, heads of special collections, and collection development directors are or should be involved in specific aspects of library fund-raising as a team with the library development director and the library director. In public institutions all library staff play an important role in interacting and cultivating current and future donors simply by carrying out their day-to-day duties in a positive and helpful manner. They work with not only students and faculty, but also the general public because of the openness of most public research libraries to all. These various public user groups share an expectation of excellent service as taxpayers and will respond positively or negatively to library development efforts in the future based on their experience.

Most university libraries have some type of development board, Friends group, or Friends board with which to directly involve library supporters and volunteers. The library development director will either lead these groups or work with another library staff member who is assigned to work with the Friends of the Libraries in close consultation with the library director. Administrative office staff normally get involved on a regular basis with the fundraiser and Friends staff.

Faculty senate library committees, faculty department representatives, faculty leadership, student advisory groups, student leadership, and alumni leadership are potential key partners in the organization of library development, particularly during a campaign. Their testimonies of the importance of the library for teaching, learning, and research are far more powerful than those of librarians or campus administrators.

Library Development in a Land Grant Institution

Research libraries in land grant institutions have special opportunities for reaching out to potential donors. Land grant institutions, through their agricultural extension offices, have a presence in every county of the state. This reach could be leveraged more for university outreach and fund-raising purposes, including library projects. Land grant institutions also have a special mission well articulated by University of Tennessee's Chancellor Loren Crabtree:

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is the state's flagship research institution, a campus of choice for outstanding undergraduates, and a premier graduate institution. As a land-grant university, it is committed to excellence in learning, scholarship, and engagement with society. In all its activities, the university aims to advance the frontiers of human knowledge and enrich and elevate society. The university welcomes and honors people of all races, creeds, cultures, and sexual orientations, and values intellectual curiosity, pursuit of knowledge, and academic freedom and integrity. The university intends that its graduates will promote the values and institutions of representative democracy, and be prepared to lead lives of personal integrity and civic responsibility.[2]

He goes on to say in the University of Tennessee strategic plan's preamble:

Today, land-grant universities are renewing themselves to meet the demands of the new millennium. The University of Tennessee, the state's flagship research institution, adheres to its landgrant heritage and seeks to advance the frontiers of knowledge, provide intellectual and cultural leadership, prepare students to be productive citizens, and improve the human condition. It aims to provide equitable educational access to Tennessee citizens; create, critique, and apply new technologies; sustain and nourish higher culture; meet the challenges posed to food, energy, and the environment by population growth; preserve and enhance democracy through civic education and civic renewal; and address the globalization of cultures.[3]

Research libraries support the land grant mission and so should development efforts in covering the wide range of areas the mission statement asserts. A presence in the university's strategic plan will also help move the library's fund-raising agenda forward in terms of its centrality to the university's goals and mission. And, even if the word "library" is not found in every section of a campus strategic plan, its presence and activities can and should be implied in every goal.

Making the Connections

The history and organization of campus development has particular relevance to a research library's success in fund-raising. Understanding the campus development environment is an important step to a workable and strategic approach in library development. An old

boy campus development situation means that library development efforts will need to be attuned to the personal and time-sensitive approach of a homegrown development administrator. Savvy library fund-raisers will leverage this environment by recognizing and utilizing the special knowledge of longtime donors such administrators have obtained over the years. Campuses with the more recent professional development environment feature the importance of strong and well-documented fund-raising objectives linked to the university's overall priorities. Fund-raisers in this environment will have to know how to harness professional expertise, including what questions to ask and what donor data is currently available and ready for evaluation.

No matter what the development environment is on the campus, all who are involved in library fund-raising must take a proactive and assertive approach to laying out fund-raising priorities, asking for appropriate donor information, and making the connection between donor and project.

Public University Library Myths

Research libraries in public universities are subject to strong and persistent myths about perceived success or failure in fund-raising. Examples are:

- It is difficult to raise money for libraries.
- Libraries have no natural constituency, no alumni.
- Libraries are supported by the state and need no additional funding.
- Public university libraries are just bigger public libraries with similar needs.
- The general public does not benefit from public university libraries.

