

Susan Motin

Reach out to your community through exhibits

Employing ALA partner grants as part of your academic library's marketing effort

During the summer of 2002, agreement was reached by the dean, staff, and librarians at St. Cloud State University Library that communication and marketing of our library's resources and services must be a strategic initiative for the coming academic year. With the luxury of some extra money left over from the previous year, a support person with a communication and/or marketing background would be hired. It was argued that to assist this person, a librarian should coordinate the effort and help the person wade through any possible bureaucracy that she or he might encounter on the campus. Since I was a very vocal proponent of having a librarian as coordinator, I found myself drafted but also volunteering to take on these responsibilities with some diminution of my other duties. Realizing that I needed to learn more about marketing, I was excited that a preconference course on marketing an academic library was being offered at ACRL's 11th National Conference in Charlotte. I signed up to attend. After completing the workshop, I came back to my own academic library with a great deal of inspiration and enthusiasm.

The planets must have been in perfect alignment or, perhaps just fortuitously, opportunities began to arise that would begin the process of our library's journey toward marketing and better communication to our patrons. One of the most exciting opportunities arose when a library staff member and the library's grant writer submitted a proposal for "Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend," a national traveling exhibition

organized by ALA's Public Programs Office (PPO) along with the Newberry Library's Center for Renaissance Studies. The exhibit was based on the 2003 exhibition by the same name at the Newberry Library to commemorate the reign of Queen Elizabeth I on the 400th anniversary of her death. Fortunately, our library, the James W. Miller Learning Resources and Technology Services (LRTS) was one of the libraries awarded the grant.

For those who may not be familiar with these grants, ALA has been working for a number of years with a variety of partners to create and fund traveling exhibits and book series discussions.¹ Some of their partners have included the National Endowment for the Humanities, NextBook, the New-York Historical Society, and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. The PPO's site announces new grants, gives you advice on how to write a competitive application, and has information on how to subscribe to its electronic discussion list, pubprgms@ala.org. As stated on the site, this discussion list is where the new grants are first announced. You should return to this Web site fairly regularly, as it is updated continually.

Achieving support

After having the privilege of being awarded these grants, here are several ideas and

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practical suggestions that your library may wish to consider as your library begins an application process. First, and most importantly, it is vital that not only your library administration support your initiative, but also your college or university administration. To achieve their support, it is necessary to effectively demonstrate how these grants can be of great value to your institution, even though the grants are not monetarily large. Their support can increase your resources both in personnel within your institution and also with money to fund publications and events.

Here are some suggestions that we employed that were persuasive for our university's administration. It was advantageous that our administrators were aware of the commitment of the LRTS staff to marketing and outreach. This had already been evidenced in the LRTS's actions for the Isaac Bashevis Singer grant. The Isaac Bashevis Singer grant had been received after the Elizabeth I grant, but the programming was completed even before the Elizabeth I grant would arrive on campus. Administrators were able to see what could be accomplished with an even longer time for planning.

The university was putting a great deal of effort into enlarging our first-year experience and honors programs. It was suggested that, by using the Elizabeth I exhibit as a focus for one or more of these programs, a number of unique events and experiences would interest our faculty in pursuing the creation of a first-year experience or a number of classes in our honors program. Another idea we proposed to the administration was working with the local K-12 schools to have teachers use the exhibit in their teaching and then bring their students to see the exhibit or attend any of the events. We also pitched to the administrators the possibility of involving local area businesses as sponsors for individual events and the possibility of having area arts institutions participate, including the Guthrie Theater, located in Minneapo-

lis. The university was fortunate to have a number of enlightened administrators who saw the advantages for our students, faculty, and surrounding communities. They not only were supportive but they offered vocal support across campus for the grant and also added a substantial amount of money for various events.

Form a committee

Another suggestion, to help market the university in its use of grants, is to form a committee. Although committees in general are not always looked upon favorably, it was valuable to have input from a variety of constituents from across the campus. This is also a way to create or strengthen librarians' professional relationships with their teaching faculty, an issue which appears with frequency in the library literature.

A call was issued for committee members both within the library and also to faculty and staff from across the campus. Certain faculty and staff were also directly contacted from particular departments, including history, music, English, political science, theatre, and human relations. Other staff was also directly invited to participate, including the director of the Women's Center and the director of the student union.

As part of the requirements for completion of the grant, several events must be planned and advertised around the subject matter of the grant. Since our library was not going to receive the Elizabeth I grant until Fall 2006, the committee had the advantage of having two years of planning time.

At the first few meetings, ideas were brought forth and a commitment to use this grant opportunity as a means to market our library emerged as a means to draw library campus and community members into the library. Eventually, a number of ideas and events were agreed upon for the committee to pursue.

While not all of the ideas came to fruition, some of the more traditional ideas that

were finally included were four lectures on a variety of issues surrounding Elizabeth I and the Elizabethan Age, presented by St. Cloud State University professors from the History, English, and Philosophy departments and a book talk and discussion led by an emeriti professor on the book *The Leadership Secrets of Elizabeth I*, by Shaun O'L. Higgins and Pamela Gilberd. In addition to these events, faculty offered courses that related to Elizabeth I themes.

