The Theological Librarian's Role in Fundraising

by Barbara Kemmis

Theological institutions have been dependent on philanthropy since their inception. This is a unique characteristic of seminaries and divinity schools when compared to other graduate schools such as medical and law schools. Since 1776, endowments were established to underwrite capital and operating expenses as well as offer scholarships to ensure minimal barriers to entering the missionary or pastoral fields. Indeed, the initial collections of most academic libraries were comprised of gift books.[1] Despite or because of this historical reliance, the role of fundraiser has fallen primarily to the President, Board of Trustees, or, in recent times, to dedicated development staff.

The theological librarian as proactive fundraiser is a relatively new phenomenon in the development field. Many ATLA members may wistfully remember the days before case statements, proposals, Friends of the Library efforts, and donor meetings. Whether a librarian views fundraising as a useful public relations tool or a necessary evil, there can be no doubt that fundraising has become an activity in which theological librarians must routinely engage.[2]

The central argument of this essay is that fundraising is not just an occasional activity but rather a continuous role of successful theological library directors. Whether done in concert with the institution's development staff or independently in the library, fundraising efforts are a vital element of the revenue mix supporting theological libraries. The books and databases selected for this essay are intended to provide a practical foundation and introduction to the tools and processes of library fundraising rather than a proper scholarly overview of the field.

The Position of Theological Libraries within the Philanthropic Sector

Charitable giving in the United States is well-established and monitored through a combination of surveys and analysis of publicly available tax information. It is wise to understand the sources and allocation of funding before attempting development efforts.

In July, the Giving Institute publishes its annual survey of individual giving, *Giving USA 2008: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2007* (Indianapolis: Giving USA Foundation, 2008), to much fanfare. The survey identifies trends in giving and correlates them to economic, environmental, political, and societal trends. The Foundation Center in New York tracks similar trends in foundation and corporate giving in *Foundation Giving Trends: Update on Funding Priorities, 2008 edition* (New York: Foundation Center, 2008). Both use defined categories and terms from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities and Internal Revenue Service to organize statistics. The categories for both individual and foundation/corporate giving are grouped as Arts/Culture/Humanities; Education; Environment/Animals; Health; Human Services; Public-Society Benefit; International Affairs; and Religion. The statistical reports published by the Giving Institute and The Foundation Center are the gold standard for such information and are well known to foundation and corporate program officers. Referencing these sources in proposals to establish the context of your request will help differentiate your proposal from the rest of the stack, while also framing prospect research.

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[1] Jesse Brundage Sears, *Philanthropy in the History of American Higher Education* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992. Reprint 1990), 43-44.

[2] Adam Corson-Finnerty, *Plenary Address* ALADN Annual Conference. 2004, http://www.library.pitt.edu/aladn/plenarysessionMon29.doc.

Barbara Kemmis is Director of Member Services for the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, Illinois.

Overall, Education received the second highest amount of foundation giving in 2006 and the highest amount of individual giving in 2007, the most recent years for which statistics are available. Libraries, as a subfield of foundation giving to Education, received six percent of individual giving—representing a small slice of a very large pie. [3] While this figure fluctuates slightly from year to year, it has remained remarkably stable for the entire time these figures have been collected. Funding for education was primarily provided program support (44.9 percent). Capital support came next (22 percent), followed by general support (16.5 percent). Aside from these types, a significant share of education dollars was allocated for student aid. [4]

Theological libraries typically fall in the Education category, but may also benefit from Religion funding, which comprises the largest individual funding category. Although the statistics are not detailed enough to differentiate between giving to churches and synagogues versus religious studies and theology, it is likely that grants to libraries are sometimes represented here, depending on the purpose of the gifts. [5] Among foundations, only three percent of grant dollars were allocated toward Religion; The Lilly Endowment has been the largest grantmaker in this area since 1995. [6]

THE FUNDRAISING PROCESS

Theological libraries typically receive funding from several streams, including a portion of tuition and fees, endowment distributions, earned revenue (e.g., fines, copier revenue, and book sales), in-kind donations (e.g., "buy a book, get a bookplate program" or equipment), grants, and charitable donations (e.g., Friends of the library or other fundraising activities). Diverse streams of funding are a sign of a healthy organization; however, library directors too often exercise minimal to no control over these funding streams. Indeed, too many theological libraries are on a starvation diet of stagnant or, more commonly, declining budgets with the unrealistic expectation of maintaining or increasing library services and support for new technologies.