Library directors and fund-raisers need to break through these myths with sound and compelling stories about what constitutes a research library, how it is unique, and how it benefits students, faculty, and the public. Also, seeking out examples of successful fund-raising at similar institutions is a useful and productive way to suggest that the myths are just plain wrong. Myths can be altered to demonstrate why fund-raising is not only possible but also successful and beneficial to the entire campus and beyond. Instead one could say:

- It is easy to raise money for libraries (if you communicate the right project and its benefit).
- Libraries have many natural constituencies, including the entire alumni and many segments of the general public.
- Libraries are minimally (at best) supported by state funds but need significant additional funding each year to keep up with the pace of scholarly publishing and the rising cost of library materials.

- Public university libraries complement public libraries and support them in important ways because they are larger and more in depth.

Myths turn into mantras to support the library fund-raising effort within and beyond the campus with the right kind of information and examples, including:

- The public benefits enormously from a public university library's research collections and services through access to federal documents, maps, and scholarship in all disciplines.
- All students and faculty benefit through the library's support of teaching, learning, and research.
- The state benefits through consortial arrangements that allow the public university library to be a key support to local public and smaller college and university libraries.
- The payoff for investment in library collections, technology, and staff support is exponentially huge.

The mantras must be overtly and consistently created and disseminated over time by the library within its marketing and public relations efforts as well as through individual conversations with key administrators and donors.

Leadership and Development

Library development requires strong leadership from the library director or dean. This is especially true at large public universities, where library fund-raising may not have as much of a track record as academic departments and athletics. Effective leadership requires cultivating productive and strategic relationships with campus administrators and faculty as well as with donors. The savvy library director will work from the top with the president, vice presidents, chancellors, and provosts and well as within academic circles of high-profile faculty, department heads, and deans. Securing these people's support will pay off in many ways. The more they are aware of the library's services, collections, and programs, the more likely it will be that they will support asks to major donors or mention the library in passing to any number of people they meet on a day-to-day basis. At the appropriate time, they will be willing to make calls, along with the library director. They will be more supportive of the library's central role in a university campaign.

Expanding the Donor Base

A major imperative for library fund-raising success and sustainability is expansion of the donor base. Advocating the position that all alums are library alums is the ideal.

However, the reality is that academic units have the view that graduates of their discipline belong only to them when it comes to fund-raising. Creative approaches are then required to work around the donor dilemma:

- **Never givers**. Within any alumni base there are large numbers of never givers—alumni who, for whatever reason, have never given to the university. Research libraries around the country have had success in approaching certain segments of the never giver population. It is a risk-free strategy for colleges, as these folks have not given a penny to them in the past. Also, there is evidence that never givers who are persuaded to give to the library begin to donate to their college or departments as well. This is truly a win-win situation.
- **Honors students**. Surely heavy library users, honors students are likely candidates as library donors down the road. Also, research libraries and honors programs have close ties that makes the connection to fund-raising access possible in many cases.
- **Graduate students**. No student or faculty group is a heavier user of libraries than graduate students. As a group they are an excellent target for library fund-raising.
- **Faculty and staff**. The university family, as it were, contains current and potential library donors and should be tapped at every opportunity including retirees.
- **General public**. Library lovers from the general public are potential research library donors once they become aware of the opportunities to give and the rich array of programs and services available. Public research libraries have a special opportunity to seek funding support from the general public because the university is connected to them as part of their state, regardless of their own collegiate affiliation.
- **Alumni from specific disciplines**. Targeting particular colleges or disciplines, especially for specific projects related to their discipline, can be very effective and may result in more gifts in the future.

Athletics and Library Fund-raising at Public Institutions

The opportunity to raise money for libraries in partnership with athletics is a particularly grand area for exploration in a public university. Many have high profile Division I intercollegiate men's and women's athletic programs. Athletics draws people from incredibly diverse backgrounds physically and remotely to the university. Large numbers of fans are the norm, especially with top-ranked programs or programs with long-standing tradition and history. Intercollegiate athletics has to have a focus on the student athlete and at least give lip service to the academic side of

the university house. One way of doing this is to partner with the library on fund-raising projects. The library is an ideal partner because it provides services for all disciplines and therefore, all students. James G. Neal, the vice president for information services and university librarian at Columbia University, notes that "an affiliation with a central academic agency like the campus library can help to restore the credibility and to legitimize the heavy investments in sports programs."[4]

A few examples of partnerships with public institutions include:

- Penn State's library fund-raising with Joe Paterno, including naming of the Paterno Library;
- University of Oklahoma $1 million endowment campaign with athletics;
- University of Nebraska and University of Tennessee's Fun Runs co-sponsored by athletics;
- Indiana University and Texas Tech's library fund-raising by coach Bob Knight; and
- University of Louisville's partnership with men's basketball.

