



Article

Creative Fundraising Through Campus Collaborations

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Abstract

Many libraries have traditionally failed to consider unorthodox sources of funding, especially for collection building. Because of resource limitations, librarians are now beginning to work on acquisition projects with non-library entities. This paper examines a number of innovative collaborations on a university campus that yielded substantial collection development monies for a Library Media Department at the University of Maryland.

Introduction

During periods of budget cuts and consolidation, librarians must consider all means of outreach and fundraising. Despite reductions in collection funds, user expectations for new materials remain high. In this article, I describe my experience while head of the Library Media Department of the Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) in forging a number of partnerships that brought in substantial collection funds. As a result of these efforts, circulation of media rose nearly 1,000% during my six and one-half year tenure (2003 - 2010). Holdings increased from fewer than 100 DVDs to more than 5,000 and from 2,400 CDs to more than 7,000.

Prior to embarking on creative fundraising, media never accounted for more than 6% of the library's circulation; by 2007 it sometimes accounted for more than half.

While my experience was specific to a media collection, the ideas described below can be applied to any library collection, including serials, archives, reference, or circulating books. The library is a natural repository for items, with the infrastructure to support circulation and controlled access. Libraries are also known commodities, since most cities and college campuses have them. As such, libraries are in a unique position to be the primary place on campus where patrons come for materials. Holdings are in a centralized catalog, and hours of access are generally better than other campus repositories. These facts are selling points when speaking with potential campus collaborators.

UMBC is a public research university located approximately six miles from downtown Baltimore. Nearly 13,000 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs. The library is a member of the University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions (USMAI), which includes all fourteen public universities in Maryland and two affiliated institutions. The UMBC library shares in the consortial USMAI catalog, and consortial borrowing of books is commonplace. Consortial loaning of media materials, however, is almost non-existent, with only one library loaning media to other institutions.

The UMBC Library Media Department, located within the Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, supports the media needs of all disciplines. Heavy users include faculty and students from Music, Visual Arts, English, American Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, Philosophy, History, and Modern Languages. Media only circulates to UMBC students, staff, and faculty, and all non-reserve items circulate for seven days. The department is open daily during the school year for a total of 66 hours per week.

Assessing the Situation and Reaching Out

When I arrived at UMBC in November 2003, I learned that the Library Media Department had no discretionary budget for collection development. All media purchases were made using academic department library allocations, so only faculty liaisons could select new media titles. The collection was primarily VHS, CDs, and uncataloged LPs. I chose to focus my efforts on digital media (DVDs and CDs), and quickly moved to create open stacks. I put together a discretionary budget proposal for the Library Media Department, and the library allotted \$5,000 annually for media items to be chosen by me, the department head. While these monies allowed me to begin building the collection, our needs were far greater than this amount would support. I immediately set out to find contributors outside of the library.

The most obvious potential donor, The Friends of the Library, was my first stop. This group had made a previous gift to the department, so additional monies were possible. Not only did they step forward and purchase a number of DVDs when I asked, they continued to purchase additional titles over the next several years.

Student Groups

I next approached the Student Government Association (SGA). I knew that they received student fees and enjoyed a substantial budget. Such organizations generally fund events, but unless students attend these events they do not see their fees at work. I met with the SGA President and proposed that the Association purchase DVDs of students' choosing for the collection. He was enthusiastic and took the idea to the SGA Senate. It passed legislation providing the Library Media Department \$1,000 for DVDs, and a committee of students was formed to choose titles. I worked with this committee, which selected a number of important films that made their way onto course reserve lists in the ensuing years. These donations included television programs and popular and award winning films. Most of the titles have circulated hundreds of times. The Library Media Department and SGA promoted the partnership through the student newspaper, displays in the library and student center, and student listservs. SGA was so pleased with the collaboration that it created a line item in its budget titled "Library DVD Program" and has given generously since 2004. In fact, it has increased funding several times, contributing \$2,500 during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years.

After several years of a successful partnership with the SGA, I received a phone call from a student from the University of Maryland, College Park. This student was aware of UMBC Library Media Department's collaboration with SGA and wanted to start a similar program at his institution. The undergraduate student government at College Park put together a proposal based on my SGA partnership and approached the Non-Print Media Library (the branch library at that campus that handles media formats). The program began in the fall of 2010, with the undergraduate student government at College Park donating approximately 1,000 DVDs to the Non-Print Media Library.