Librarians serve the entire academic community, yet have no alumni of their own, so are allowed access to a limited number of prospective individual donors—current students, community members, faculty and staff, and the occasional donor who claims the library as an interest in conversations with the development office. The field of opportunity is a bit wider with respect to foundations or corporations, yet it is imperative that grantseeking efforts are coordinated with the development officer. There is no better way to ensure a proposal is declined by a foundation than to submit multiple uninvited proposals from various parts of the campus. It is unprofessional and could be construed as a sign of desperation.

Building a relationship with the development office is advantageous, but requires some effort on the part of the librarian. Besides the obvious research skills, librarians often possess valuable institutional memory that the development office may lack. Turnover in academic development positions is notoriously high, with one in three fundraisers remaining in the same job less than three years. [7] A general understanding of fundraising and grantseeking is crucial in order to speak the same language. Approaching individual and foundation donors requires different strategies; however, the preparation and research required is similar.

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[3] Giving USA Foundation, *Giving USA 2008: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2007* (Indianapolis: Giving USA Foundation, 2008), 14

[4] Josefina Atienza and Reina Mukai. *Foundation Giving Trends: Update on Funding Priorities, 2008 edition (*New York: Foundation Center, 2008), 10-11.

[5] Giving USA Foundation, 23-24.

[6] Atienza, and Mukai,15.

[7] Giving USA Foundation, 107.

Hank Rosso's Achieving Excellence in Fund Raising (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003) is an outstanding resource that provides practical articles on topics ranging from the historical and philosophical underpinnings of fundraising to practical strategies for approaching donors to a comprehensive glossary of fundraising terms. In a little more than 500 pages, Eugene R. Tempel has compiled articles, tables, figures, and exhibits touching on every aspect of the fundraising process. Elements of each of this essay's topics are covered in some depth in this book. This is a textbook for many graduate programs in nonprofit management, yet maintains its utility as a ready reference tool.

Many novice fundraisers make the mistake of beginning with "the ask," thus skipping essential initial steps in the fundraising process. Several of these steps are outlined below. Skipping any of the steps is ill-advised and could result in failure. While this may sound overly dramatic, foundation program officers can readily spot a poorly researched, hastily conceived proposal among the multitude on their desks and welcome the opportunity to make an easy decline.

IDENTIFYING FUNDING NEEDS

It is likely that librarians already have developed a wish list in some form during strategic planning, staff meetings, or daydreaming. Who couldn't quickly compile a list including a new building, increased support for collection development, new furniture, etc.? This internal wish list is an important beginning, but must be followed by the development of a public case for fulfilling these wishes. A case statement puts in writing a brief, clear proposal to communicate the purpose, program, and financial need for the wish list item. A case statement should provide the prospective donor with perspective, a sense of history, and a feeling of importance and urgency of the project. Cases are often internal documents, but are utilized for proposals or conversations with individual donors.

There are thousands of books and articles discussing all aspects of case statements, but few focus on libraries, much less theological libraries. Lorraine Olley presented a paper at the 2008 ATLA Annual Conference, "Making the Case: Creating a Successful Fundraising Partnership with Institutional Development," summarizing the key elements of case statements (Chicago: American Theological Library Association, 2008). This paper outlined core elements of developing the case and describes applications in a theological library setting.

Another excellent resource regarding case statements is *Developing Your Case for Support* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008). With a thorough examination of the process to develop, implement, and test cases, as well as appendices containing a variety of examples, this book is both practical and encouraging.

When developing the case, it is wise to think about the various types of potential support. The type of support sought and the potential sources of funding will vary depending on the kind of funding required. Donors distinguish among several funding purposes:

- General operating support—keeping the library open and staffed with support from earned revenue, tuition, and fees, and/or individual donors; foundations and corporations typically do not fund this purpose.

- Program or project support—special projects and initiatives that are core to your organization and time-limited with support from government, foundations, corporations, grantmaking public charities, or other entities.

- Capital support—funds for a special need such as a building, an endowed staff position, or a book or resource collection with support from any of the sources listed above.

- Other types of support—in-kind, equipment or book donations, technical assistance.

Types of support often determine the course of action for further research and eventual success.

