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Building Fundraising Momentum: Message, Relationship, and Alliance Essentials

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Building Fundraising Momentum:

Message, Relationship, and Alliance Essentials

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Abstract

Inquiry-based and user-centered facility design catalyzes constituency engagement, creates shared vision, and builds stakeholder partnerships through signature 'participatory action research' and 'library as lab' initiatives that advance collective learning and energize renovation planning in the library and on campus. This user-centered design approach also informs energetic fundraising strategies which produce $32.8 million in multi-year State appropriations and cash contributions. Essential elements - creating messages, furthering relationships, and forging alliances - invigorate the capital campaign and sustain renovation fundraising momentum.

Introduction

The Auraria Library opened its doors in 1976 on a new campus built to accommodate no more than 13,000 students. When a new University Librarian and Library Director (Mary Somerville) commenced employment in 2008, student enrollment exceeded 53,000 students. In addition, disruptive forces in both academic publishing and higher education environments had altered student learning, faculty teaching, and scholarly research. In response, the academic library had to re-invent services and, since form follows function, repurpose facilities.

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[1] As of January 2016, University Librarian, University of the Pacific.

A $165 million legislative appropriation supplemented by a $10 million cash contribution was expected to fund a new library building. However, because no land for a new building was available, the library project had languished on the campus master plan list for more than a decade. In 2009, in the absence of another viable solution, campus leaders agreed – at Somerville's recommendation– to renovate the existing facility. In 2010, a local architectural firm was engaged to conduct a charrette (a series of design workshops) (Somerville & Brown-Sica, 2011; Howard & Somerville, 2014), which produced a renovation cost estimate of $32.8 million. The significant reduction in cost, which would save Colorado taxpayers $130 million, surfaced early as a speaking point.

Initial fundraising efforts emphasized friend raising and fundraising events. For several years, a local philanthropist hosted "Strike It Rich" dinners, featuring local speakers, at the university club. Other donors hosted dinner parties, ranging from a dozen guests to more than sixty persons, with the promise of an evening with the University Librarian, who presented the evolving user-centered vision and associated user-generated design. Reflective of classic fundraising 'moves management' strategies, some guests became major gift donors. Most noteworthy, two anonymous gifts from donor-advised funds at the community foundation contributed $850,000 for public restrooms (to satisfy city code requirements) and 'stair wraps' (to mitigate sound transference issues).

Local foundations and corporations also contributed generously to early phases of the library renovation, which subsequently proved influential to State legislators. Over a five-year period,

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for instance, one foundation awarded grants totaling $250,000 for specific projects, including a

faculty reading room and research computer zone. To encourage corporate giving, in 2012 a gala

dinner and dance was held, inviting guests to "Dream with us?", which netted $175,000. Such

early cash contributions demonstrated significant community support, which secured a $150,000

challenge grant from another local foundation.

These generous donor, foundation, and corporate gifts provided important evidence of

community support in the capital funding request submitted to the State of Colorado legislature.

In response, legislators awarded $4 million in 2013 for holistic design service and selected

projects, including special collections. Then, in 2014, the legislators awarded an additional $22.6

million. When the $6 million cash contribution goal was satisfied in 2015, capital campaign

aspirations established in the 2010 design charrette were satisfied. Now, however, library leaders

are keenly aware of all the other projects that have since surfaced, which require additional

funding. Hence, as the title of this paper suggests, it's imperative to build fundraising

momentum.

Organizational Readiness

Raising $33 million for holistic design and facility renovation required organization wide

engagement. To catalyze inclusive participation in needs finding, library leaders, campus

planners, facility managers, and project architects employed user-centered design principles

informed by participatory action research methods guided by these questions:

> How should the library, and its services and collections, serve the institution? What
> programs not in the library at present, should be in the facility in the future? How does
> the library add value to the academic experiences of the students and faculty? How is
> the library building presently perceived, and how can it function in the future as an

> interdependent facility with other learning and teaching opportunities on campus? How much of the traditional library program must remain in the centralized facility? How does the library reflect the vision of the institution of which it is a part? (Somerville, 2015, 78)

To prepare, in 2009, interested library staff members participated in workshops to learn to apply mixed social science methods because new data was necessary to supplement the library's 'busyness' statistics. Staff members initially exercised their new research proficiencies to investigate, over several months, students' learning spaces preferences and professors' pedagogical methods requirements. 'Paper and pencil' surveys, participant observation logs, and focus group sessions generated data on course assignment trends, digital tool usage, collaborative learning needs, and café menu preferences (Somerville, 2015, 78).

