

An Analysis of Fundraising Strategies in Local Maritime History Museums

Matthew McCallum

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Committee:

Dr. Jessica Luke

Wilson O'Donnell

Laura Phillips

Anna O'Donnell

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Matthew McCallum

University of Washington

Abstract

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Matthew Clement McCallum

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Senior Lecturer, Jessica Luke, PhD
Museology

Fundraising is an essential part of non-profit organizations like museums. Despite the vast literature that discusses fundraising strategies, there is no literature showing how fundraising strategies are used in maritime history museums. This study focuses on three maritime museums, the Columbia River Maritime Museum, Harbor History Museum and Northwest Maritime Center, to discover themes that may go beyond the broad fundraising literature and give maritime museums more specific data on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with their fundraising strategies. Results identified themes including assets in the form of local stories and history, as well as potential business-related ventures; issues related to staffing; and needs focused on donor acquisition, donor retention and community engagement. Overall this study showed that the key strategies identified in fundraising best practices literature is represented in the three museums used in this study. Furthermore, this study provides a resource specific to maritime museums that can aid in how maritime museums approach fundraising.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Fundraising in museums is a necessity that fuels everything from public programs and education to collections management and the overall impact museums have on their respective communities. In order to keep enough money in the coffers to pay for the operating expenses museums incur, development professionals use a variety of fundraising strategies that are often based on the best practices and successes that other museums and nonprofits have experienced. There are numerous books and articles giving advice on how to fundraise as a non-profit organization, there are plenty of case studies showing how specific non-profits approach fundraising, and there are even a few books and articles dedicated to showing how museums can effectively fundraise.

Amongst all that literature, there is nothing that shows how maritime history museums, as a subgroup of typically small museums, deal with fundraising. The lack of literature specific to maritime museums presents the need to identify how maritime museums are fundraising. Research is needed that looks at what strategies maritime museums use to fundraise, and the strengths and weaknesses of those strategies. This research study addresses this need. The study is designed to understand what fundraising strategies maritime museums use, why they are using those strategies, and if the fundraising strategies maritime museums use align with the broader nonprofit fundraising literature. This research also identifies themes in the strengths and weaknesses of those fundraising strategies, which can then be used by the maritime museum community to make more informed decisions about how they choose to fundraise.

Specifically, the goal of this research study is to identify and describe the current fundraising strategies of three local maritime museums. The study is guided by three research questions:

- What are the fundraising strategies used by local maritime history museums?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with those fundraising strategies?
- What changes are local maritime museums making in their fundraising strategies?

By compiling and analyzing these data, a better picture will emerge of how generalized fundraising literature applies to maritime museums. This study will help maritime history museums make more informed fundraising decisions based on data collected from their peers in maritime museums.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature that is relevant to this study centers around three areas: 1) nonprofit fundraising strategies; 2) fundraising in museums, and case studies for specific museums; and 3) fundraising in maritime museums. Looking at these three areas of literature paints a picture of the best practices in fundraising, how museums are using those best practices to address their fundraising issues, and how specific museums struggle at times to adequately raise funds. The literature, however, will also show that much of the discussion about nonprofit fundraising revolves around mid- to large-sized institutions, with little that applies to small museums, and more specifically to local maritime museums.

Non-Profit Fundraising Strategies

Fundraising in general is such a broad topic that there are hundreds of books, articles, and even blogs that suggest different fundraising strategies non-profits can use to fundraise. Most useful for this study is an examination of the best practices used in fundraising. One book that outlines current best practices, and one that has received rave reviews from fundraising professionals, is Johnson's (2011) *The Eight Principles of Sustainable Fundraising*. In this book, Johnson outlines eight key areas that nonprofit organizations should address in order to not only be successful at fundraising, but to sustain that success. Johnson's eight principles are based on the current fundraising idea that cultivating relationships is the most effective way to acquire and retain donors in a nonprofit organization. This idea of relationship building is a theme that is prevalent in

numerous books and articles on fundraising such as Burke's (2003) *Donor-Centered Fundraising*. Burke's book is the product of six years of research on fundraising that involved interviewing 267 nonprofit organizations.

The first principle discussed by Johnson (2011) is “[d]onors are the drivers” (p. 21). Johnson discusses how nonprofits need to identify donors' values, and how reciprocation is necessary for successful fundraising. This principle focuses on the idea that “people give to people” (pp. 21), and that donors need to be treated as people not simply as money sources: “Donors want to be engaged, not enticed” (p. 24). He explains that oftentimes nonprofits approach donors through a trial and error process that is only marginally effective. In order to raise capacity (increase the overall number of donors), nonprofits must learn about their donors first. One example Johnson gives is discussing in-kind contributions with donors and how reciprocation would work with an in-kind gift. Furthermore, when an individual does give a gift, nonprofits need to make sure they recognize those gifts properly. Burke (2003) makes a similar argument in her book stating that,

“[s]tatistics are vital in fundraising, but fundraising is not just a numbers game. Heavy focus in the development industry on volume of donors and dollars raised is often at the expense of creating relationships with the very people that fundraising programs are trying to capture and keep” (p. 36).

The second principle Johnson (2011) describes is “[b]egin at the beginning” (p. 41). The goal here is for organizations to obtain self-knowledge and translate their mission to the prospective donor. Johnson explains that nonprofits need an effective mission statement, and need to be able to articulate that mission statement to donors. Specifically, he outlines that nonprofits should try to explain to individual donors “why this, why now, why us” (p. 44).

Currently, the emphasis in the field of fundraising seems to focus heavily on individual donors and donor retention. Reddrick (2012) states that “[i]ndividual donors are a vital component to every nonprofit’s fiscal survival and health.” She goes on to cite data from *Giving USA 2010*, which estimates “individual contributions to charitable causes in this country account for 73 percent of all charitable giving, while foundation giving accounts for just 14 percent of such giving” (para. 6).. In order to tap into those individual donors, Johnson suggests with this principle the need for nonprofits to distinguish their needs from others. Burke (2003) reiterates the need to articulate and communicate with donors, because her research has shown that donors want to know about the organization they are giving to and how their gift is helping, “[c]ommunication is the process by which information is delivered. Fundraising under-performance, therefore, is actually a failure to communicate” (p. 53).

The third principle highlighted by Johnson (2011) is “[l]eadership leads” (p. 54). Essentially this principle explains that nonprofits need a strong board that is specifically designed to fundraise. In regards to the role boards play in nonprofits, Johnson states,

“Many times, boards would rather involve themselves in the operations of the organization rather than in advocacy, fundraising or policy. If this is the comfort zone of some of your board members, you probably need to consider inviting these individuals to serve in an area where operations need help—and not on the board” (p. 56).

The role of boards is further supported by Burke (2003), in an interview done for her book, in which a donor stated that “[m]embers of the Board are the key personal link – the link that makes it easier to give and give a lot more. In conjunction with senior staff they are vital in delivering essential information to donors” (p. 547). Furthermore, her interviews with nonprofit professionals shed light on how important they felt board

member participation is in the fundraising process. One interviewee stated, “[a] board member’s main role should be to contact donors and build relationships. They don’t necessarily have to ask for money. Properly developed relationships will look after that” (Burke, 2003, p. 237).

Johnson’s (2011) fourth fundraising principle addresses donor acquisition in nonprofits. The fourth principle is to “[l]earn and plan” (p. 71). He explains that a charity’s mission has already determined who will give, and that because of this a nonprofit can identify those individuals, plan accordingly, and build those relationships. To do this, Johnson further explains that nonprofits should understand why their donors give, because most donations are giving with purpose. Johnson states the importance of making that connection by saying “[w]hen there is little or no connection with the basic values of the donors there is weak philanthropic intent and little or no loyalty” (p. 78). Understanding why donors are giving allows nonprofits the ability to report back to those donors as to the desired effect their donation has had.

The importance of understanding why people give and reporting to those people accordingly is supported by Burke (2003), who discovered that “46% of donors stop giving to a charity for reasons related to a lack of meaningful information” (p. 39). Once again, there is nothing showing if maritime museums subscribe to this idea of understanding why donors give or if how they go about reporting back to their donors.

The fifth principle Johnson (2011) describes in his book, is “[work from the inside out” (p. 84). This principle is essentially making the argument that staff giving is important for sustainable fundraising. The reasoning here is that “[b]y starting from the inside, [nonprofits] are more likely to build relationships with new supporters as the

network of influence grows” (p.84). Lynne T. Dean a consultant for Custom Development Solutions Inc., a nonprofit fundraising consulting firm, discussed in an online article the importance of employee giving. She told a story of a successful solicitation of a banker in which the banker stated, “One of the most important things you said during the presentation was that 100 percent of the employees in the organization have contributed to the campaign. That speaks well of the organization and of the campaign” (Dean, 2013, para. 1).

Johnson’s (2011) sixth principle addresses several fundraising best practices, and is titled, “[d]ivide and grow” (p. 101). This principle is made up of what Johnson calls “the four building blocks for engaging donors” (p. 101). Those four building blocks are donor acquisition, donor retention, moving donors up a donor pyramid, and coordinating efforts. The first two building blocks have been discussed in the previous principles and will be revisited in later principles. The third building block, the donor pyramid, is a common way of referring to the lifecycle of philanthropic giving. One explanation of the donor pyramid and its importance can be found in Hughes’ (1996) *Sweet Charity: The Role and Workings of Voluntary Organizations*, a book that exhibits a collection of writings by fundraising professionals:

“80 per cent of funds raised will come from 20 per cent of donors. Over time, fewer donors stay with a charity but the size of their donations increases. They also sign up for more tax-efficient giving through covenants and, ultimately a legacy. Research to identify and cultivate these key donors thus becomes crucial to the charity’s fundraising success” (p. 179).