Building on the successful relationship established with SGA, the next step was to create a similar program with the Graduate Student Association (GSA). Its officers embraced the idea and contributed \$1,000 for DVDs in 2004. GSA also made the DVD program a line item in its budget, but after donating \$1,000 for four years, it lowered its annual gift to \$750. Most of GSA's selections related to world cinema, art house and cult classics.

As knowledge of the successful partnerships between the Library Media Department and students groups spread, I was approached by UMBC's Hillel, the Jewish campus organization. It wanted to contribute 40 DVDs to the collection to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the creation of Israel. The titles covered many genres, from musical performances to documentaries and features films from the Middle East.

It is difficult to precisely state the cumulative effect of these contributions over the years because many of the donations were used in instruction and placed on reserve. The recreational titles brought students in to the library, which led to teaching them how to search our catalog efficiently and manage their library accounts. It also engendered

awareness of programs and services that the library offered. Library administrators were pleased with the goodwill that was fostered by these collaborations.

Faculty and Campus Departments

Creating faculty interest in your collection can engender contributions. I began working closely with a History Department faculty member on building a collection of human rights films. He discovered a respected scholar's online list of human rights titles, and we decided to purchase as many of them as possible. Funding for the project was non-existent, so he recruited a faculty member from the Political Science Department and the Director of the Dresher Center for the Humanities as allies; they would solicit monies from their departments. Ultimately the Political Science Department, the History Department, and the Dresher Center for the Humanities contributed substantial funds, allowing us to purchase most of the titles we desired. We created finding aids for feature films and documentaries in both paper and web format for researchers, students, and instructors.

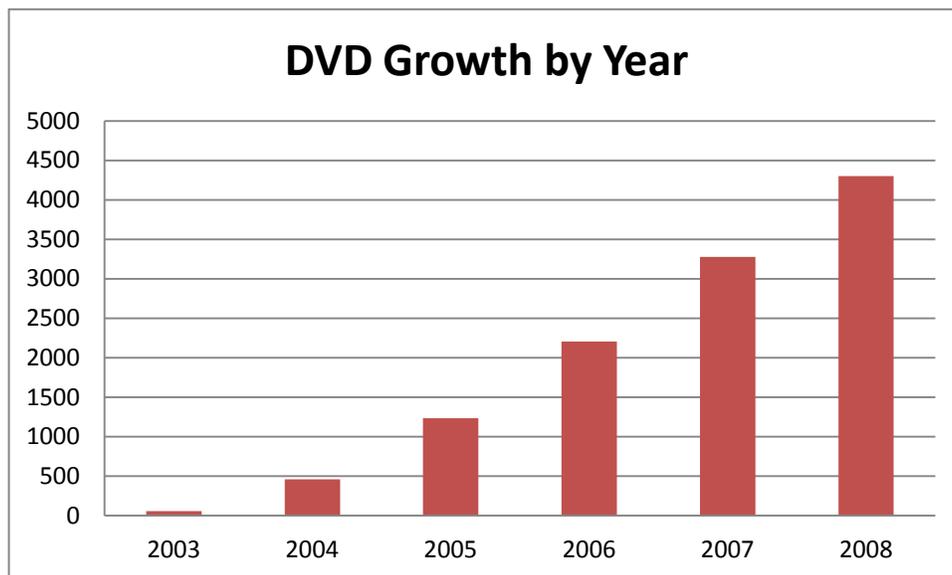
I also collaborated with a faculty member whose interest was international film. Once or twice per year he taught a seminar titled *Intercultural Film*, and as part of the First-Year Seminar Program he was entitled to grant funds to improve his course. He requested this grant every semester he taught the course and had the funds transferred to the library to purchase intercultural DVDs. While the grant amount was modest (between \$250 and \$500), the cumulative effect over five years is an outstanding collection of foreign films.

