

2023

Review of Fundraising for Impact

Meredith R. Evans Ph.D

National Archives and Records Administration, Carter Presidential Library and Museum,
drmeredithevans@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#), and the [Strategic Management Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Evans, Meredith R. Ph.D (2023) "Review of Fundraising for Impact," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*: Vol. 10, Article 13.

Available at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol10/iss1/13>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies by an authorized editor of EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. For more information, please contact elischolar@yale.edu.

Kathryn K. Matthew. *Fundraising for Impact in Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Making the Case to Government, Foundation, Corporate, and Individual Funders*. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Securing funding may feel like winning the lottery, but it is not as easy as turning in a ticket and collecting the winnings. Kathryn K. Matthew makes the case that you need to collect data, develop relationships, and expand and engage (or reengage) your network to effectively define and strengthen your argument for funding. Her book *Fundraising for Impact in Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Making the Case to Government, Foundation, Corporate, and Individual Funders* sits between a professional guide and a textbook. It combines theory and practical application that is helpful and understandable. However, it can be daunting, and one cannot avoid wondering if perennially underfunded, small community organizations will have the time or capacity to pursue these exercises.

The author clearly states in the introduction that she is using information from her interviews with over one hundred library, archive, and museum (LAM) practitioners from around the world. She highlights their strategies and use of community development, philanthropy, impact investing, and fundraising. Furthermore, she notes that she uses “vignettes” from some of her interviews in each chapter to emphasize prioritizing the work of cultural heritage institutions with communities and effectively securing funds. This book provides a roadmap of concepts and methods to maximize an organization’s potential, focusing on collecting data and providing examples on how such data can be used to seek funding. Matthew broadly defines fundraising as securing desired financial resources from different means to successfully establish institutional vision.

Nonetheless, this is not a traditional how-to book on fundraising. There is no “how to make an ask,” “how to write a grant,” or “how to seek funders.” Still, it does provide tools to collect information to identify the strengths of the organization and the types of potential partners that can lead to funding, whether that means securing a donor or new partner, successfully arguing for an increase in your department’s or organization’s budget, or writing a grant. The author has years of firsthand experience and expertise that gives this book credibility and weight: she is a Doctor of Design Distinguished Fellow at the College of Art and Design Administration, Louisiana State University, as well as the fifth director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Her understanding and care for LAMs and immense knowledge of cultural heritage institutions and fundraising strategies beyond grant writing is well articulated in this book.

The book is divided into two parts. The first half discusses the frameworks that help organizations identify strengths and weaknesses and the second half anecdotally shares how some organizations have used the data they gathered to promote their value, which then led to various pursuits that increased funding. Matthew spends the first chapter explaining an asset-based approach and then proposes five frameworks: power dynamics, community wellbeing, design thinking, outputs and outcomes, and collaboration. An asset-based approach in this book is meant to move past measuring quantity to focus on other entities of impact like relationships and network-building. The first framework, power dynamics, helps the LAM identify and constructively use and share power to reach a goal. The second framework, community wellbeing, focuses on the impact of social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions on the people the institution serves. The

third framework, design thinking, is an approach to address the LAM's existing and future user needs. The fourth framework, outputs and outcomes, identifies ways for the LAM to know the institution is having a positive or negative impact. Finally, collaboration, the fifth framework, seeks to identify methods and opportunities to work with different people and entities that benefit the LAM.

These frameworks are often used in community development to identify organizational impact and appeal for philanthropy. Matthew suggests that an institution can be sustained or transformed by using these frameworks in combination with asset-based practice. An asset-based approach, as defined by the author, focuses on the strengths of an organization. She convincingly argues that these assets are not just physical and financial resources such as property, admission sales, store inventory, endowments, and collections, but also the impact and use of technology and space, expertise, viable community networks, and diversity in thought and culture. She contends that this full range of assets can be quantified and evaluated, which she demonstrates, an approach that allows the reader to see the frameworks in action through examples of existing institutions. What is not articulated is how labor-intensive the process can be. One example comes from an interview with an employee from the Tehama County Library in California, which found success using multiple frameworks. Matthew notes that by using an asset-based approach and the design framework, the library staff were able to better understand the user experience. Using this new knowledge, they collaborated with the Social Security Administration, legal services, and a community college to offer new programs to address their constituents' wellbeing. Matthew acknowledges that it can be difficult to measure the full range of services and experiences provided by LAMs (such as teaching and learning, in-person and virtual assembly, websites, and digital exhibitions), let alone quantify the knowledge, expertise, and relationships embedded in the organization.