Hughes’s quote is further reflected in Johnsons book, as he describes the need within this principle to use strategies like a major gifts program and a planned giving program (legacy giving) that allow for multiple types of donations at the upper end of the donor

pyramid. The coordinated approach building block refers to nonprofits needing to have a donor database and proper management of that database. The idea here is to keep detailed records of donor information like addresses for mailings and gift recognition, as well as proper documentation of individual donor activity. These are essential for keeping track of where donors are on the donor pyramid, and for accomplishing the highest levels of stewardship possible. Johnson describes stewardships as “fundraising-speak for those activities that are related to meaningful communication, appreciation and recognition of [an] organization’s donors” (p. 105). Burke (2003) also discusses the importance of stewardship and a coordinated approach including recognition by saying that

“[w]hat happens between the first gift and second ask, makes or breaks the relationship and determines real fundraising potential. And, since an investment of 70% to 100% or more of the value of the donor’s first gift is made in simply acquiring her, there is a lot riding on the choices that not for profits make concerning post-gift communication” (p. 42).

The seventh principle in Johnson’s (2011) book is “[r]enew and refresh” (p. 127). Another way to put this, in context of the other principles, would be retain and acquire donors. This may seem a little redundant with the other principles, as retention and acquisition are both highlighted in the other principles. This principle, however, goes into more detail about the strategies nonprofits can use to maximize both of these essential areas and why they are important. In order to acquire new donors, Johnson describes using strategies like membership and networking. He explains the importance of donor requisition by stating that “[a]dding new donors keeps the value based lifeblood of your organization flowing” (p. 134-35). He goes on to explain that once you acquire that new flow of donors, in order to keep them as donors, organizations need to acknowledge gifts, show how they are using funds, and show the results or outcomes of those funds. This is

important, because Johnson describes that many nonprofits do not do both acquisition and retention in tandem. He explains,

“Organizations that are consumed with acquiring new donors devote very little attention to keeping them once they arrive. Once donors are lost, it is very difficult to return them to the fold. This tactic ends up churning donors, all giving at merely entry levels with donors going out the back door almost as fast as they come in the front” (p. 130).

It has already been shown that Burke (2003) agrees with the importance of donor acquisition and retention, but this sentiment is the topic of a myriad of nonprofit fundraising articles, and its importance to nonprofit fundraising appears to be significant. In a study by Sargeant and Hartsook (2008), it was determined through an analysis of database records that,

“[e]ven small improvements in the level of [retention] can generate significantly larger improvements in the lifetime value of the fundraising database. A 10% improvement in [retention] can yield up to a 200% increase in projected value, as significantly more donors upgrade their giving, give multiple ways, recommend others and ultimately perhaps, pledge a planned gift to the organization” (p. 2).

The eighth and final principle Johnson (2011) talks about is, “[i]nvest, integrate and evaluate” (p. 141). This principle explains the need to have well directed resources, consistency, and have a plan that includes evaluation and measures of success. Specifically this principle takes an in-depth approach to how nonprofits should evaluate and manage their fundraising budgets. Johnson suggests looking at fundraising expenditures and the resulting contributions as a measure for effectiveness. Johnson says, “Although no organization perfectly mirrors the ‘norm,’ seeing how your organization compares nationally should generate some hard questions and perhaps facilitate a more comprehensive review of cost and benefit for your fundraising programs” (p. 144). Johnson goes further, however, to say that donated money is not always the best measure,

because the business cycle of nonprofits is around three to five years. Instead, Johnson suggests that nonprofits measure success based on the eight principles in his book. Each principle is given a score one through three, one being “starting,” two meaning “in progress,” and three meaning “totally there” (p.150). This measurement system, however, assumes that nonprofits are attempting to change or are currently following these eight principles.

Fundraising In Museums

Narrowing the scope of the literature, the best practices for nonprofit fundraising are also represented in literature looking more specifically at museums, though not in as great of frequency. One example of a comprehensive and museum-specific fundraising source is Cilella Jr.’s (2011) *Fundraising For Small Museums: In Good Times and Bad*. His book echoes many of the eight principles highlighted by Johnson (2011) and Burke (2003). Cilella begins by discussing the donor pyramid, or the giving pyramid as it referred to in his book, and like Johnson believes that fundraising between individuals and relating the mission to those individuals is a key to fundraising. He believes that museums need to be aware of the donor’s needs, ways in which the museum can meet those needs, the donor’s interest in the museum, and ways in which the museum can enhance that interest.

Cilella expresses the same opinions as the nonprofit best practices literature in other areas as well. Throughout his book he discusses the importance of mission saying, “[all] fundraising must be mission driven. You are wasting your two most important precious resources—time and money—if you do not tie your fundraising to the mission. Allow no fundraising in your museum if it is not mission driven” (Chapter 2, para. 10).

He also discusses the importance of acquisition and retention of donors, two of the key fundraising goals mentioned frequently in Johnson's eight principles. As with the broader nonprofit literature, Cilella believes that museums should focus on identifying potential new donors, make a connection with those donors, understand why they give, and recognize those gifts. Unlike Johnson's work, Cilella dives into specific reasons why museum donors might give, with reasons ranging from having related personal experiences to guilt. Overall, however, the concepts remain consistent with the nonprofit literature, and contain key points throughout the book that align with nonprofit best practices. When discussing best practices for donor acquisition and retention for example Cilella (2011) writes, "solicitation must always be preceded by a healthy dose of cultivation and followed by an equally robust serving of recognition. But it is not a once-and-done exercise. It means keeping those donors close to the family as long as possible" (Chapter 3. Para. 17)..

Also mirroring the broad nonprofit literature is the idea of having a strong fundraising board. Cilella (2011) cites research from multiple sources showing that "requiring board members to personally give is slowly becoming the norm" (Chapter 1, Section 3, para. 6). He goes on to explain that expectations need to be made clear to board members early and often. He states, "I have seen new trustees come on board with little or no knowledge of what is expected of them by staff and current trustees" (Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 6).

The best practices from the nonprofit literature and their application in museum fundraising literature is further strengthened by case studies of specific museums. An example of one such case study, published online by the Cherokee Preservation

Foundation,(2014), looks at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian and their problems with trying to solicit individual gifts within their community. The case study makes it clear that the museum's biggest concern in regards to fundraising was getting local donations when the local Cherokee population did not have a culture of giving to non-profit organizations. Their response was to hire fundraising staff capable of elevating giving by providing the bandwidth to properly research potential donors, cultivate relationships with donors, and properly recognize gifts. They also focused on building a board of directors that would lead by example of 100% participation in giving to the organization, as well as bring in gifts.

Maritime Museums

Most of the museum fundraising strategy research available does not relate directly to maritime museums. The most relevant source is a study by Dunlop (2011) of the Shultz & Williams development firm called *Finding the Money: Strategies and Tactics: Fundraising in the Real World*. This study analyzed the best way to raise money for a historic Naval Destroyer owned by Tin Can Sailors Inc. This case study laid out the plan that Shultz and Williams created for Tin Can Soldiers Inc. It walked them through the process of creating a diverse fundraising program in which revenue is generated through various strategies, most of which are consistent with strategies discussed in Cilella's book. It discussed down to the last detail how to build a nonprofit organization to fund the ship they were based around. This could be a great resource for up-and-coming maritime museums. The report mentions "Revenue not growing while expenses rise" and "not having a designated development department" (Dunlop, 2010, para1). . It is very clear the plan was designed based off of generalized fundraising best practices,

and tailored to the fundraising opportunities they identified through prospect research. This could certainly be a tool maritime museums could use to help develop an initial fundraising plan when they are first starting a museum, but it lacks relevance because this fundraising program is not for a museum, but instead designed for a single ship, and doesn't provide much that would be useful for a maritime museum that is already established. Furthermore the plan created by Dunlop is not articulated as being based off of what other maritime museums are currently doing, and has no follow up to show how effective the plan was. This report does a great job of reinforcing the fundraising best practices of nonprofits and museums, but says nothing about what established maritime museums are doing.

Also relevant is a doctoral dissertation, titled *Save Our Ships: The Viability of Naval Vessels as Museum Exhibitions*, by Seth Weiner (2012). Weiner's dissertation looks at case studies of museums that are struggling to raise funds for large ships they have in their collections. In his study, the New Jersey Naval Museum (NJNM) is in danger of closing its doors due to a lack of fundraising and thus a lack of funds. Weiner identifies specific faults such as organizational structure, lack of proper preservation of boats that sit in the water year round, and a lack of resources as the primary causes for the NJNM's problems. He also acknowledges, however, that "the increased need for conservation of objects exposed to elemental deterioration has resulted in increased costs to the institution's conservation budget," and that the number of visitors is affected as "display of large exhibits outdoors has also heavily affected visitor traffic in that it subjects incoming visitors to the whims of Mother Nature"(pp. 52). He goes on to specifically discuss the fundraising situation at the NJNM saying that, "The challenge for

these institutions is to find a solution that will allow them to reach maximum numbers of new potential donors, while utilizing the least amount of resources” (p. 72). In other words the museum is having a difficult time with donor acquisition. Furthermore, Weiner details the fundraising strategies the NJNM implemented via his recommendation to address their attempts to raise revenue for operations. His strategy consisted of utilizing a mailing campaign, which was a strategy that was present in Salvatore Cilella’s book, but his plan was not articulated with any template or model in mind, or how it would be sustainable over the long term. This is important, because Cilella (2011) and Burke (2003) both question the effectiveness of such a strategy, because it is hard to cultivate long-term relationships with individuals through mail appeals to people who have not previously given to a nonprofit organization, Wiener blames the failure of his fundraising program on a lack of trained museum professionals, but there was clearly never a fundraising plan based off of a similar museum’s fundraising strategy or even nonprofit best practices.

Weiner’s case study is a great example of the need for a study that analyzes multiple local maritime history museums. The lack of literature exploring how maritime history museums fundraise, and how maritime museums implement the best practices that are detailed in the vast amounts of nonprofit fundraising literature, would have undoubtedly been a valuable resource for the NJNM who clearly was lacking information on the best practices of fundraising and how they apply to maritime museums.