Like many universities, UMBC has media resources scattered throughout various departments and centers. I attempted to bring a number of these disparate media collections together. One such example was the Mosaic Intercultural Center, a unit of Student Life located in the student union. For years the center purchased media titles addressing cultural issues; however few knew of their existence. Realizing that their media would be more accessible in the Library Media Department, I convinced its administrator to give us their entire VHS and DVD collection. This occurred at the end of the fiscal year, and they also spent monies they needed to encumber on several thousand dollars of additional DVDs. The Mosaic donation included a number of expensive titles that ranged from \$200 to \$400, so while the number of items was low (under 50), the value was high. I produced a handout describing the Library Media Department and a sampling of our intercultural titles for distribution in the Mosaic Center.

Growth, Circulation, and Publicizing

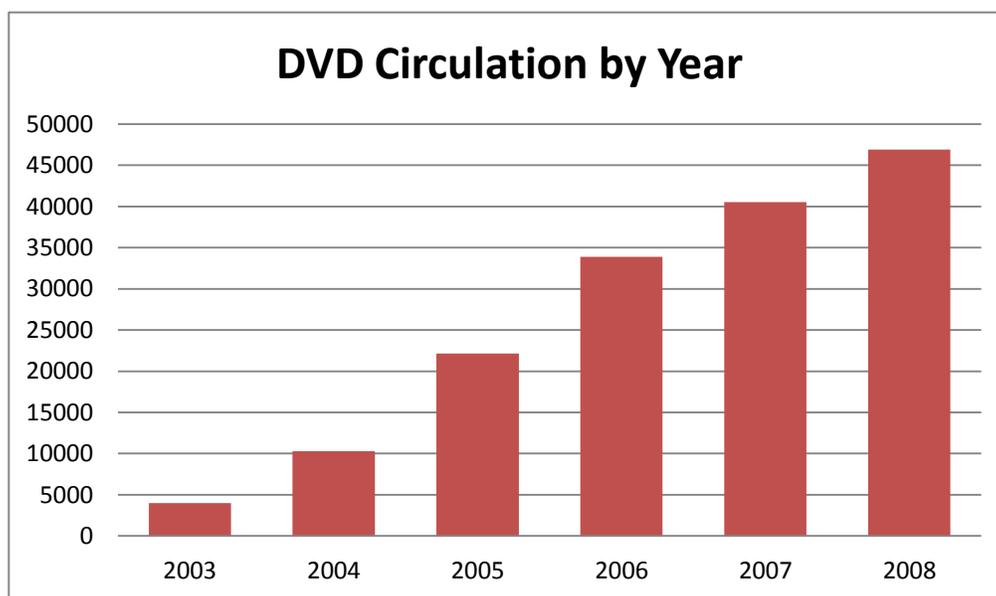
The DVD collection grew significantly beginning in 2004, in large part due to donations (see Figure 1). It was not uncommon for the Library Media Department to receive more donated monies in a given year than its collection allocation. This growth, combined with aggressive publicity and outreach, resulted in a circulation increase of nearly 1,000 percent during a six-year period (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. DVD Collection Growth by Year



Publicizing gifts is important not only to one's donors, but also to prospective donors. I used small round Avery labels to bookplate all media gifts. Since our collection was housed in open stacks, we strove to keep obtrusive labels on the cases to a minimum, so as not to obscure the cases. I was usually able to insert the graphic logo of the donor and text, which read: "this DVD donated by." Most students, staff, and faculty realized that many of the DVDs in the collection were donated. As a result, some contributed their gently used DVDs to the Library Media Department.

Figure 2. DVD Circulation by Year



Conclusions

Many librarians are not accustomed to approaching campus organizations for funding, but as budgets become tighter, it may become more commonplace. As head of the Library Media Department at UMBC, I identified needs in the collection, and when acquisition funds were not adequate, I looked for all possible collaborators. I sought out win/win scenarios that benefit not only both parties, but also the end users. I was pleasantly surprised by the willingness of non-library entities to provide the Library Media Department with collection funds.

Developing strong relationships is crucial to successful fundraising, and success breeds success. For example, my positive interactions with the Drescher Center for the Humanities during the human rights DVD initiative led to additional contributions of DVDs from the Center. Catering to faculty needs; building personal rapport; and discussing collections, programs, and needs laid the groundwork for successful collaborations.

Joe Clark is currently the Head of the Performing Arts Library at Kent State University.

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