
Fundraising

Jerry D. Campbell

The science of fundraising, if we may call it that, is the most inexact science I have encountered. It requires, for success, some mixture of thought, preparation, information, interpersonal skill, and, perhaps most importantly, luck. My anxiety in writing about fundraising is further heightened because I have from time to time encountered advice that left me feeling as if I were being given recipes for fifteen different ways to make homemade bread by someone who had never actually baked a loaf.

So let me note at the outset that this essay is not based on a careful survey of fundraising literature, except insofar as I have read from such literature in the past and been influenced by it. It is not a research paper or an attempt to review the various theories about how fundraising should be carried out. There is much written material on the subject of fundraising and if you are going to be involved in fundraising, you owe it to yourself to do some background reading. I intend simply to outline what I believe to be some of the important mechanics that underlie successful fundraising and to share with you my opinions about what it takes to make the mechanics work.

Mechanics

By referring to the following matters as "mechanics," I do not mean to imply that they are unimportant. Indeed, ignoring the mechanics of fundraising would be like taking a test without studying. Maybe a better analogy, under the circumstances, would be that of going hunting without loading the gun. These are matters to which we must attend early in the process.

On the other hand, the order in which I present the following topics is purely one of choice. It reflects a common sense arrangement derived from the context within which I work. You may wish to rearrange the topics, omitting any that do not make sense in your institutional setting, while including any others that do.

Analysis

One good place to begin the process of fundraising is within the walls of our libraries. It is at least hypothetically possible that we do not need any more money for our library budgets. No? Well, to go seeking funds requires that we be specific and realistic about our needs. So, we can begin with an analysis and evaluation of the library in all its facets. Such an evaluation may be conducted against a variety of benchmarks. While such benchmarks will likely change from library to library, they should usually include at least the following questions:

1. How well does the library satisfy the demands of the curriculum and program it serves? What can you learn of faculty and student satisfaction with the library? Can you buy all the materials suggested by faculty? Do you need additional funds for a growing interest in materials in non-book media like film or video? Can you purchase sufficient copies of heavily used titles for student satisfaction? Can your staff get books cataloged and on the shelves expeditiously? Are there new faculty members or programs active in subject areas for which the library has not collected in the past?

These are routine questions with which you are all familiar, and each of us could list many others. But the point is that analysis and evaluation of a library hinge first on how well it satisfies the needs of the institution it has been established to serve.

2. How well does the library stack up against other, similar libraries? A second benchmark in the analysis and evaluation phase of our efforts might be to place our libraries against others of similar size and purpose. By this, of course, I mean the use of so-called comparative statistics. If you do not already have one, establish a list of peer and peer-aspirant institutions. Find out with which institutions your chief executive officer (CEO) hopes to compete. Make comparisons with as much specificity as statistical tables will allow.

3. How does the library measure up with regard to the major issues of the day? By this I

mean such matters as preservation and automation, where costs often do not appear in operating budgets because of outside sources of funding. For this reason comparative statistics may tell you very little. You may simply have to ask yourself, "Is the library doing enough?" "Should it do more?"

4. What else may be right or wrong with the library? Does the roof leak? Are you stacking books on the floor because the library is out of shelf space? Do you find birds in the reading room every morning? Is the staff's work area so old that it offers outdated lighting? Perhaps this is the category that will permit you to be visionary. Try to think of library needs beyond the immediate strengths and weaknesses. While no one will know the cost exactly, we can all guess that we will soon need considerable means to afford the technology usually intended in the phrase *the electronic library*. Perhaps this is not so much a benchmark measure for analysis and evaluation as it is a fail-safe category. I include it here only as a reminder that when you examine the needs of your library, be aware of real library needs that may fall outside the bounds of the benchmarks noted above.

Now you are ready to turn the results of your analysis into fundraising initiatives. This analysis should have revealed the library's strengths along with its weaknesses. Your development plan should include both. Build to your strength; the pride of strength will help attract support. Treat the weaknesses as great opportunities for new gains.

Costing

Once you have completed your analysis, you should have a list of items for which you have identified the need for additional support. For the sake of convenience, group them in families if possible. Put a figure, a cost, with each item. To do this, you will find it necessary to return to the details of your analyses.

Ordinarily, you will quickly find that you are working with more than one kind of cost. Some of your needs will require simple, one-time costs. Others will require funding over a period of time, say for five years. Still others will require on-going annual support for the foreseeable future. If you are fortunate, these different cost requirements will correspond to the rough family groupings you made earlier. At any rate, once you have placed a cost with each need and arranged them by the kind of cost represented, you will have the beginnings of a financial plan for fundraising.