Summary

Whether a local maritime museum is trying to develop a successful fundraising program, trying to revamp the fundraising program they have, or make changes to an

existing program, their research is limited to fundraising best practice literature that does not explicitly relate itself to maritime museums. They can scour the hundreds of books on fundraising theory and best practices, they can look at what non-maritime museums are doing in fundraising, or they can look at specific case studies that do not directly address the how local maritime museums currently are approaching fundraising. There are case studies that cover museums and ships that have similar missions and collections, but there is no study that analyzes fundraising best practices across multiple local maritime history museums. This study seeks to begin to fill that gap in literature, looking across multiple maritime museums for a more comprehensive look at fundraising than a one-dimensional single museum case study can provide.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this research study was to identify and describe the fundraising strategies used by local maritime history museums. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the fundraising strategies used by local maritime history museums?
2. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with those fundraising strategies?
3. What changes are local maritime museums making in their fundraising strategies?

This chapter will address the methods used in this study, how they were chosen and how they were implemented, as well as the study sample. It will also discuss limitations encountered during the research process.

Sampling

Three maritime museums were selected for inclusion in this study, including The Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria, Oregon, the Harbor History Museum in Gig Harbor, Washington, and the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend, Washington. To be eligible for participation, museums needed to meet the following criteria:

1. Located in the Pacific Northwest;
2. A mission that focuses on maritime history specific to their local geographic location;
3. Wet collections and or boat care/building; and
4. An operational budget of between \$500,000 and \$3,000,000 dollars.

Using these criteria, the researcher identified a total of eight eligible maritime museums. This list was created by asking three museum professionals with experience in maritime subject matter and museums to identify the best candidates based on the provided criteria. All eight museums selected as research candidates were solicited for participation through email (see Appendix A), and were followed up with a phone call if there was no reply to the initial email for participation. The decision of who to contact at each museum was determined by looking at staff lists online, and identifying the staff member who was most likely to be most closely involved in the museum's fundraising efforts. Of the eight museums asked, three agreed to participate.

Methods

Semi-structured, in-person interviews were conducted with fundraising professionals at maritime history museums. Interviews consisted of questions designed to illicit both qualitative and quantitative data, asking about each museum's fundraising strategies, the strengths weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with those strategies, and the changes they are making to them (see Appendix B for the interview guide).

Data Collection

Following acceptance from participants, interviews were scheduled. In March and April 2014, the researcher conducted in-person interviews with all three participants. All interviews were conducted at the museum. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes in length, and were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Handwritten notes were taken during the interview as well.

The participants interviewed were Sam Johnson, Executive Director of the Columbia River Maritime Museum, Tami McDaniel, Deputy Director and former Development Director of the Harbor History Museum, and Jake Beattie, Executive Director of the Northwest Maritime Center. All three museum professionals interviewed have been fundraising or grant writing for at least 10 years. On top of their experience in the field of fundraising, all three museum professionals interviewed have held their current position for at least two years.

Data Analysis

The answers given to each interview question were organized based on which research question they were designed to address. Similar answers were grouped together and used to begin to develop themes across museums. First, tables were created using lists generated by the strategies identified by each museum professional. These lists were crosschecked for similarities and differences and the numerical data that corresponded with each strategy, when available, was made into a chart and also compared across the other museums. Next, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in the interviews were used to create an individual SWOT analysis of each museum's fundraising program. The interview answers were then organized based on the four distinct groups of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and four separate charts breaking down each category was created to look across the three museums. Themes were discovered when taking each SWOT category and identifying similar answers between each museum. Separately, Strengths were compared with weaknesses, and opportunities with threats, to identify areas where there may have been museums identifying the same fundraising strategy but under opposite SWOT categories. Lastly,

changes that were identified as being made or going to be made to the current fundraising strategies were grouped first based on their similarity with the changes presented by the other museums. Then, they were compared with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats so see if they were consistent with themes identified during that process.

Limitations

The biggest limitation was the criteria for selecting museums. Due to the very specific (geographic and financial) nature of the stipulations for participation, there were only so many museums that fell within those criteria. It would have definitely been possible to expand even the geographical criteria to include museums from the San Francisco bay area, the entire west coast, or even the east coast. It could have also been an option to alter the requirements for participation to include any northwest museum that has maritime subject matter. This would have included museums like MOHAI, the Nordic Heritage Museum, and several other museums thus increasing the sample population. It would have also been possible to look at the single boat museums that are becoming more popular in the Puget Sound. Boats like the Virginia V and the Arthur Foss, are independently curating their own boat and the history of their boat. All that being said, there is still merit in keeping the criteria as restrictive as it was. By keeping the participating museums as tightly linked via mission, finances, subject matter and geography, the relations between them are much stronger. The similarities across the three museums makes the information more relevant and possibly more useful in terms of how they look at their own fundraising. Broad statements about maritime museums in general cannot be made from this study, but the three museum involved now have a

resource that identifies similarities and differences across three museums that are a like in many ways.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Description of Case Study Museums

All three museums focus on the maritime history and industry of their local community. Two of the museums that participated in the study are located on the Puget Sound, and the third museum is located on the mouth of the Columbia River.

Columbia River Maritime Museum

The Columbia River Maritime Museum's mission, as found on their website, is

“to collect and preserve historical and cultural maritime material relevant to the Columbia River System and the waters of the North Pacific, and to display and interpret selected material from the collections for the education and enjoyment of the public” (*Mission*, n.d., para. 1).

This museum is located on the mouth of the Columbia River in Astoria, Oregon. Astoria is a rural community with a population under 9,527, as of the last census in 2012 (*State and County Quick Facts*, (2012.), pp. 1). Though the museum was founded in 1962, the current facility was expanded upon during a \$6 million dollar capital campaign that began in 2000. The Columbia River Maritime Museum is located in a small community, but of the three museums used for this study, this museum is the largest in terms of revenue and focuses heavily on exhibits and collections. In regards to the creation of their annual fundraising revenue goals, there is a system in place that is designed to create staff ownership and accountability. Each year the museum director sits down with the heads of each department in the museum and walks through a budget. They discuss the viability of that budget, and make cuts or additions designed to provide each department with the necessary resources while also managing realistic fundraising goals. The final fundraising goals are then represented as a compilation of those

individual department budgets. Overall the Executive Director is the primary fundraiser and develops an annual fundraising budget based on what he believes he can obtain through the various fundraising strategies he uses.

Harbor History Museum

The mission of the Harbor History Museum is “to create opportunities to experience the heritage of the greater Gig Harbor community. We do this by collecting, preserving and sharing this area’s history” (“*About: Our Mission*,” (n.d), para. 1). This museum, though near in proximity to a large metro community in Tacoma, is located in the relatively small community of Gig Harbor which had a population of 7,549 as of 2012 (“*State and County Quick Facts*,” (2012.), pp. 1). The museum was founded in 1967 and is located in a newly built facility, which is the product of a 10-year capital campaign (“*Harbor History Museum Overview*,” (n.d), para. 1). The Harbor History Museum achieves its mission through exhibits and programming that includes ship restoration demonstrations. This is the smallest museum of the three case studies in terms of revenue, but is also smaller in physical size. Similar to the Columbia River Maritime Museum, the fundraising goals are set based on the needs of individual departments within the museums. The Harbor History Museum, however, also have a fundraising committee consisting of key museum staff like the Executive Director and Deputy Director. This committee not only sets annual fundraising goals, but they are constantly assessing the museums fundraising in regards to more long-term fundraising goals. As will be displayed latter in this paper, on top of creating their annual fundraising budget based on departmental needs, they have set monetary goals beyond the current fiscal year.

Northwest Maritime Center

The mission of the Northwest Maritime Center is “to engage and educate people of all generations in traditional and contemporary maritime life, in a spirit of adventure and discovery” (“*About: Mission.*” (n.d.). para. 1). This museum is also located in what can be considered a rural community on the Puget Sound. Port Townsend, Washington has a population similar to Astoria, of 9,117 people in 2012 (“*State and County Quick Facts,*” (2012.), pp. 1). Founded in 1978, unlike the other two museums, the Northwest Maritime Center does not have what would typically be considered collections nor do they have an admission fee, although they still fit the criteria for this study, because they do have boats that they build/care for. Their annual Wooden Boat Festival was the original fundraising event for the center, and since then they have added a focus on education through programming. Currently, they provide programs like boat building classes, a 3D training simulator and youth programs out of their facility, which was completed in 2009. Of the three case study museums, the Northwest Maritime Center falls in the middle of the other two in terms of revenue as well as physical size. In regards to their fundraising budget planning, unlike the other two museums, the Northwest Maritime Center had a long-term five-year fundraising plan following a successful capital campaign that resulted in a new facility. Unfortunately, it became clear to the executive director and fundraising staff that the goals of that five-year plan were over ambitious and deemed unrealistic. As a result the five-year plan was scrapped and they now have a system very similar to the other museums in which the fundraising staff meet with the various departments in the museum annually to create an overall budget that is consistent with what they believe they can raise through their fundraising efforts. That being said

the Executive Director, Jake Beattie, did acknowledge that he would like to eventually create a long-term plan again that is more realistic and sustainable.

What are the fundraising strategies used by local maritime museums?

Columbia River Maritime Museum

The Columbia River Maritime Museum has a unique fundraising structure compared with the other two case study museums, in that they have very limited staff dedicated to fundraising activities. There is a Membership Coordinator and an Assistant Director of museum operations, but the lion's share of the fundraising, including one-on-one solicitations and grant writing, is done by the Director. The museum does not have an annual gala or auction designed to raise funds for the museum; instead, it relies upon the revenue sources articulated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Revenue sources of the Columbia River Maritime Museum, as reported by the Executive Director.

Admissions
 Store Sales
 Individual Giving/ Major Gifts:
 Annual Appeal
 Other letters/appeals
 One-on-one
 Grants: (None for operations)
 Special projects
 Education
 Curatorial
 Corporate Giving:
 One-on-one
 Shipping League¹
 Planned Gifts
 Facilities Rentals
 Program Fees
 Courses
 Unrelated Business Income:
 Patterson Nail Works²
 Chandlery³
 Library Fees
 Other

Looking specifically at the fundraising strategies on the list of overall revenue sources, Johnson identified one-on-one solicitation as the museum's most successful fundraising strategy:

¹ The Shipping League is a membership-based organization that will include individuals and businesses that are involved with the maritime community in Astoria. It will be a forum for them to discuss their industry as well as have a chance to participate in the Columbia River Maritime Museum, who will be the recipient of annual dues. This is still in concept phase and is not yet a functioning source of revenue for the museum.