Library directors and their fund-raisers need to work carefully with campus administrators and athletics directors to develop a great partnership idea. Usually the library has some kind of connection to athletics through user education sessions or other services. These connections can be used to leverage the appropriate meetings and make the contacts necessary to advance the partnership.

Fund-raising Projects and Public Universities

Successful projects abound that are appropriate for public university libraries' fund-raising. Collections are always a focus, and now print and electronic formats must be integrated into development plans. However, libraries have projects that fit virtually every category of a university's fund-raising campaign, including:

- **Endowed chairs**. The dean or director of libraries, head, special collections, head international collections, preservation librarian—these are all positions that could be endowed in the sense of a faculty-endowed chair.
- **Faculty research and development support**. Funds for travel, research, training, and other development needs of librarians can be sought.
- **Scholarships**. Funds for graduate assistantships for students working in a variety of departments in the library, for student employee awards, and for undergraduate library assistantship positions.

- **Bricks and mortar**. Funds for building facilities and refurbishing existing facilities; can be combined with naming opportunities.

Nontraditional Projects and Donors

As baby boomers come to the age of greater philanthropic interest and as the younger generations mature in their financial savvy, the time is right for innovative projects with a high-tech bend to attract a nontraditional library donor:

- electronic resources;
- digitization projects;
- Web site projects;
- portal projects; and
- electronic publishing projects.

Innovative projects require innovative methods of solicitation and recognition. Web fund-raising is beginning to come into its own in public research libraries. Adam Corson-Finnerty, director of Library Development and External Affairs, University of Pennsylvania, and Laura Blanchard, executive director of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries, note that "the more people pull out their cyberwallets or click the 'e-cash' option, the more they will consider sending money to your institutions, school, or cause."[5] A recent Google search indicated 29 million hits related to university libraries' friends Web sites. This tremendous growth is documented in Brenda Hazard's study of online fund-raising at ARL libraries, where she noted online fund-raising increased from 43 percent to 69 percent from 1998 to 2003.[6] Issues of access and accessibility are also found in university Web spaces. An examination of several university central development homepages that serve as the primary online giving space for their institutions often don't have libraries on the first page. Prominence and placement can make a big difference with online fund-raising success. Ohio State University Libraries, for example, is noted on the homepage of their university's campaign.[7]

What's Special about Special Collections for Public Research Library Fund-raising?

Fund-raising for special collections is a fundamental aspect of most library development programs and probably serves as the historical core of a public university library's fund-raising effort. Special collections plays a unique role for public universities because of their imperative to serve the citizens of the state as well as students and faculty. This implies a focus on local, state, and regional history. The public university needs to take responsibility for collecting and preserving the cultural history of the state and region. Collaboration with other institutions involved in cultural heritage—museums, public libraries, state libraries and archives, and local history organizations—is an important partnership.

Large public university libraries, in particular, must take the lead because of their size, expertise, and capacity.

An excellent example of special collections fund-raising is the Iowa Women's Archives. Named after two prominent Iowa women, the archives developed from their vision of the need to preserve the heritage of Iowa women from all walks of life in perpetuity. The archives was founded through a $1.5 million gift from the late Louise Noun's sale of her Frida Kahlo painting, *Self Portrait with Loose Hair*. Additional fund-raising took place resulting in one of the premier collections of state heritage material in the country.[8]

The Great Smokies Regional Bibliography project (GSRB) at the University of Tennessee Libraries is an example of a collection near and dear to the hearts of Tennesseans. The project has been a catalyst for securing funding from individuals who had no previous connections to the university but were lovers of the Smokies.[9] Specialized, one-of-a-kind collections such as GSRB are also good candidates for grant funding. The University of Tennessee has received two grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to digitize Smokies-related material in the past four years.