Be aware that this process of costing is a crit-

ically important undertaking, for your credibility will be tested on the basis of how well you accomplish it. You must not fall prey to delusions of grandeur, but neither can you afford to set sights on an insignificant amount. The best figures to put forward are those which are realistic and explicable. If you have done your homework well, these are just the kind of figures you will set forth.

Sources for Fundraising

Now that you have a list of needs and their respective costs, spend some time attempting to identify what might be your best sources for funding. A good fundraising plan will represent not only the variety of types of costs noted above, but a variety of fundraising sources as well. Do some research. Read announcements of awards to libraries and note the funding sources. Talk to your friends, your staff and your administration.

Among the major sources of funds you might consider are the following:

- the institution that the library serves
- foundations
- business and industry
- governmental agencies and programs
- the private sector

I have begun with the institution that the library serves as a source of funding because often, when you have really done your homework, the case for a larger share of the budget suddenly becomes more convincing. This will surely not supply all the new monies you seek, but neither will any one of the other sources. Before you leave home, try it; be creative. Propose that the first \$10,000 income from any newly endowed chair be directed to endow an acquisition fund under the same name. This will provide the library funds to underwrite a collection in the chairholder's field, and that in turn will help the school attract prospects to the chair. Make the case for a percentage of any new, unrestricted endowment. Challenge the athletic club to underwrite the library's ability to purchase books in physical education. You may be surprised at its willingness to support a related academic enterprise. Does the library have a check-off square on the form for solicitation to the annual fund? It is often productive to sit back and take a fresh look at the immediate context. We are limited by convention only if we choose to be.

The second source for funding that must not be overlooked is foundations. North Carolina is blessed with many and generous such institutions. Grants from foundations most readily match needs that are one-time or, at least, limited to a few years in duration. Special projects are

naturals for foundations. Some foundations support building or renovation. Foundations often like to provide start-up funds for programs that the library must write into its own budget in subsequent years. Some foundations are particularly attracted to challenge grants. Few foundations give to endowments. Most foundations have special interests and conveniently describe them in foundation sourcebooks.

I personally believe that the causes and projects represented by interesting and persuasive foundation proposals reveal the level of vitality of a library, and so I believe that each library should produce at least one viable proposal each year. If you are serious about fundraising, order extra copies of the *Foundation Directory* and the *North Carolina Foundation Directory* for your office. Set time aside to browse through pertinent sections. You ought to read the entire North Carolina directory. Keep a note pad handy because against the background of your funding needs, the ideas will come.

I have listed business and industry as a major source, though opportunity may vary considerably by location. It is likely, as well, that business and industry may be most useful for more limited and specialized needs. Look for obvious convergence of interests: you need it; they make it. Pay attention to those operations that may have some standing connection to the institution (e.g., the CEO is an alumnus). Can any of your needs be filled by gifts in kind: carpet, furniture, microcomputers, delivery van, repairs to a leaky roof?

. . . to go seeking funds requires that we be specific and realistic about our needs.

I have added governmental agencies and programs as a major source just to show you that I really am an optimist. As long as such sources continue to be funded, do not ignore them. I assume that all qualifying research libraries are acquainted with the Department of Education *Title II C* program. Beyond that, however, any library may make its case for a portion of the National Endowment for the Humanities monies for preservation. At reasonable intervals, you should request and read the full guidelines for other NEH and National Endowment for the Arts programs. Look for creative intersections of possibility. Most projects must be public-oriented to qualify, but you may have unique cultural resources that beg exposure.

Finally, we come to the private sector as a source of funding. Some say that philanthropy is decreasing, and it probably is. I have heard it said that those who do give in these times are interested in knowing the return on their investment. That is probably true also. But the essential observation here is that people, even if fewer people, are still willing to support worthy institutions.

Where do you start? Do you have a Friends of the Library group? Do you know who uses the library? Does the library have a few, even one, significant supporter? Is there someone who could be counted as a potential supporter? Most successful fundraising endeavors are conducted with the aid of well-chosen volunteers. This is true no matter what sums of money are involved. The most successful people at raising money from faculty members are other faculty members. The most helpful people at raising money from those of power and means are their peers.

I believe that the private sector offers the greatest potential for fundraising, and I will return to this topic again. But, first, let me reiterate that I think it is unwise to place the full burden of all your financial needs on any one of the above or on any other sources, and most especially not on your own institution. Strive, rather, to develop the best and most varied list of sources possible. You may notice convenient match-ups between sources and needs, and you should note them as they occur to you.

Conceptualizing

At this point, we have analyzed the library and identified its needs; we have placed a cost on each of them; and we have identified potential sources for fundraising. Now pause and conceptualize each need or category of needs, making a convincing and persuasive case for each. Write it down. Begin with as much explanation as necessary, but do not stop until you can state each need simply and without jargon in no more than a single-spaced page and a half. That page and a half should be direct, specific, and include the cost. It should be upbeat in tone. When appropriate (for projects and more complicated proposals), always append an additional page with a full and itemized budget.