As has already been established, librarians too often have limited or no direct access to individual donors. The full variety of sources of funding should still be considered when initiating research:

- Private foundations, including corporate, family, and independent foundations
- Corporate giving programs and sponsorships
- Community and public foundations
- Individuals
- Government funding

Previously prepared cases may be repurposed to approach any potential source of funding, but the strategy and resources involved differ greatly.

PROSPECT RESEARCH

Prospect research is an area where librarians naturally excel and can prove to be valued partners with their institutional development officers. The goal of prospect research is to identify donors willing and able to support the library, program, or project. The key words in this statement are "willing and able." Celebrities, such as Oprah Winfrey, are certainly able; however, their willingness is unlikely without a direct personal connection. Foundations are able and are set up for this very purpose; however most have established guidelines and specified funding areas that focus their grantmaking and can restrict their willingness.

Prospect research is time intensive, but need only be conducted once a year or as new donors are identified or initiatives launched. Annual research may garner new donors, but—more importantly—will update contact information, application guidelines, and deadlines.

Initial prospect research involves skimming information about funders and their funding areas, support types, and geographic preferences, and should result in a list of twelve to fifteen prospective funders. Most funding is geographically based, so it is best to concentrate on local resources first, usually the closer to home the better. Some grantmakers fund more widely, whether nationally or internationally.

It is wise to invest the time required to review a lot of information. This may, for example, involve comparing information from various sources to develop a more complete picture of the funders who donate to organizations and programs that resemble one's own.

Once the initial list is compiled and basic information is identified, it is time to learn more details about each prospect. This involves creating a file of background information that includes:

- mission statement and core values
- history
- main interests
- special interests

- geographic focus, if any
- any identifiable patterns in their recent giving
- amount of money typically awarded
- organizations previously funded
- special projects supported
- guidelines for applications and grant requests
- preferred method for initial contact
- key decision-makers (staff and board) and their special interests
- limitations and exclusions on the funds
- deadlines for proposals

To turn this lengthy list of prospective donor organizations into a short list of the priority options requires making a special note of organizations that have:

- a mission or core values that mirror one's institution's especially closely
- previously supported a similar program
- special annual programs to give funds for compatible needs with specific deadlines for application
- staff members with whom one's institution has personal networking connections

As the research becomes more detailed, weaker prospects will be naturally weeded out. This is a positive factor, as the next step is to contact the prospect, and that takes a significant investment of time. The end result of prospect research should be between two and five vetted prospects per case.[8]

For foundations and corporations, research involves compiling and reviewing guidelines, funding priorities, deadlines, and instructions. The Foundation Center is an excellent resource for free and fee-based online and in-person training, current research on the field, corporate and foundation databases, and an excellent online glossary (New York: The Foundation Center, 2009) defining a broad range of fundraising jargon. Start with the free online tutorial, *Guide to Funding Research* (New York: The Foundation Center, 2009).

Many foundations publish excellent websites with reports, forms, and other helpful resources, but some avoid publicity and release little or no information over the Web. The most helpful and comprehensive resource to search is the *Foundation Directory Online Professional Version* (New York: The Foundation Center, 2009). Available by subscription or by visiting one of the Foundation Center's libraries or cooperating collections, which are listed on the Foundation Center website under the "Locations" tab,[9] this database provides comprehensive access to corporate, foundation, and grantmaking public charity profiles; recent grants awarded; trustee, officer, and donor names; 990-PF tax forms listing all grants made in a particular year; interactive maps and charts; and links to related news items.

When searching in *The Foundation Directory Online,* or a similar grantmaker database, it is a good strategy to search for a relevant subject, such as "Theological" or "Libraries/Library Science." Such a search will yield hundreds of

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[8] Donors Forum. Grantseekers Toolbox. http://www.donorsforum.org/resource/gstoolbox1.html.
[9] http://foundationcenter.org/.

results—far too many to browse. The search can be refined by applying geographic limitations such as "National" or "National/International" to capture grantmakers interested in funding in multiple states or in Canada. A recent search with these parameters resulted in forty-one funders, the top ten of which (in order of total assets, the most common indicator of size) are listed below:

Grantmaker Name	City	State
Lilly Endowment Inc.	Indianapolis	IN
Luce Foundation Inc., Henry	New York	NY
Hearst Foundation, William Randolph	New York	NY
Fuller Foundation, The	Pasadena	CA
Hearst Foundation Inc., The	New York	NY
Davis Foundations, Arthur Vining, The	Jacksonville	FL
Crowell Trust, The	Colorado Springs	CO
Nash Family Foundation, Inc.	New York	NY
Chatlos Foundation Inc.	Longwood	FL
American Antiquarian Society	Worcester	MA

Upon selecting a grantmaker from the list, a profile is displayed (see **Figure 1** below; please note that some sections of this profile have been edited for space, but key sections remain). When scanning the foundation profiles it is important to note the sections on contact information, publications, and application information for further areas of research and relevant limitations and deadlines. The next step in this example would be to look at the website and request listed publications for further research.

Guidestar.org (Williamsburg: Guidestar, 2009) is an excellent resource that offers basic information at no cost with registration. With an optional paid subscription, the actual tax returns of nonprofit organizations are available, offering complete grant lists from foundations. This is a useful tool to analyze the fit between actual grantees and stated priorities. Additionally, comparing a number of years of 990-PF tax returns indicates how many new grantees appear each year. Please note that the Foundation Center has recently included 990-PF forms in *The Foundation Directory Online Premium*; however, it is not as comprehensive a database as *Guidestar.org*.

There is no comprehensive database for identifying individual donors by type of support comparable to the *Foundation Directory Online*. This may come as a relief to readers concerned about the proliferation of personal information available online and elsewhere, but it presents certain obstacles in identifying individual donors. One key strategy for developing lists of potential donors to your library is to acquire annual reports from local charities, or institutions similar to your own. Regularly reading local newspapers or setting online news alerts will also garner prospects.

There are still other strategies to find information once a donor is identified. A search engine is a good starting place. Newspaper databases, *Who's Who* publications, etc. can also be useful.

Lilly Endowment Inc.

2801 N. Meridian St., P.O. Box 88068, Indianapolis, IN 46208-0068, Telephone: (317) 924-5471, Fax: (317) 926-4431

URL: www.lillyendowment.org

Type of Grantmaker: Independent foundation

IRS Exemption Status: 501(c)(3)

Additional Descriptor: Family foundation

Financial Data (yr. ended 12/31/07): Assets: $7,734,860,156; Total giving: $341,863,979

EIN: 350868122

990-PF: 2007 2006 2005 2004 2003 2002 2001 E-Grant Reporter

Last Updated: 12/11/2008

Donor(s) *Note: If a donor is deceased, the symbol (‡) follows the name.* J.K. Lilly, Sr.‡ Eli Lilly‡ J.K. Lilly, Jr.‡ Ruth Lilly

Background

Limitations

Giving limited to IN, with emphasis on Indianapolis, for community development projects (including the arts, preservation, capital building funds, operating funds, and social services). Education funding focused principally on Indiana under invitational grant programs. National giving in religion, philanthropic studies, leadership education, and selected higher education initiatives, principally to increase educational opportunities for minorities. Generally, no support for healthcare programs, mass media projects, or libraries or for individual elementary/secondary schools. No grants to individuals (except for fellowships awarded under special programs) or for endowments (except in the context of special initiatives)

Purpose and Activities

Program Area(s)

The grantmaker has identified the following area(s) of interest:

Community Development; Education; Fundraising and Philanthropy; Leadership; Education; Matching Gifts; Religion; Youth; Fields of Interest; Subjects; Population Groups

Geographic Focus National, Indiana

Types of Support

Publications

Annual report (including application guidelines)

Application guidelines

Occasional report

Program policy statement

Application Information

Requests submitted via fax or e-mail will not be considered. Application form not required. Applicants should submit the following:

1. Timetable for implementation and evaluation of project
2. How project will be sustained once grantmaker support is completed
3. Qualifications of key personnel
4. Statement of problem project will address
5. Population served
6. Copy of IRS Determination Letter
7. Brief history of organization and description of its mission
8. How project's results will be evaluated or measured
9. Detailed description of project and amount of funding requested
10. Copy of current year's organizational budget and/or project budget
11. Listing of additional sources and amount of support

Initial approach: Letter (no more than 2 pages)

Copies of proposal: 1

Board meeting date(s): Mar., June, Sept., Nov., and Dec.

