

Collaborative Fundraising

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My husband has always wanted to write role-playing games. In fact he's been doing it for years but never really got much published or otherwise recognized until recently. You've all probably heard of *Dungeons and Dragons* (*D&D*) even if you've never played yourself. Well, living with a gamer has taught me that there is much more out there in the role-playing world than just *D&D*; there is a whole world of independent game publishers. In order to get their works published, these independent game designers have embraced the power of "crowdsourcing" in fundraising. I watched with awe during the entire fundraising process at how easily everything fell in to place and wondered how we could use some of the things he learned in libraries.

It always amazes me how much we share in libraries. Inter-Library Loan alone is huge and such an awesome resource to our patrons. It makes perfect sense, then, for us to use crowdsourcing (essentially sharing on a large scale) to assist in our fundraising efforts.

Crowdsourcing Fundraising

When my husband starts a new project, he and his team set up a page on Kickstarter.com (<http://kickstarter.com>) to encourage their future customers to invest in the game. Kickstarter is just one of many crowdsource fundraising sites out there with a focus on creative projects. That means it might not be the tool for raising money for a new library roof, but would be great for getting your community and worldwide support in helping fund a new program at the library.

The way these sites work is pretty simple. You sign up with an account for your library, write up some information about your project (new roof, new program, new computers, etc.) and publish it. Once your project is out there people can start donating to the cause. Some sites have

a specific focus (like Kickstarter), while others are meant for non-profits and charities such as Firstgiving (<http://firstgiving.com>) or Crowd-rise (<http://crowdrise.com>).

Both of these sites already have libraries and library projects listed as places you can donate to. Crowdrise has several libraries listed as charities (<http://crowdrise.com/search/charity-results/library>), but not many seem to have raised any funds using the site as of yet. Firstgiving also has several libraries listed as non-profits (<http://firstgiving.com/app/Search/all/Results?id=library&cat=n>), but it seems to be the specific library projects (<http://firstgiving.com/app/Search/all/Results?id=library&cat=pr>) that are getting the funding (not the libraries themselves).

The reason these projects are being overlooked isn't because they're uninteresting, it's because people aren't promoting them as they should. Going back to my husband's project as an example, if he didn't promote the fact that he was raising money for his new game on Twitter (<http://twitter.com>), Facebook (<http://facebook.com>) and on gaming message boards he would have never reached (and eventually surpassed) his funding goal.

It's always important to remember the power of social networks. These online tools are not just for seeing pictures of your new grandchild or family far away, they can be used to raise awareness and money for your library. Once you've set up your project on a fundraising site you need to let people know that you're out there. All you need is for one person to repeat your plea for help and then have their friends repeat them; before you know it, everyone in (and sometimes out of) your community knows that you're raising funds and is chipping in if possible.