Not until you can concisely conceptualize each fundraising goal have you completed your preparation. Only then will you know it inside and out. And only then will you be able to respond either in writing or extemporaneously with confidence and speed when opportunity knocks. When you have finished conceptualizing the needs, you will have your fundraising portfolio together and

ready.

All this may be summarized in what I will call *Basic Principle for Library Fundraising #1: Do your preparation at the outset and do it well.*

Staffing

There is a lot of work involved in the mechanics we have considered already, and you can do it all yourself. It is a good idea, however, to involve other members of your staff, depending somewhat on the size of the fundraising project. If you really know from the outset that the library has only one overriding need, then a serious analysis is not required. You can, alone, proceed to cost the need and consider sources, and you can make the case for that need. But in most instances, even the single need situation will concern some part of your library where staff involvement could be helpful in adjusting your perspective. You might also capitalize productively on their expertise in the process of conceptualizing the need.

If you want to establish a more comprehensive fundraising plan, then broader staff involvement is imperative. Rather than setting up a committee, utilize appropriate structural groupings that already exist. That is, if you have an executive or administrative group, or if the library is arranged in departments or units, make use of those divisions for the mechanics we have been considering. If there is a key individual on your staff who has special skills in analysis or costing, seek his or her help. Fundraising initiatives, even in these early stages, should not be a secretive process. Proper staff involvement can help raise more than money; it can raise morale as well—a benefit not to be ignored. Fundraising, especially in the private sector, depends upon gaining access to individuals, and the more people involved, the more connections possible.

One good place to begin the process of fundraising is within the walls of our libraries.

This brings me to the *Basic Principle for Library Fundraising #2: graciously accept the assistance of anyone who can help you raise money.* I also call this the basic humility principle. An oversized ego has no constructive place in successful fundraising. If you discover that one of your staff members has cultivated a library friendship with a potential major donor, encourage and assist that staff member in the process of

seeking a major gift. Whether successful or not, give every staff member so involved credit for his efforts and extend your thanks.

There is a second staffing consideration that is of paramount importance. You must become a part of the larger institutional fundraising team. At the risk of speaking hyperbolically, let me say that no million dollar gifts are made without the full support and involvement of the chief executive officer of your institution—president, chancellor, or whatever he or she may be called.

Earlier, I noted that fundraising begins at home. In part this means only that you must successfully communicate to your CEO that you are engaged in analysis and what results you are finding. Your goal must be to convince the top decision-making management of the institution of the crucial place of the library in the institution and the need for making library fundraising a top priority. The library is in fundraising competition with every other need and program within the institution. Do not take for granted that the importance of the library for institutional advancement will be self-evident. You must convince them.

Do you know how top fundraising priorities for your institution are set? Do you know what individual or group sets them? You must find out, and you must become a part of that group if you are not already. This is critically important if you are to have the best chances for success. I believe it is also critically important because of the often unrecognized role of the library in facilitating institutional vitality and prosperity. Librarians superintend no less than the cornerstones of our educational institutions. Our presence in the right forums will keep that message fresh.

If your institution has a fundraising officer, get to know that person. You can help one another. This is a crucial aspect of your becoming part of the executive fundraising team. Your own institutional fundraising officer can supply you with information about foundations and individuals. He or she can tell you about the intricacies of estate planning, deferred giving and the variety of giving programs already utilized by your school. You, on the other hand, may discover potential donors who have interests other than the library and endear them to the institution.

Finally, with regard to staffing, after you have your fundraising portfolio together and institutional support in place, involve one or more significant volunteers. It is best if you can identify volunteers from among the Friends of the Library. If that is not possible, ask your CEO to help identify someone from among trustees or other insti-

tutional friends. Let me reiterate an earlier point: the best people to raise money from those who have means are their peers.

At the same time, you should recognize that volunteers of power and substance will, as they are accustomed, be strong forces with which you have to contend. Your CEO and fundraising officer will be experienced in keeping this a happy process, so enlist their help. Whatever extra effort is needed to work with such volunteers will be well worthwhile.

Staffing your fundraising effort, therefore, can involve the library staff and almost certainly must involve the institution's executive fundraising team. For best success, it will also include selected volunteers.

Strategic Planning

This brings me to the last aspect of the mechanics of the fundraising process. With all or part of your portfolio of needs given institutional priority, you and the executive fundraising team must determine how you will actually raise the money. You must determine what kind of fundraising effort is appropriate. Will it be a limited effort targeting specific items? Will it be a full-scale capital campaign? Will it be a featured part of a larger institutional capital campaign? In either case, will you design and print development brochures or other publications? (If so, you will be so glad to have your background portfolio in hand.)