The action research results, conducted *for and with* the constituencies served, had the further benefit of catalyzing constituency engagement, creating shared vision, and building stakeholder partnerships, often expressed as compelling stories and robust testimonials. Tangible results included full funding from the Offices of the President and Provost for a $120,000 Discovery Wall digital installation initiative[2] that emerged during participatory design activities, for which no other funding was available. Senior campus leaders were also regularly consulted to ensure continued alignment with their evolving institutional aspirations, thereby fostering the political alliances necessary to secure legislative appropriations.

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[2] For more about the Discovery Wall initiative, see Niraj Chaudhary's *RE-THINK IT* presentation materials: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/rethinkit/2015/presentation/8/.

Building upon these early findings, library leaders and development officers progressively

formulated core messages for successful funding proposals for philanthropists, foundations, and

legislators. As one donor solicitation stated:

> Now in the third year of a five-year transformation, the Auraria Library renovations will result in flexible spaces that are innovative and comfortable and that meet the needs of the students of today and tomorrow. When the Library first opened in 1976, it was designed to serve a maximum of 15,000 students. Today, it is the intellectual home of nearly 53,000 students. Almost a million people walk through the Library doors annually. Not only is Auraria Library serving more people, it operates in an entirely new context. The nature and technology of information exchange and knowledge creation are constantly evolving.

Messaging emphasized the student-centered focus of the redesign activities, within the larger

context of changing higher education teaching methods and learning outcomes, in response to

contemporary workforce needs. In combination, essential fund development elements - to create

messages, further relationships, and forge alliances – ensured momentum for the Auraria Library

fundraising approach.

Capacity Building

In the next phase, user-generated ideas and insights were invited from professors and their

students through learning partnerships expressed through co-investigations that used the 'library

as lab'. Students, supervised by professors in human factors, industrial design, graphic design,

architecture, and landscape architecture identified problems and opportunities within the Library.

Mirroring common practices in the architecture field, juried competitions with cash prices

included planners, architects, librarians (clients), and students (peers) in considering such

questions as:

> How might this space enrich educational experiences? What are the learning essentials that can happen in this space that compels building or remodeling a brick and mortar learning space, rather than relying on a virtual one? How might this physical space be

designed to encourage students to spend more time studying and working more productively? For what purpose on the continuum from isolated study to collaborative study should this learning space be designed? Should this space be designed to encourage student/faculty exchanges outside the classroom? (Somerville, 2015, 78-79)

During the semester, librarians, planners, architects, and peers followed students' evolving problem definitions, inquiry strategies, and study outcomes. For instance, students in two graduate-level architecture studios focused on the following provocative questions: What type of physical environment, technology, and services are needed to support and enhance the learning and research experience of the campus community? How could the library involve campus students, faculty, staff, and administrators in co-creating the re-design concept (Brown-Sica, Sobel, & Rogers, 2010)?

At the conclusion of a semester, results were presented at library staff meetings. These presentations advanced staff exposure to diverse disciplinary frameworks, research methods, and reporting conventions. Architecture students, for example, used 3-D models to express their visual design vocabulary. Landscape architecture students enlarged the boundaries of 'the library' to include both indoor and outdoor spaces, including the roof. Sustained student and faculty relationships, especially those extending over multiple semesters, produced novel innovations for consideration – and oftentimes adoption – in the evolving design. The student-generated recommendations, transformed into building redesign specifications with service re-invention implications, also furthered forward thinking organizational culture and enlivened fundraising solicitations and donor stewardship.

Throughout the planning process, campus constituencies were intentionally and persistently engaged in design discussions to ensure shared vision and consistent messaging. Special

meetings convened executive campus leadership, college deans, university faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty advisory committee, student advisory committee, student senate, faculty senate, facilities managers, campus architects, and master planners, as well as university development officers and university foundation board members. Sustained communications with key decision makers and campus thought leaders forged alliances that ranked the Auraria Library renovation as the top campus priority for State legislature funding.

In addition to creating messages and building relationships, the capital campaign required developing strong political alliances. In the State of Colorado, this required strategic communication with the Colorado General Assembly Capital Development Committee – where the Library Director was asked "Why do we need a library if we have the internet?", Joint Legislative Budget Committee, Democratic and Republication caucuses, and the Offices of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. To ensure consistent messaging, customized to the interests of State representatives and senators, the key spokespersons for the University - the University President, Chief Financial Officer, Government Relations Team, and Board of Regents - received speaking points (see Attachment 1). Alumni serving in the legislature, in both political parties, added their support to successfully champion a multi-year appropriation of $26.8M for holistic redesign and renovation. Success required a coalition of higher education leaders and elected officials.