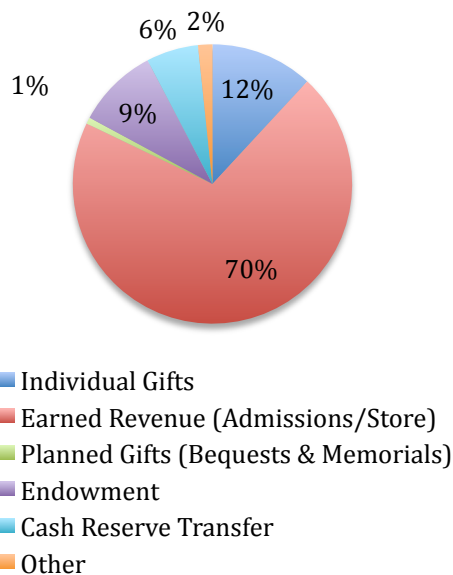
² Patterson Nail Works is a business venture of the Columbia River Maritime Museum designed to create unrelated business income and educational programming for the museum. Factory equipment designed to produce copper nails was purchased from a former nail producer in Anacortes, WA. Currently that style of nail can only be purchased overseas. Patterson Nail Works is not yet functioning, but is expected to contribute to revenue in the near future.

³ A chandlery is a store or depot that sells nautical supplies for boats/ships.

“People give to people. Organizations don’t have needs but communities have needs. We may have a need for a lift truck but we have that need because we are trying to satisfy some community need. That applies to our fundraising. It’s harder for people to say no when you are face to face with them. It hurts for them to say no. The only grant I’ve failed to get here, is one [where] I didn’t get the chance to meet with them first.”

Figure 1 shows the projected revenue associated with the Columbia River Maritime Museum’s fundraising strategies. The percentages for these figures were calculated and rounded to the nearest percent based on a copy of the annual operational budget provided during the interview with Mr. Johnson.

Figure 1: Projected revenue of the Columbia River Maritime Museum for fiscal year 2014 as reported by the museum’s Executive Director.



Harbor History Museum

The museum’s fundraising department is headed by the Executive Director and the Deputy Director, and aided by a Development Assistant. A list of the museum’s fundraising strategies and overall revenue sources was provided by the Assistant Director of the museum, Mrs. Tami McDaniel (see Table 2 below

Table 2: Revenue sources of the Harbor History Museum, as reported by the Deputy Director

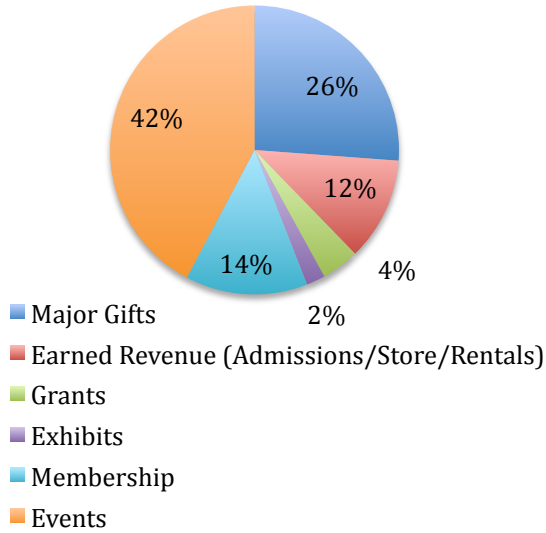
- Admissions
- Store Sales
- Fundraising Events
 - History Rocks
 - Splash
- Individual Giving/Major Gifts
 - One on one
 - Board Appeal
 - Mailings
 - Through Events
- Grants
- Exhibits
- Membership
- Program Fees
 - Midway School
- Facility Rentals

Mrs. McDaniel, like Mr. Johnson, identified one-on-one solicitation as their most effective strategy for fundraising:

“The most effective fundraising strategy is building relationships and getting people here. Once I can give people a tour and see how professional our exhibits are and our programs are, they are more inclined to make that connection. Meeting them in person builds that relationship. That’s important.”

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the Harbor History Museum’s fundraising strategies relative to their projected 2014 revenue. The percentages produced for this chart were based on verbal answers given during the interview with the Deputy Director, Tami McDaniel. These percentages and numbers were provided from memory by Mrs. McDaniel and represent the percentages per fundraising strategy of total operational revenue created in 2014.

Figure 2: Revenue of the Harbor History Museum for fiscal year 2013 as reported by the museum’s Deputy Director



Northwest Maritime Center

A list of the museum’s fundraising strategies and overall revenue sources was provided by the Executive Director of the museum, Mr. Jake Beattie, during an in person interview on April 14, 2014 (see Table 3).

Table 3: Revenue sources of the Northwest Maritime Center, as reported by the Assistant Director

- Store/Chandlery Sales
- Membership
- Facilities Rentals
- Events
 - Wooden Boat Festival
 - Fundraising Brunch
- Individual Giving/ Major Gifts
 - One-on-one
- Bequests/Legacy giving
- Grants
- Corporate Donations
- Corporate Sponsorships
- Vessel Donations
- Program Fees

Of the fundraising strategies present on this list of revenue sources, Mr. Beattie identified individual giving/major gifts as being the most effective. He explained that the museum's ability to acquire and retain donors was very strong and an important piece of their overall fundraising. One way the Northwest Maritime Museum has been able to acquire new donors, for example, is through engaging people who have recently moved to the area:

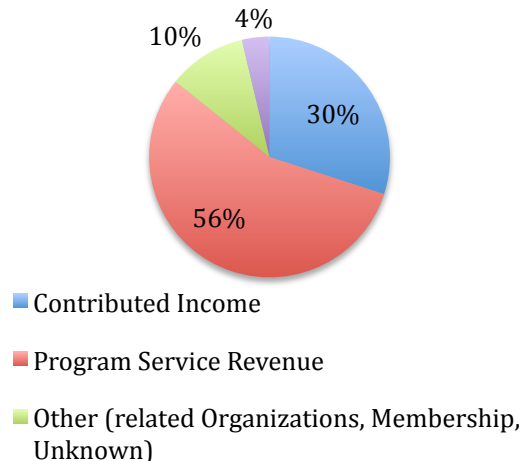
“We work with realtor groups and let them know what we are up to. So they can pitch events to new people and work with them to put on an event that helps us get in touch with the community.”

He went on to explain the purpose of using a realtor:

“People generally just want to connect to people. So we do that first and then we are able to connect them to the mission activities we are involved in so that even if they don't become donors they are at least a spokes person for us in the community.”

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of fundraising strategies relative to 2014 projected revenue. The percentages used in this chart were provided from the memory of Mr. Beattie during the interview and base off of revenue created in 2013. The 30% contributed income figure was further checked for accuracy by Mr. Beattie and reported as accurate through a follow up email on April 21, 2014.

Figure 3: Revenue of the Northwest Maritime Center during fiscal year 2013 as reported by the Executive Director



Trends in Fundraising Strategies across the Three Case Study Museums

Looking across these three museums there are noticeable similarities and differences in the strategies they use to raise money. Each museum uses a combination of strategies to raise funds. All three emphasized the importance of soliciting individual gifts. The Northwest Maritime Center specifically cited individual/major gifts as their most successful fundraising strategy, while both the Columbia River Museum and Harbor History Museum identified that one-on-one solicitation was their most successful fundraising strategy. Though one-on-one relationship building is used in a variety of fundraising strategies like grants, it is also a major component of soliciting individual gifts, especially major gifts. These museums also share membership as a fundraising strategy.

Although there are similarities in the strategies these three museums use to raise funds, the distribution of how much of their operational funding those strategies account for is vastly different. Revenue sources like store sales and admissions that make up earned

revenue are much higher at the Columbia River Maritime Museum (70%) than at The Harbor History Museum (12%), suggesting that the overall fundraising model used by these museums is different because the percentage of revenue that contributions counts for is vastly different

The revenue distributions are not the only difference across the museums in this study. There are specific strategies that are not used, or used differently across all three museums. The Columbia River Maritime Museum for example does not use fundraising events as a strategy for raising money. The Harbor History Museum on the other hand earns 46% of its fundraising money from events, while the Northwest Maritime Center takes on a third style and has a fundraising brunch that makes up an undetermined percentage of their events revenue, which accounts for 4% of their overall fundraising. A source of revenue that is not represented across all three museums is revenue from admissions. The only admissions that are collected by the Northwest Maritime Center are during the Wooden Boat Festival and thus fall under event revenue. Strategically this makes sense, because they do not have collections like the other two museums, who do rely on admissions as a strategy for raising money.

The reason that each museum uses different strategies for fundraising becomes clear when looking at Tables 1 through 3. The Columbia River Maritime Museum, for example, relies heavily on unrelated business income and as a result effects their overall fundraising strategy and how much revenue fundraising accounts for. Mr. Johnson, is currently planning a business venture called the Patterson Nail Works, which would sell vintage copper nails while also providing programming. This idea of creating taxed income is much different than the contributed income strategies used by the other two

museums. The Northwest Maritime Center also has a unique fundraising strategy, in that they have a vessel donation program that allows people to donate boats to the museum with the understanding that the museum will put the time and effort into selling the boat and get to keep whatever they make from the sale. Again this is not to say that any one of these museums is more effective at fundraising but rather that the data they have provided shows three things. It shows that there are some obvious similarities in the strategies they use to fundraise, that within those strategies each museum accounts for a different percentage of their overall revenue, and that some strategies are unique to an individual museum.

What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with these fundraising strategies?