When the question of type of fundraising effort is settled, you must then, on the basis of logic, collective wisdom, and the list of prospects, determine the best possible sources for each need. Remember the list of sources you have compiled? By now it should be long and varied. The executive development team should add even more sources. Against this list, place the needs. Weigh every variable the team can adduce. Take into account the nature of the need and its cost, the interests of various foundations and individuals, the potential level of giving. Try to come up with at least one good source for each need.

Within the bounds of reasonable flexibility, make an effort to schedule the work and make assignments. If foundations are to be approached, who will draft the proposals and by what date? What previous contacts have those foundations had with the institution, and with whom? If individuals are to be approached, how should the approach be made and by whom? When can the contact be arranged? The team will, no doubt, have regular meetings, so make specific plans for a period—for thirty or sixty days, or until the next meeting.

The emergence of this actual strategic plan is the last major part of what I have called the mechanics of fundraising. What remains is to get the job done, to execute the plan.

Successful Fundraising

The remainder of my observations, therefore, will address matters less concrete than the mechanics. I want to focus on what it takes to make the mechanics work. To return to an earlier simile, even if you load the gun, you must still hit the target. While these remarks clearly reflect my own opinions, they may also be the most important part of this essay.

The Librarian's Involvement.

Whose job is it to raise money for the library? Remember Basic Principle #2—graciously accept help from anyone. But whose job is it? Yes, the development officer includes the library as some part of his or her responsibility, and, for that matter, so does the CEO. But who, day after day, week after week, year after year has the library as his or her primary concern?

A good fundraising plan will represent not only the variety of types of costs . . . but a variety of fundraising sources as well.

I beg the question, but it is an important issue. No one knows the library's needs like the librarian; no one can interpret them like the librarian. And no one but the librarian maintains a passion for and a commitment to the library's purpose. In addition, popular wisdom has it that the majority of all major gifts have required the involvement of the unit head (in our case, the librarian) and the CEO. If you are not the chief librarian, you must figure out how to get the chief involved.

If you are serious about fundraising, you must include it as a part of your job description, reserve a percentage of your time for it, and work hard at it. If you stop somewhere between completing the mechanics and coming face-to-face with potential donors, you will not raise a penny. On the other hand, in this matter as in most other pursuits, nothing produces better results (or resembles genius more) than plain, simple hard work.

How Long Will It Take?

Take care to establish a realistic calendar. Depending upon your own knowledge of the

library, the expertise of the staff, and the magnitude of the fundraising needs, just the analysis and evaluation of the library may take six months or a year. Doing it well, of course, is more important than doing it quickly. Team building and strategic planning will depend upon your own experience and the circumstance of fundraising as it already exists or does not exist on your campus. In any event, it will take time either to create a process or to join one already in operation. You should begin to build the rapport with other principal fundraisers within the institution from the very outset, in order to move forward rapidly when you have conceptualized the needs.

Keep in mind that foundations and governmental agencies have schedules and that even the best of proposals must conform to them. With the most fortunate timing, expect at least six months for a response. Among North American colleges and universities, the average lapse in time between initial contact with an individual and a major gift is two years.

Fundraising is a long-term endeavor. It requires patience and persistence. If you are just beginning the whole process, you should expect your first foundation returns in about eighteen months. You may expect to raise your first million from the private sector in about three years—if all goes well. When you hear stories of great successes, you may be reasonably assured that they were undergirded by sound planning and enduring effort.

What Will It Take?


I have only two points left to make. They more directly concern fundraising in the private sector, though not exclusively so, and if I could set

forth only two points, it would be these two.

First.

Fundraising is a matter of establishing and nourishing relationships. Why does it take a couple of years before a major gift is forthcoming? Suppose I asked you for a gift of \$10,000 by phone or letter one day. Even if you were an alumnus of my institution, you would most likely say no. But suppose I came to see you and explained how seriously we needed \$10,000 and what such a gift could do, and then asked you to consider it. And suppose I invited you to campus to see things for yourself and sought your ideas and really invited you to become a part of the destiny of the school. If I kept coming to see you at reasonable intervals over a couple of years, you would come to know me and to know the real urgency of the library's need. You would come to trust how I would use the gift if you made it, and how much good it would do. And, I believe, you would make it.

Second.

And let this be my conclusion. If you and I are to convince anyone to make major gifts to our libraries, we ourselves have to be convinced of the urgency and importance of our mission. If you do not love your work and believe in the value of what you are doing, do not come to me for support. If you have not made your own pledge to the library program to the extent your personal resources permit, do not ask someone else to put a million dollars into it. It is a matter of integrity. Those who are asked for money for many different causes every day become adept at distinguishing true commitment from its counterfeit. 



Keep your Mind in Shape
Go for it! Use your library!