Student involvement

Another group of ideas came from the committee's commitment to encourage our students to become involved in the planning and to actively participate in as many events as possible. Several positive examples of student involvement included students dressing in Renaissance costume during the Elizabeth I birthday celebration, working with the student-run university's programming board to show a film relating

to Elizabeth I during the time the exhibit was in the library, and the St. Cloud State University Department of Theatre, Film Studies and Dance production of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet."

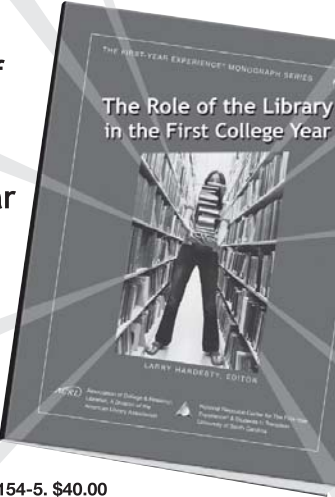
Some unexpected, but positive, student involvement came from the St. Cloud State University American Indian Center and Multicultural Resource Centers' advisory boards. Both centers' advisory boards have a significant student membership. As the committee was alerting the university community that the Elizabeth I grant would be coming to the campus and inviting participation, a number of students and faculty from the centers were concerned about one of the exhibit themes, "Europe and America." Because of the concern shown, another interesting event became a reality, a lecture from an expert on America and Native Americans at the time of Elizabeth I.

The committee members from across the campus were enthusiastic about trying to take advantage of the grant to create new and different partners. One event which was planned that did not exactly work out, was to bring a Shakespearean production from the Guthrie Theater. Unfortunately, at the time, the Guthrie Theater was moving to a newly constructed facility, and they realized that it would be extremely difficult to be able to perform. An alternative plan was proposed and was accepted by them. The proposal was that the Guthrie Theater would create a display of Elizabethan costumes created in their costume shop and their costume curator would give a lecture on Elizabethan costumes. This alternative event also was a success.

As further encouragement to include community participation, the city park next to the library was used during the university's family weekend to hold an all-day event. The event was a group of Renaissance performers, Have Court Will Travel, which was contracted to present "A Day in Queen Elizabeth's England," which included presentations on courtly manners,

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royal weaponry, and other related activities that would appeal to all age groups.

As the final requirement for the grant, the project coordinator/principal investigator is required to write a report giving information on the events and number of people attending these events and enclose copies of any publications created for the exhibit and any newspaper articles written about the exhibit or events. This report not only fulfills the grant requirement, but it also allows your library staff to evaluate the effectiveness of some of your programs and marketing efforts.

From a marketing perspective, the report can be used to guide future marketing efforts. Several questions can assist in this effort: Were the evaluations from participants favorable? Did you reach your target audiences? and Did you raise your patron's awareness of your library and the resources available to them through the library? It would also be worthwhile to bring your committee back for a debriefing meeting to discuss their feedback, their students' feedback, and whether applying for this

type of grant in the future would offer value to them as faculty, to their students, and to the community.

Since the Elizabeth I initial grant, three additional grants have been awarded to LRTS, including grants related to Isaac Bashevis Singer "Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature" and "Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America." The Isaac Bashevis Singer grant has been completed and the Elizabeth I and "Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature" were completed at the end of 2006. From these grant experiences, a possible first-year experience and/or honors courses are being explored and a campuswide committee is being formed to emulate and improve events and other marketing efforts for the upcoming Alexander Hamilton traveling exhibit that will be in the LRTS in fall 2007.

Note

1. If you are interested in applying for these grants, you should go ALA's PPO Web site at www.ala.org/ala/ppo/publicprograms.htm. *zc*

("Awards" continued from page 304)

special collections celebrates the recent acquisition of the Robert A. Wilson Ezra Pound Collection," said Reed. "Modestly illustrated with titles and pages from modernist publications, the volume provides a well-rounded discussion of Pound's singular production and his impressive circle of friends and contacts."

In Division Four (brochures), the winner is the Getty Research Institute brochure entitled "A Tunultuous Assembly: Visual Poems of the Italian Futurists."

Reed noted, "The tabloid format of Futurist manifestos used for this brochure reproduces the 'words-in-freedom' of the original avant-garde publications featured in the exhibition, pairing the images of the works and helpful translations with a thoughtfully written text on the history and context of Italian Futurist production."

In Division Five (electronic exhibition), the winner is the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at the Cornell University Library for "Vanished Worlds, Enduring People: Cornell University's Native American Collection," nac.library.cornell.edu/exhibition/introduction/.

"Utilizing Cornell's well-designed template to present a clear and readable overview of the exhibition design and principal objects, the electronic resource provides more than a catalog's worth of information and images attractively and effectively," said Reed. "The exhibition and its electronic version herald the transfer of the Huntington Free Library's Native American Collection to Cornell University in 2004."

Certificates will be presented to each winner during the RBMS Program at the ALA Annual Conference, June 24. *zc*