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the fundraising strategies of the three participating museums, study participants were asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within their museum's fundraising and to explain their thinking. They were also asked if they believed any of those self-identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats were unique to maritime museums. Analysis of these data revealed several similarities across the case studies, which are presented following Table 4.

Fundraising Strengths

Table 4: Comparative summary of fundraising strengths within each museum, as identified by interviewees.

| Fundraising Strengths | | |
|--|--|--|
| Columbia River Maritime Museum | Harbor History Museum | Northwest Maritime Center |
| 1. History and relatable stories | 1. The stories and history they present | 1. Fresh and interesting stories |
| 2. No operational debt | 2. The community where they are located | 2. Soliciting major gifts |
| 3. Strong board in regards to giving and getting donations | 3. Fundraising committee/experienced staff | 2. Good relationships with individual donors |
| 4. \$4 million endowment | | 4. Sponsorships |
| 5. Small well trained staff | | |
| 6. No reliance on government grants for operations | | |
| 7. Well defined mission and adherence to that mission | | |

1. The Columbia River Maritime Museum and the Harbor History Museum indicated that staff was a fundraising strength.

The competency and quality of current staff was a strength across the case studies. Mrs. McDaniel from the Harbor History Museum stated, “Our staff is a strong component of our fundraising. Our director for example has over 15 years of fundraising experience.” When asked why this was a strength, she said, “Our staff is all on the same page and has created what we believe is a solid development plan. They really understand fundraising.” Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum had similar thoughts on the quality of his staff and added that staff size was also strength: “We’ve kept staff size small and the number has stayed stable over more or less 10 years. We’ve added one and a half jobs over the last ten years.” He explained that this was a strength because “every member of the staff is trained on how to be courteous and recognize people important to this museum. They all do cultivation through tours, etcetera.” Mr.

Johnson also discussed how keeping staff numbers low was a strength because it limited overhead.

These two museums believe that their staff can be considered a strength in fundraising because the staff they do have, though limited in size, are well trained and have ample experience.

2. All three case study museums indicated that the history or stories they present are strengths of their fundraising.

All three museums strongly believed that there is strength in their museum's ability to tell a unique story and relate that to visitors/donors. Mr. Beattie from the Northwest Maritime Center stated that,

“[w]e do an exceptional job of shaping what we do into an exciting project and creating fresh stories. We often tell very specific stories or focus on a specific area within our mission, and this allows us to sustain and hopefully grow interest for what we do within the community.”

The ability to relate maritime history to the museum's geographic community was also considered a strength by Mrs. McDaniel from the Harbor History Museum who stated that, “Our history is our strength, because the community and individuals here are so passionate about that history.” Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum believes in the strength of the history and stories as they relate to communities as well, but expanded even further and indicated that the stories his museum could tell were a strength for fundraising even beyond his museum's immediate geographic location. He stated, “Generally speaking the story we tell is more interesting than any other history. People like boats, they like war, they like the romance of the sea. That's an enormous strength.”

The interview data show that these museums believe their stories are considered to be strengths in their fundraising. Furthermore, when asked if this story-related strength was unique to maritime museums, two museums responded that it indeed was unique. The Northwest Maritime Museum gave a “no” response, but staff from both the Columbia River Maritime Museum and the Harbor History Museum indicated that the history and stories were in fact the one unique characteristic that could be identified as different from other types of museums. However, each museum gave a slightly different response when explaining why. As indicated in the quote above, Johnson suggested that the stories are unique because of their appeal to the public. The interest that can be generated in the stories his museum tells can appeal to a wide range of people. McDaniel, on the other hand, stated that

“[s]ome of our key supporters who have stuck with us through our capital campaign have a direct connection to the maritime industry. They are part of the fishing industry or their families were fisherman. It’s unique to be able to tell the stories of our donors in that way. That may not be unique to maritime but here it is because our community is so tied to maritime industry.”

There is a slight difference in scope between the two museums, as Mrs. McDaniel in her response focuses specifically on how maritime history can be directly related to the community of Gig Harbor, while Mr. Johnson takes the broader approach that maritime history generally can be compelling and tailored to be of interest to any audience.

3. The Northwest Maritime Center and Columbia River Maritime Museum each identified strengths that leverage their specific resources/assets.

Each museum identified unique strengths that could be useful to the case study museums as well as implications for maritime museums as a whole. Mr. Beattie from the Northwest Maritime Museum indicated that sponsorship was a strength for the Northwest Maritime Center. He stated that,

“[w]e’ve recently had the biggest wooden boat festival we’ve ever had and it’s been around for 38 years. This goes partly to sponsorships. We do a really good job of working with our sponsors to make sure there is a connection that is meaningful to both the patrons and the sponsor.”

He went on to discuss how the Northwest Maritime Museum’s major donor program is also considered a fundraising strength:

“We have a great major donor retention program. Since our capital campaign in 2009, we have been able to reduce our loan by \$1.5 million dollars through a major donor campaign. Being able to raise money for debt can be very difficult and the fact that we have been able to do so is definitely a strength.”

These two strengths identified by Mr. Beattie are unique when compared with the other two case study museums. The fact that the Northwest Maritime Museum is having success with sponsorships is something that The Harbor History Museum identified as an opportunity later in this study. Similarly the relevance of having a strong donor retention program is made clear by Mr. Beattie when he explains how this has aided in the alleviation of debt left over from embarking on a new facility. Any maritime museum going through a capital campaign or coming out of a capital campaign can consider how their donor retention and major giving can impact their funding strategy.

Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum indicated that having no operational debt was a great fundraising strength. He stated, “We have no debt. In fact we have never had any substantial debt. Occasionally we take on \$100,000 or so here or there, but we’ve never had any operational debt.” This is important, he explained, because “when we go to people, we are going with a good track record. Success breeds success and it’s important that we can show our strength through our lack of debt when building relationships with people.” Mr. Johnson also said that, “Having no government support is critical. We do get IMLS grants and things for special projects but we have no

government money covering our operational revenue so we don't blow with the political winds." He explained the importance of this further by saying that,

"I learned a long time ago that grants at times lead to hiring new people, but then the grant runs out and you now have people on as overhead. It can be hard to pull your nose out of that trough."

Furthermore, Mr. Johnson explained that government grants are very political in nature. He stated that, "[g]overnment grants can't be relied upon so not having them eliminates that risk." Another strength Mr. Johnson emphasized was the makeup of the board: "We have a board created based on give get or get off, and we get people on our board who can do that." He explained that,

"Each board member is also evaluated on their ability to give money or get money. Their primary role is to help find money. That being said we have people connected to the fishing industry. You don't necessarily have to be super wealthy to get on this board, but you don't just get on this board by asking."

Lastly, Mr. Johnson talked briefly about the strength of having a stable endowment. The endowment for the Columbia River Maritime Museum is managed by a separate board that is made up of financial managers and individuals who have a track record of financial success. The endowment for the Columbia River Museum provides a level of stability as a piece of their overall fundraising plan, but was not the main focus of the strengths section, and was not explicitly stated as the reason for not relying on government grants or as being the main reason for having no operational debt. Instead, the endowment is a piece of the overall list of strengths identified by Mr. Johnson. Each one was presented as a strength that has merit standing on its own and each can be intriguing for maritime museums who are facing challenges with any one of the strategies discussed as strengths by Mr. Johnson.

Fundraising Weaknesses

Table 5: Comparative summary of fundraising weaknesses within each museum, as identified by interviewees.

| Fundraising Weaknesses | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Columbia River Maritime Museum | Harbor History Museum | Northwest Maritime Center |
| 1. No development support staff | 1. Staff bandwidth does not match fundraising goals | 1. Membership |
| 2. Only the Executive Director makes asks to major museum donors | 2. Staff bandwidth does not support robust database resource | |
| 3. Distant geographically from the money | 3. Staff turnover | |
| | 4. Donor Fatigue | |
| | 5. The contributed to earned revenue ratio for the operating budget is not ideal | |

1. The Harbor History Museum and the Columbia River Maritime Museum both indicated that at times, staffing was a weakness.

Looking now at the weaknesses identified by each of the three museums, one commonality with their responses was the weakness that was posed by a lack of staffing. Though indicated previously as a strength, it also poses problems with fundraising. Mrs. McDaniel from the Harbor History Museum stated that, “We have high expectations. We have an operating budget of nearly \$600,000 per year. So we really have high goals but don’t necessarily have the staff to carry out all of those goals.” She explained why this was a weakness by saying,

“You’re only as good as your team around you. Being able to have higher staff be able to focus on other areas would be helpful. We are finding stability. But having three different development assistants since I’ve been here makes it tough. We haven’t been able to devote the time we need because we have to take up support roles.”

Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum also identified staffing as a weakness for the Columbia River Maritime Museum: “I think right now the focus of this museum is dependant on my shoulders.” He went on to explain that he takes on a variety of roles that require skills he has accumulated over many years in fundraising, and it may not be possible to replace that single person dynamic when he leaves. He said that,

“[o]ur weakness is my style. We could hire a development director to do all of the background work. We have a membership coordinator who works with members, but we could have someone for planned giving and make sure we get stuff out but we don’t have enough money for that. So that’s a weakness in terms of staffing.”

Mr. Johnson explained that currently he is able to fundraise effectively, but in the future, the hiring of certain support staff may become a larger priority if the museum cannot find a director in the future who can take on all the roles necessary within the current format.

The responses given by these two museum professionals are interesting, because they identified staff as both a fundraising strength and weakness. They indicated that the staff at each museum was well trained and have a lot of experience. That being said, they identified a bandwidth issue. The Harbor History Museum and Columbia River Maritime Museum both have executive staff taking on a large fundraising workload. The need for support staff is a similarity between these two organizations. Even though Mr. Johnson explained that he is capable of handling the large workload, his reflections indicate that adding support would definitely aid in the responsibilities that are involved with fundraising. The Harbor History Museum takes this need one step further and has made support staff an immediate priority. In order to reach their fundraising goals they have decided that they need to have adequate fundraising support staff. There is a balance concern with these two museums, in which they identify the quality and size of their staff

as a strength, but at the same time there is struggle trying to grow and acquire donors with limited staff and bandwidth.