Literature with local and regional connections provides a great focal point for special collections fund-raising. James Agee, a famous Knoxvillian, was the focus of a recent James Agee Celebration, including exhibitions, a conference, designation of the James Agee Park, concerts, and plays. The University of Tennessee Libraries played a prominent role in the festival through an exhibit of Agee papers and tours of special collections for Agee scholars and relatives. An immediate end result of the event was the acquisition of more Agee papers and the potential for development of an Agee endowment to support the collection.[10] The event was a perfect partnership between the English Department and the Library and also brought in local people who have a special interest in Agee.[11]

Leveraging Discipline-Based Collections for Gifts

Public universities have special opportunities for fund-raising by focusing on discipline-based collections. In many cases these collections comprise branch libraries. Music, engineering, sciences, art, architecture, medicine, and law libraries all have a focused and dedicated clientele, and therefore a strong donor pool of past, current, and future users. They provide an ideal opportunity to develop projects, working in partnership with department heads and college deans to fund-raise together. The discipline-based approach can provide the perfect entrée to accessing various alumni. For example, Jerome Lerud, director, Arthur Lakes Library, Colorado School of Mines, and Lisa Dunn, reference librarian, Colorado School of Mines, note that,

"the engineering/science library, which plays a special supporting role for academic engineering and science departments, alumni, and the business community, can use its special strengths in collections, staff and resources to approach fund-raising creatively."[12] This approach is also effective in capturing the attention of faculty who use these collections.

Diversity, International, and Intercultural Initiatives

Public universities have a special responsibility to reflect the diversity of their state and nation and, as good citizens of the state, reflect international perspectives that drive intellectual as well as business pursuits. A comprehensive library development initiative should intertwine aspects of international and intercultural infusion with specific projects advancing the university to become more diverse and global. Failure to do so will perpetuate an isolated and narrowly schooled student body. Janice Gow Petley, in her book on cultivating diversity in fund-raising, discusses the various philanthropic traditions of diverse audiences and how understanding them helps develop appropriate projects and approaches.[13]

Certainly internationalizing and diversifying the collections are attractive development initiatives. Funds to develop and sustain archives of the history of various groups in the state and region can be an exciting development opportunity. Some examples include the University of Iowa's African American Women in Iowa collection, University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research, University of Tennessee's Southeastern Native American Documents, and University of Miami's Cuban Heritage Collection.[14] Other projects include endowments for minority residency programs aimed at bringing in more librarians from underrepresented groups to public research library positions such as the University of Tennessee's Minority Librarian Residency Program.[15] Scholarships and assistantships for minority graduate and undergraduate student library workers might be another initiative.

Such projects may attract a wider group of donors, including those from diverse backgrounds. According to Petley, fund-raising practices have grown out of the traditions and interests of early settlers but do not necessary address those of other cultural backgrounds. Library development efforts should attempt to reach many different cultural and ethnic groups both by having projects of interest and learning from a variety of people what projects they would like to see.

Conclusion

Erla Heyns's definitive study on fund-raising in publicly supported libraries from land grant institutions (page 126 in the study) summarized a model fund-raising program based on findings.[16] Characteristics for success were a shared organizational structure; a fund-raising staff (development officer and support staff); separate budget for fund-raising; access to alumni; involvement of the library director, university president, and a library Friends group; use of a consultant; existence of case statements and written annual and long range plans, annual fund, planned giving, and major gifts program; participation in university capital campaign; donor recognition program; and raising from 1 to 5 percent of the institutions' fund-raising earnings. While this is a composite of successful traits, they are something to work toward as library fund-raising programs are built.

Fund-raising efforts will surely grow in public university libraries, as they are central to the core mission of higher education and governmental funding is not likely to increase. Understanding the context of library fund-raising and the various players in our unique campus environments will provide the basis for more effective development plans and their implementation. An investment in superior planning is a must for successful library fund-raising programs. Exploding myths about the so-called difficulty of library fund-raising with real-world examples and data combined with persuasive projects and uses for funds will lead to success. Leveraging faculty, students, and public library users as the voices of our testimonials will dramatically increase library fund-raising success and ultimately provide a wider margin of excellence for teaching, learning, and research.

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