Final notification: Generally three to six months after formal proposal is submitted

Additional information: Two-page letter should include a description of the organization and project, as well as the amount of support needed from the endowment. If the project is judged to be of interest to the endowment, one copy of a complete proposal will be requested and should include the items from above and any additional items requested by the endowment staff. All grantseekers receive written notification of decisions.

Officers and Directors

Number of Staff 20 full-time professional, 20 full-time support

Memberships

Affinity Groups

Associations and Other Philanthropic Organizations

Financial Data Year ended 12/31/07:

Additional Location Information County: Marion, Metropolitan area: Indianapolis-Carmel, IN

Selected Grants

Figure 1: Abridged entry from *Foundation Directory Online* ©2009 The Foundation Center, NY.

Demystifying Grantmaking

Once the initial research is complete and the contact person and address are identified, it is time to write. Initial contact with foundations and corporations is almost always in writing and submitted on paper or online. The goal for every proposal is to stand out from among a very large crowd, particularly if one is approaching a grantmaker for the first time. It is not uncommon for an applicant to be declined for three or more years before receiving a grant from a foundation. This should not be seen as a personal affront or negative reflection on one's library or project. Program officers routinely decline more than 90% of the proposals they receive. While the grantmaking budget may be large, foundations often provide ongoing support to established grantees, resulting in minimal or no funding for new grantees each year. Therefore, polite persistence is necessary to get in the door. Additionally, foundation support should be seen as a long-term relationship rather than an emergency source of funding. Unless the library has an existing relationship with a grantmaker, it is virtually impossible to secure emergency funding or grants out of the funder's established cycle.

Proposal writing is intimidating, but very similar to writing a research paper. There are hundreds—if not thousands—of books and articles on the subject and all have similar useful content. Public libraries are most likely to offer the Dummies Series (www.dummies.com) or the like. The resources below may prove more difficult to access, but are worth the effort.

The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing (New York: The Foundation Center, *Proposal Writing* 2007) is an excellent starting place. The authors espouse the theory of the Master Proposal, which involves preparing all of the elements of a proposal, updating them routinely, and editing them to fit the guidelines and needs of the funder. In addition to thoroughly examining the proposal elements, the book discusses donor cultivation, provides a sample proposal, and offers a chapter on "What the Funders Have to Say," providing insight into the mind of a program officer.

The Foundation Center's Guide to Winning Proposals (New York: The Foundation Center, 2008) builds on the foundation of the *Guide to Proposal Writing* by compiling funded proposals of various types: special project single year, special project multiple year, general operating support, capacity building, building/renovation, evaluation, and equipment. Examples of budgets, letters of inquiry, and cover letters are also included. While most examples come from more traditional nonprofit organizations, several examples from libraries and colleges are included.

Professional Resources

There are a number of professional associations serving the development field that publish excellent websites with free resources available to non-members.

The Association of Fundraising Professionals website houses a Resource Center section that is particularly useful in offering sample documents, white papers, and professional practice statements on a variety of topics. It is likely that a seminary's development staff is already a member of AFP or a local chapter and will be familiar with these resources (http://www.afpnet.org/ka/).

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education website publishes the CASE Index, a browsable library of articles, conference presentations, award-winning practices, and available books and e-media resources. While comparable to AFP resources, it focuses on higher education specifically (http://www.case.org/Search/CaseIndex.cfm).

The Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement (APRA) website includes useful prospect research links as well as standards for advancement research. A particular strength of this website is resources to research individuals (http://www.aprahome.org).

The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com), Chronicle of Philanthropy (http://philanthropy.com) and Philanthropy News Digest (http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/) offer news feeds and alerts to higher education grants and other current issues in philanthropy.

Conclusion

While the necessity of fundraising is well known, the exact role of theological librarians in the process has never been clearly defined. There are instances of seminaries where the librarian and the development officer work closely together, but these are frequently rare, according to recent feedback from ATLA members. Theological librarians have skills and knowledge that can be helpful to development officers and can position the library as a resource for development efforts, but this intersection of need and skill is too often left unexplored. By adding fundraising knowledge and skills, theological librarians position themselves for success on their campuses. Now more than ever, coordinated efforts to secure the financial future of theological libraries are crucial. It is never too early to start and the resources identified in this essay should serve as encouragement to begin now.

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The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com).

The Chronicle of Philanthropy (http://philanthropy.com).

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education. (http://www.case.org/Search/CaseIndex.cfm).

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Philanthropy News Digest (http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/).