Concluding Thoughts

Whether in public or private institutions, libraries must respond nimbly to rapidly changing conditions for learning. In response, library staff recently engaged in a scenario planning activity for 2030. Highlights of our shared aspirations include:

> We embrace the roles of convener, communicator, creator, collaborator, and connector of innovative spaces for communities beyond the home campus – expanding conservation roles into generative and creative roles. We enhance the curriculum with scalable and seamless user services. We create and build upon tools that facilitate and encourage a culture of participation and collaboration, forming new links between people and information. We practice cooperative and anticipatory collection management and procurement strategies. With campus partners, we design environments and experiences that facilitate productive teaching, learning, and research. (Auraria Library, 2015).

Renewal of space, program, and expertise requires funding. As examples in this paper illustrate, transferable fundraising elements - building messages, relationships, and alliances – have catalyzed and enabled fundraising momentum that predicts continuing generous financial support in the years ahead. This inclusive and participatory signature approach to establishing, designing, and funding construction also offers considerable promise for raising funds for renewal projects in other academic libraries.

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Biography

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At the time of her participation in *Re-think it: Libraries for a New Age*, Mary M. Somerville was serving as the University Librarian and Library Director at the Auraria Library, which serves the University of Colorado Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and Community College of Denver in Denver, Colorado. She now serves as University Librarian at the University of the Pacific, where she applies the same principles to fundraising for a library facility renovation, fortified by participatory design. Her leadership approach applies participatory design principles and practices to further workplace information sharing and knowledge creation. Inclusive communication, decision-making, and planning systems enable collective capacity for direction setting, collective learning, and organizational advancement.

Attachment 1:

Auraria Library State Funding Request Facts

- Auraria Library is the only tri-institutional academic library in the nation, serving the students, faculty, and staff of three leading urban institutions: University of Colorado Denver; Metropolitan State University of Denver; and Community College of Denver.

- When the Library first opened in 1976, it was designed to serve a maximum of 15,000 students. Today, it is the intellectual home of nearly 45,000 students in the same 180,000 square-foot space and welcomes over 900,000 visitors each year, the same number as those who visit the busy Denver Public Library's Central Branch.

- One in six college students in Colorado -- 17% -- attend the Auraria campus. As many as 25,000 people walk through the front door of the Auraria Library weekly, an increase of 21 percent from just five years ago.

- When the Auraria Library was last surveyed for the campus' building audit program in 2008, the building received a facilities condition index rating of 87.26 (out of a 100 point scale). Those areas that received lower scores (indicating the systems are in poor condition) include the structural system, floor covering system, HVAC, plumbing, conveying systems and overall safety standards. As time has progressed, these systems have worsened.

- During peak time periods, all of the 1,366 seating options in the Library are taken, requiring many students to sit on the floor. Much of the furniture is outdated and shows heavy wear and tear.

- The Auraria Library building was designed by internationally recognized architect Helmut Jahn, completed in 1976, and received a 1978 Excellence-in-Design award from the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In 2009, the building earned the Denver AIA 25-year Award, which recognizes the enduring quality of architectural design that has withstood the "test of time" and still functions in its original capacity. Therefore, renovation of the Auraria Library preserves a significant work of 20th century architecture while practicing sustainable principles through the continued use of existing resources.

- In addition to the State support of $26,774,733 in 2015 dollars on this project, the Library commits to provide an additional $6 million in cash funds through fundraising and cash reserves that will provide furniture, create a skylight over the north courtyard to make additional usable space on the first floor, create group study rooms on the first floor, provide for café infrastructure, upgrade the first floor restrooms, and provide a home for the Center for Colorado & the West at Auraria Library. To date, the Auraria Library has spent just over $2 million to complete many of the projects listed above, and has a goal to raise $4 million more to complete the remaining improvements.

- This renovation project will conform with High Performance Certification Program (HPCP) policy, in accordance with state requirements and is expected to achieve a LEED Gold certification.

- If this renovation project is not funded by the State of Colorado, the Auraria Library will be less able to serve its growing customer base that demands up-to-date study and community space and more advanced technologies. Without these improvements, the Library facility will continue to deteriorate. In addition, the renovation consists of operational projects that are not attractive to private donors.

- A continued lack of investment in this building and its systems will likely lead to emergency repairs, which must be funded through the State Architect's office via the emergency controlled maintenance fund. This approach will take emergency funds away from other projects, and serve as a band-aid approach when the entire building and its systems should be designed together to increase energy and operational efficiencies.