2. Each case study museum identified weaknesses specific to them – to their infrastructure and/or community.

As with the strengths of the three case study museums, there are some unique weaknesses as well. The Northwest Maritime Center, for example, identified membership as a weakness in fundraising, though they are unsure why it is waning:

“We don’t know why it’s weak. We have had declining membership despite success in other areas. The disadvantage is that the membership is geographically limited to Port Townsend and we are a rural community.”

Furthermore, Mr. Beattie questioned why the strategy of using memberships as a fundraising method was implemented to begin with and explained by saying, “memberships don’t really make sense for us, because we have no collections or admissions fees outside of the Wooden Boat Festival, but it was higher in the past so the decline is unclear.” That being said it also would be too impulsive to simply drop the membership strategy. As he said, membership was high for whatever reason, which may suggest that it could be stimulated into being more successful than it is currently. The weakness here is that the benefits that are often used to entice people into becoming members, like reduced admissions prices or special tours, are not an option for a maritime museum with no admission and no collections. The relevancy here lies with maritime museums that have a similar concept involving mostly programming and lack of collections or admissions may also struggle with this problem.

A different weakness was identified by Mrs. McDaniel from the Harbor History Museum. She indicated that donor fatigue is a weakness in their fundraising:

“Donor fatigue is pretty straight forward. There are a finite number of donors, but we haven’t reached everyone, so reaching new donors and visitors becomes more important. You want to keep donors in your circle and have them feel appreciated, so you need to give them time to recoup and feel supported or you may lose them as supporters.”

Donor fatigue is a subject that faces museums of all kinds and can be detrimental to fundraising if not addressed. Just like with the membership problem above increasing the donor base is an issue. If a maritime museum does not have a large enough donor base they will be forced to ask their donors for money more frequently and eventually cause them to limit their giving or stop giving all together.

Fundraising Opportunities

Table 6: Comparative summary of fundraising opportunities across the three museums, as identified by interviewees.

| Fundraising Opportunities | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| Columbia River Maritime Museum | Harbor History Museum | Northwest Maritime Center |
| 1. Shipping League | 1. Engagement with the business community | 1. Legacy giving |
| 2. Unrelated Business income | 2. Program or exhibit sponsorships | |
| 3. Mission allows for specific stories that can help with fundraising (relates back to strengths) | 3. Increased revenue from individual donors especially major gifts | |
| 4. Increased chances for research fees one the collections are moved | 4. Increased revenue from grants | |
| | 5. New event coordinator adds bandwidth and effectiveness | |

1. The Columbia River Maritime Museum and the Harbor History Museum both saw opportunity in engaging businesses.

The Harbor History Museum, according to Mrs. McDaniel, is looking to engage businesses more in their fundraising efforts. Mrs. McDaniel said,

“I would say we are looking to engage the business community at a larger scale. We’re hoping to get program or exhibit sponsorships, or business memberships to really get businesses to utilize the facility as well. We are generally looking at trying to grow business support overall.”

The thinking behind this opportunity is based on the make-up of the community in which the museum is located. Mrs. McDaniel explained that,

“Gig Harbor is kind of a financial hub. We have so many investment businesses in the harbor and businesses in the medical community. We really haven’t engaged that community as much as we could so I see that as an opportunity for us.”

Mr. Johnson also saw business engagement as an opportunity for The Columbia River Maritime Museum. He suggested business memberships and a goal to increase the overall involvement businesses with the museum. To do this, Mr. Johnson is in the process of developing something he calls the Shipping League (see footnote 1). As a membership-based club, the Shipping League is expected to not only provide a modality for business with maritime ties to meet, network and address issues within their field, but to also get them more involved in the museum through opportunities to be more active participants in exhibits and programming. The level of involvement those businesses would have is still up for interpretation, but one of the goals of the Shipping league is certainly to encourage businesses to become active members of the museum.

Two of the case study museums clearly identified engaging businesses as a fundraising opportunity. The Northwest Maritime Center has found success through corporate sponsorship of their Wooden Boat Festival and events, The Harbor History Museum sees opportunity in sponsorship of exhibits and programs with membership as well, and the Columbia River Maritime Museum is taking an approach that creates a way

for businesses to join membership group that would work outside of the museum while simultaneously engaging them in what the museum is doing.

2. All three museums saw opportunity to engage their communities, but planned to do so through different strategies.

As discussed above, the Harbor History Museum believes there is significant opportunity to engage the businesses in their community to become sponsors, members, and generally be more active with what their museum is doing. The Northwest Maritime Center also believed there is opportunity in engaging their community, but through legacy giving, because of the demographics of the community in which they are located.

Mr. Beattie stated that,

“[t]he median age in Port Townsend is the highest in the state at 55.5 years of age. That’s 20 years older than the average so legacy giving is an opportunity. We already know of about 1.7 million in legacy gifts. We’ve actually received more than 1.7 but that is the estimation of the value of estates that have been left to us. That is bound to change based on how long people live. It depends on how the estates shake out.”

This is an opportunity according to Beattie because it provides a service to individuals as well as helps the museum with its mission:

“The scale of this organization and the way we are trying to change the community, economic prospects, and the education for public schools make us able to sell that our programs are a good way for people to leave their legacy within the community. We have a track record of dealing with their gifts responsibly.”

Mr. Johnson revisited the history and stories as an opportunity for the Columbia

River Maritime Museum to engage their community:

“We are not beholden to our story. We have broad history but defined boundaries through our mission. By having boundaries we can go into depth with really good stories. Those stories help with our fundraising. I mean take any avenue and build on it. Fishing, geopolitics, navy, coast guard. Every one of those stories can go deeper and deeper and is of general interest to the population.”

Looking at all of the opportunities identified by the three case study museums, a theme emerges centered around engaging new donors. These three museums have looked within their own organizations and communities to identify opportunities to improve their fundraising.

3. Case study museums identified fundraising opportunities that were unique to their needs.

There were some opportunities identified that were unique to each case study museum. The Harbor History Museum saw grants as a large fundraising opportunity:

“There’s definitely opportunity to grow our grant revenue. It’s been as low as \$8,000 but it takes a lot of manpower. The board sometimes suggests we send out a lot of grants. But building a relationship with grantors takes time and bandwidth we don’t necessarily have yet. But I could see the museum receiving \$50,000 or \$60,000 in operating grants and we are at about \$20,000 right now so that is an opportunity for us.”

Identifying grants as an opportunity is important for maritime museums more broadly, because grants are an option for other maritime museums to consider as a funding source. The National Maritime Heritage Grants Program (1993) for example, has been giving grants “to foster a greater awareness and appreciation of the role of maritime endeavors in history and culture,” since the Maritime Heritage Act in 1994. The possibility of going after grant money also brings up the fact that there is a balance to think about between desired grant revenue and staff time required to achieve that revenue goal. Boards in maritime museums may be pushing for larger grant revenue figures, but as Mrs. McDaniel points out, that often can be more of a question of staffing than finding enough grants to apply for. This opportunity really highlights issues maritime museums might face trying to convert an opportunity into a strength, because there needs to be adequate staff to do so.

Mr. Johnson felt that a fundraising opportunity for the Columbia River Maritime Museum was unrelated business income, namely the Patterson Nail Works (see footnote 2). He believed this would be an opportunity to increase earned revenue while also creating programming that would engage people from the community. Furthermore, he stated that, “I think unrelated business income is an opportunity for a lot of museums if they look for it, but there is a sentiment that some museums and boards have that making money is bad.” This is very different from anything suggested by the other two case study museums, but is important for two reasons. First, because increasing earned revenue alleviates the pressure to raise as much money through fundraising, and second, the Patterson Nail Works is designed to not only increase revenue, but to creatively give the museum another tool to engage businesses through sales and the community through unique programming. Both the engagement of businesses and new audiences is a theme that has emerged through these interviews. Mr. Johnson brings up an opportunity that not all maritime museums may be considering.

There are certainly some important comparisons to make between these three museums in regards to fundraising opportunities. One noticeable comparison is the difference between the Harbor History Museum and the Columbia River Maritime Museum. There is a clear emphasis on the opportunity to increase grants especially for operations at the Harbor History Museum, while the Columbia River Maritime Museum looks to grants for the funding of special projects. When asked if any of the weaknesses were unique to maritime museums, Mrs. McDaniel suggested that there are grant opportunities available for organizations that do historical restoration, which fits well within what they do at the Harbor History Museum. This is different from the Columbia

River Maritime Museum, which does not have active boat restoration as programming at its facility.

Another interesting comparison is between the Northwest Maritime Center and the Columbia River Maritime Museum. In the weaknesses portion, Mr. Beattie identified memberships not only as declining, but possibly as irrelevant to their organization. The Shipping League, though still in its infancy, is an interesting alternative to traditional membership.

Fundraising Threats

Table 7: Comparative summary of fundraising threats, as identified by interviewees.

| Fundraising Threats | | |
|---|---|---|
| Columbia River Maritime Museum | Harbor History Museum | Northwest Maritime Center |
| 3. Competition with philanthropic organizations that focus on social issues | 2. Competition with other local non-profits | 1. Aging local community |
| 1. An aging board and overall fundraising capacity of the board is changing | 1. Getting involved with events that are not mission focused or are not a major source of revenue | 2. Aging population of event visitors |
| 2. The changing nature of money and who has the money in the Northwest | 3. Backlash from choosing not to participate in certain community events | 3. Distribution of wealth is changing |
| 4. Rising energy costs | | 4. Disposable income is going down and boats and dock fees are rising |

1. The Northwest Maritime Center and the Columbia River Maritime Museum believe that the number and nature of wealthy individuals is changing.

During the interviews a theme emerged concerning the changing nature and distribution of wealth. Mr. Beattie from the Northwest Maritime Center stated that,

“[I]ong term there is a generational bubble of wealth that won’t be represented in Generation XY, and that won’t be proportionate to the baby boomers. As a result

of those changing dynamics in age and wealth, broadening our donor base will be really important.”