Implementation of the methods, customized to the needs and capabilities of individual organizations, will help organizational actors reconceptualize their "assets." Matthew uses an example from a museum in Sri Lanka that identified community assets which resulted in power-sharing to create a shared agenda leading to a new collecting initiative, among other things. Ideally, this asset-based method combined with a framework is intended to help the LAM make a better case for support or resources and might result in improved funding. The "practice" that organizations will need to bring to bear to actualize the work proposed is, as mentioned above, daunting and may exceed at first glance the capacity of smaller and midsize organizations. Still, regardless of immediate results in funding, the processes outlined can help any institution develop staff, think more strategically, and improve community relationships.

Chapter 9 on government-funded institutions, chapter 10 on aligning innovation, and chapter 11 on operations and risk management all focus on constraints to increasing funding. The author addresses structural confines like budget and staffing limitations, as well as weather implications, such as a natural disaster or flood caused by heavy rain. An example from one of these chapters is how the Slovak National Library consolidated resources to recognize and create new methods and programs to address community needs across the country. Throughout the book Matthew provides LAM examples using interview segments, diagrams, charts, and illustrations to uncover strategies gained from the framework and to document the results of data collection and research. She refers in each example to one or more of the frameworks and documents the results of conversation and

research. The final chapter focuses on change management and offers pointers to gauge organizational readiness. Matthew acknowledges that organizational culture can hinder or invoke positive change and again refers to techniques from other chapters that can be or have been used to align assets with operations.

Institutions often speak of reinventing themselves or gaining new audiences and donors, but just as often never truly understand the nature of their appeal and their existing constituencies. As society changes, the audiences, users, donors, and employees change, and invariably costs increase. Without complete case studies there is not enough information to provide detailed fundraising examples or successes, only how the frameworks enabled approaches that benefited a particular organization and its leadership. This technique works well considering the length of the book. She provides enough information about the interviewee for one to contact them or the organization listed to seek additional information and obtain more details. Throughout each chapter, the author links to the concepts of assets, communities, and the impact of working together for sustainability and success. By offering these frameworks and real-life supporting anecdotes, Matthew continues to bring attention to the inherent value of close attention to communities and stakeholders. Each chapter includes examples or commentary from diverse institutions around the world on their adaptation of one of the frameworks, their focus on asset-based methodology, and snapshots of their requests for funding and results. Real demonstrations of one of the frameworks and processes gives the book legitimacy and the reader confidence that they can do it too.

The book comes in multiple formats. The e-book includes a workbook containing tools for annotations, bookmarks, and even flashcards. It has a read-aloud feature and allows you the ability to change the font, which I highly recommend. This platform works best on a large monitor rather than a smaller or mobile device. Once you get the hang of them, these features become amazingly useful. *Fundraising for Impact in Libraries, Archives, and Museums* works as a useful manual for teams at LAMs, but perhaps even more, I hope it will find a place in the curricula of graduate programs focused on LAMs. After many years of attending conferences, presenting, teaching, and mentoring, I often hear from people that they want to fundraise but lack the training. This book is a great start for anyone in the LAM profession. It is a guidebook about this work holistically. It covers networking, collecting, synthesizing data, and articulating a functional role in communities that include a broad range of stakeholders and donors.

This book has been released at a time when many cultural heritage repositories are thinking and rethinking their value and ways to reengage past audiences and solicit new ones. For over two decades libraries, archives, and museums, like for-profit entities, have been shifting to e-books, digitization, and creating shared comfortable spaces to study, read, relax, or socialize. Have these changes furthered their mission of preserving and increasing the knowledge of cultural heritage or have they merely brought people inside? As the world endures and recoups from war, damaged economies, and widespread disease, we find ourselves fighting for funding even more than before. The biggest challenge cultural heritage institutions face is financial ruin, which would lead to the loss of historical material that helps us know who we are, why we exist, and how societies function over centuries. This book shows how these unique spaces for learning and enrichment can learn and apply frameworks that help organizations identify their value, impact, and stakeholders (known and unknown), and how to justify the need for more funding and resources.