Furthermore, Mr. Beattie discussed how disposable income is an issue, citing rising boat costs and dock fees that may be keeping people from becoming more active in the maritime community. This is important to maritime museums, because as discussed previously there is a theme of trying to entice a larger audience and increase the number of donors within the case study museums. If what Mr. Beattie described in terms of maritime boating costs and wealth distribution is an issue other maritime museums are facing, then there may be a large threat to the theme of trying to attract a larger base of donors.

Similarly, Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum indicated that

“[t]he changing nature of money and where it is, is a threat. Money is in the hands of new families. New money doesn’t have the same philanthropic philosophy or history that old families do. Tech money is staying there. There are exceptions but a lot of them are not giving like the old families did.”

On top of that, Mr. Johnson believed this threat will emerge in the museum’s board at some point:

“Many of the wealthy people of the board are old and dying off. We need to replace them with young wealthy people. The strength of the board and its fundraising capacity are changing and we need to deal with that.”

Both museum professionals saw the source of wealth as being a threat to their fundraising, though for slightly different reasons. That’s not to say they would not agree with one another’s assessment, but while Mr. Beattie is concerned with the distribution of wealth and amount of wealth that may be available, Mr. Johnson is more concerned about the giving philosophy of the younger generations. He is not convinced that the wealthy youth will be as philanthropic in general, or if they are, will be as interested in giving to

historical museums. On top of that, Mr. Johnson sees his current board, though effective they may be, as aging and eventually will need to be replaced with some of the young wealth mentioned above.

Again looking at economic factors, Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum stated that he believes that rising costs may be a threat to the museums' fundraising ability at some point:

“Rising energy costs are a threat. A threat because it effects visitorship which effects people we connect with. It also effects our collection storage costs. We are an archival institution and maintaining those collections costs a lot of money. If that goes up, that's just more responsibility on me to make up the difference.”

This further supports Mr. Beattie's sentiments about rising costs in general keeping people from becoming more involved with maritime museums.

Both museums have indicated economic factors as threats to their museums. Whether the wealth is decreasing among younger individuals, or they simply do not have the same giving mentality as the older generations, case study museums perceived that maritime museums are finding it harder to get the same amount of money from donors.

2. The Harbor History Museum and Columbia River Maritime Museum both saw competition as a threat to fundraising.

Further playing into the idea of economic factors being threats to maritime museums there is theme of money starting to go to other non-profit organizations. As Mr. Johnson from the Columbia River Maritime Museum put it,

“I'm not sure this is correct but a lot of the new money is focusing on social issues like children's education, medical research, etcetera. While important, it's not what we do. So, that means we need to be exceptionally clever and clear about what we do and why it's important to the community.”

Mrs. McDaniel from the Harbor History Museum shared similar thoughts and gave examples from the Harbor History Museum:

“When this facility was built there were two other capital campaigns at the same time in the YMCA and St Anthony’s hospital. The YMCA is still looking to expand. So, we have some competition with raising funds. There are so many volunteers here that are also members at the Y, and there are a lot of options for people to choose where they will give money.”

She elaborated on why this is a threat to her museum by saying,

“How do we sell maritime in order to compete with other nonprofits that help the homeless or even other museums? Competition is true for all nonprofits. Whether competing for an individual grant, or for individual donors makes it important to demonstrate the needs and reason to give and to differentiate our museum. Luckily, our community is directly tied to our subject matter.”

Both museum professionals agreed that there is competition for funds with non-profit organizations that focus on social issues, and the Harbor History Museum also identified other museums as being in direct competition for similar sources of money. They also both agreed that the answer to this threat is to construct and articulate an important case for why donors should give to them instead of these other non-profit groups. The threat of competition with other non-profits is one that may relate to other maritime museums. Maritime museums that do see competition as a threat may want to consider how other maritime museums are trying to deal with that problem. It has already been established that within the three case study museums there is a commonality in the stories they tell and an ability to use those to target specific audiences. The Columbia River Maritime Museum and Harbor History Museum both indicated that using those unique stories may be the most effective way to convince people that maritime museums deserve financial attention. Maritime museums in general share the similarity of the history and the types of stories they can tell, so there is value in seeing that the museums for this case study thing that those stories can be used to address this threat.

3. Each case study museum identified unique threats, specific to their community.

Building off of the age and money concerns mentioned previously, Mr. Beattie with the Northwest Maritime Center suggested that “Long term [a threat] could be the age of the community and attendees of the Wooden Boat Festival.” He went on to say that they have seen increases in attendance of the Wooden Boat Festival each year, but a majority of the attendees appear to be the same as the year before and thus overall the attendance is aging further each year. He explained, “Unless you are constantly reinventing yourself like the Pacific Science Center or Discovery Center, the next generation is going to be a challenge across the industry.” Though phrased very specifically concerning the Port Townsend community and attendees of the Wooden Boat Festival, this harkens back to the idea that there are economic factors keeping people from becoming more personally interested in boating, and the larger theme of needing to attract a broader donor base. Again, as with the other museums Mr. Beattie saw the importance of creating new experiences within the maritime genre that will attract these new young visitors.

Mrs. McDaniel from the Harbor History Museum had some interesting thoughts on threats as well. She believed that events could be a threat at times:

“Even though they are a strength and opportunity, there is a feeling you could raise money putting efforts elsewhere. Putting all our staff into events doesn’t help us grow major gifts or other areas. Hiring an events coordinator will help us shift our focus on those other areas. That being said, this museum can’t be everyone to everybody so we are finding that there are so many ways to get involved with our community, being able to identify the ones that align and are key with where we want to go is important. This is a small community and if they are upset or not happy about a decision made, then word of mouth is out there and can have a negative effect on our fundraising. Articulating that we can’t be involved in every community event can be a threat to our relationship with individuals.”

Given that events are often a common strategy used by museums to fundraise, the identification of trying to make sure that events remain consistent with mission, and are worth the time and resources needed to execute a successful event relates directly with the maritime museum community as a whole. The Harbor History Museum is starting to address this issue by hiring support staff, which is consistent with the staffing themes identified previously, and are also being more selective with what they participate in. Using this case study as an example other maritime museums that rely heavily on events for fundraising can evaluate whether or not this is a similar threat for their museum, and if it is, if taking actions similar to the Harbor History Museum might be effective within their fundraising department.

What changes are local maritime museums making in their fundraising strategies, and why?

After completing a verbal SWOT analysis, study participants were asked to discuss what their museums were doing to address the weaknesses and threats they had articulated. Interview responses identified how these three museums are planning on changing their fundraising strategies in the immediate future and at times why they are making those changes.

Harbor History Museum

Mrs. McDaniel provided a verbal breakdown of what their current revenue is based on the 2013 fiscal year report, and provided the projected changes based on goals the Harbor History Museum's Fundraising Committee has set for 2014.

Figure 4: Harbor History Museum’s fundraising revenue changes projected from fiscal year 2013-2014 and broken down for each strategy.

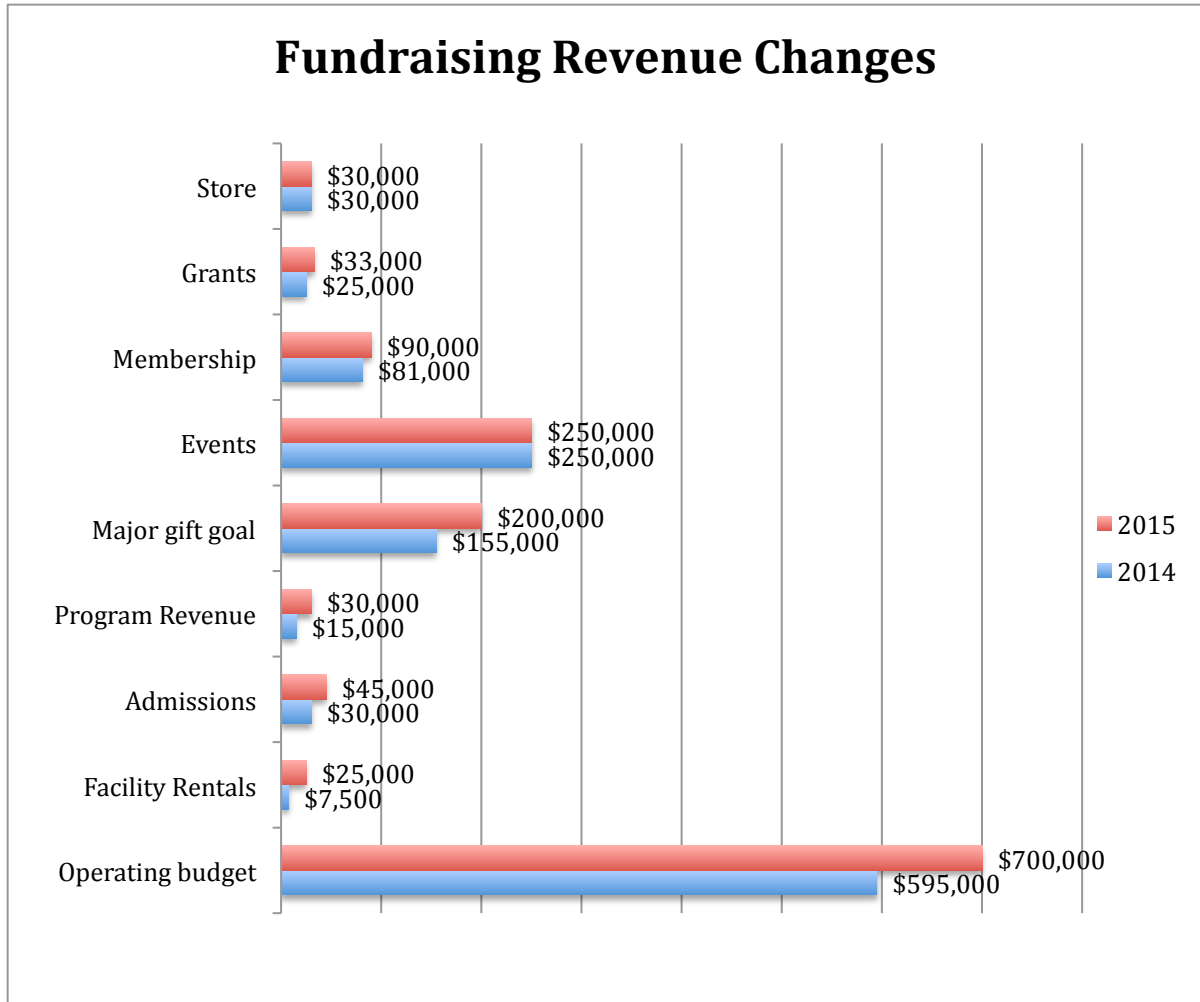


Figure 4 suggests that the Harbor History Museum is expecting to grow their operational budget, and they have identified where they are looking to increase revenue to support the increased budget from \$595,000 to \$700,000. During the interview, McDaniel identified major gifts as an important fundraising strategy for their museum to increase revenue in the coming year. She explained that,

“We expect to see an increase in major gifts, because we are putting the most focus and energy there. We are putting most of our focus there because we have a great track record of building relationships with the community and they have

shown they are willing to give through the capital campaign. These gifts are important too, because they provide the most return. It has the most growth potential and is less risky. Plus, we already have the base for some of those relations.”

The plan she discussed is also consistent with the one-on-one fundraising strategy that she identified earlier as being their most successful fundraising strategy and the strength that was identified - having a staff that is well versed in fundraising.

Mrs. McDaniel explained that the goal of the Harbor History Museum is to change the distribution of earned versus contributed income:

“A good mix would be 65 percent contributed and 35 percent earned. We want to grow earned, but the pie then just gets bigger. Still, not having 80 percent or more of contributed revenue is a healthy trend in non-profits. We are kind of in a position where we are looking at ways to grow our community programs and school program to create a buzz here. We want to become a center for the community to get people to renew or upgrade. We need to continue to engage them outside of our exhibits. If we don’t, we won’t retain or acquire donors at the rate we need to.”

The Harbor History Museum, consistent with the themes identified in their SWOT analysis, identified the need to engage new audiences in order to increase both acquisition and retention of donors. They are doing this through an emphasis on increasing major gifts, encouraging corporate sponsorships, increasing membership, and increasing grant revenue. Within each of these strategies, the Harbor History Museum is trying to take advantage of what they see as their strongest fundraising strategies. Telling the stories and history through programs and exhibits, and using one-on-one donor contact, is how they expect to even out their revenue ratios. The changes being made by the Harbor History Museum to decrease contributed revenue also address the donor fatigue that was identified as a threat to the Harbor History Museum’s fundraising.

Columbia River Maritime Museum

When discussing the Columbia River Maritime Museum, their plan is less articulated by exact numbers, and instead focused more on broader changes. A figure could not be created because the changes to their future fundraising strategies do not yet have projected goals based on a money value. It is important too to understand that how they make up their budget is designed to be more fluid annually and create ownership amongst all of the museum employees who are involved with the budget making process. Each department head is responsible for creating a budget for the next fiscal year, and then sits down with Mr. Johnson to decide what that budget will look like. Then, the fundraising goals are based on the final agreed upon budgets. They have not yet articulated the 2015 budget yet, so an exact monetary or percentage breakdown for how those strategies will increase or decrease next year cannot be formed.

That being said, Mr. Johnson did identify broad changes that the Columbia River Maritime Museum is trying to make:

“On a yearly basis, I think we need to see individual donation numbers increasing. We are working on continuing to build our endowment, and adding Patterson Nail Works to our plan is expected to be a big part of what we do.”

He went on to give reasons for these changes saying that it would “[c]reate a more even distribution of revenue. This ensures sustainability. It also is an indicator that means your discovering new sources of funding.”

When specifically discussing how to continue seeing an increase in individual giving, Johnson stated,

“I’m very concerned that while we’ve done very well, it can’t continue to go up over time. We are really focusing on trying to figure out how to reach a younger

audience and bring people into the museum. High quality exhibits and movies are how we are bringing people in, and we need to continue to be innovative with things like that to make sure we continue to see increases in contributed gifts.”

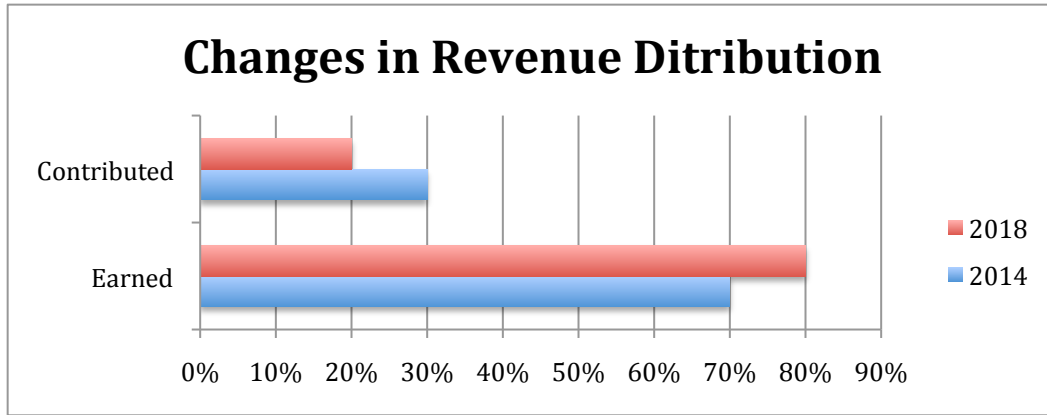
He also mentioned that the Assistant Director has really taken the lead and pushed for certain things like their 3-D movie theater and social media that is designed to engage that younger audience.

Once again the theme of engaging new audiences is represented not only in the Columbia River Maritime Museum’s SWOT analysis, but also in their proposed fundraising changes. The Columbia River Maritime Museum is expecting to accomplish this engagement of new audiences through their exhibits and programs like the 3-D theater and Patterson Nail Works. The idea behind this is that it will not only create revenue in the short term with admissions and other earned income, but that in the long term it will give them the opportunity to use the stories and history to engage new and future donors. The Columbia River Maritime Museum is trying to use what they have identified as a strength and opportunity in their fundraising strategy, the history and stories, for retention and acquisition of donors so that they can then utilize their most effective fundraising strategy of one-on-one solicitation.

Northwest Maritime Center

Mr. Beattie explained the changes that the Northwest Maritime Center is hoping to achieve, and based those numbers on the budgets that were created for the 2014 fiscal year and a broader set of revenue goals created through projected budgets, estimating the distribution of their revenue in 2018 if they reach those goals.

Figure 5: Northwest Maritime Museum’s fundraising revenue distribution changes projected from fiscal year 2014-2018 and broken down in terms of earned versus unearned revenue



Like the Columbia River Maritime Museum, the Northwest Maritime Center did not have a number or percentage breakdown of each fundraising strategy. Part of the reason for this is that they recently changed how they set their fundraising goals:

“We had a long term fundraising plan and disregarded it. Sometimes those fundraising plans convince people they need to bite off more than they could chew. It was created during the capital campaign and it grossly overestimated funds that could be raised in a post capital environment, so we replaced it with an annual cycle where we sit down several times per year, but we are not as systematic as the original five year plan.”

Similar to the Harbor History Museum, however, Mr. Beattie did highlight that the main goal over the next 4 years would be to change the distribution of earned and contributed income. Generally speaking, the Northwest Maritime Museum wants to increase the percentage of the operational budget covered by earned revenue to alleviate the pressure put on raising large amounts of money through unearned revenue. Mr. Beattie, goes into more detail, and breaks down the distribution of the contributed income and how the Northwest Maritime Center wants that distribution to change by 2018:

“Over time I think we need to get better at small dollar donors. We need to look at the gifts and pledges at say the \$10,000 level and the \$1,000 level. I want to start skewing more gifts to the \$1,000 and smaller donor side. By that I don’t mean reduce the number of individuals giving those big gifts, but rather increase the number of individuals giving small gifts. It’s not the most efficient but it’s a better long-term plan.”

Similar to both the Harbor History Museum and the Columbia River Maritime Museum, the Northwest Maritime Center is focusing on acquiring new donors and is doing so in hopes of establishing a donor base that will extend beyond the immediate future. Once again the larger theme of acquiring new donors in maritime museums is highlighted by the changes these three maritime museums are making within their fundraising strategies.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the data provided by the case study museums about the trends in maritime museum fundraising strategies, as well as some recommendations to be made concerning those trends. Beginning with the first research question, results suggest that all three museums in this study used the same strategies that the literature has suggested more broadly for nonprofits. Although the literature does not specifically address maritime museums, the data collected suggests that maritime museums are indeed following the best practices of fundraising that museums and nonprofits more generally have adopted such as individual giving, corporate partnerships, membership and using one-on-one solicitation (Burke, 2003; Cilella, 2011; Johnson, 2011).

The second research question was analyzed in terms of a SWOT analysis and themes emerged that could be useful for other maritime museums. There was a theme throughout the SWOT analysis that these three maritime museums believe there is a need to focus on acquisition and retention of their donor base. Again, as with the strategies, the challenges presented of retaining current donors and acquiring new donors were consistent with the broader literature designed for nonprofits as a whole. The reasons given for those challenges by the maritime museums, which included negative economic factors, changing age and wealth distributions, donor fatigue and competition with other non-profit organizations were also standard reasons given further supporting the similarity and application nonprofit fundraising literature to maritime museums.

In order to retain and acquire new donors a theme that came out of the SWOT analysis was the idea that the history and stories, which as a genre are similar across all

maritime museums, are seen as the largest strength. A theme of tailoring the stories to specific communities or using those stories to expand the community each museum reaches, and improves the effectiveness of their fundraising strategies is occurring in these three case study museums. Along those lines, a recommendation can be made to maritime museums and even small museums in general to strategically use stories and history to cultivate, solicit, and steward donors.

One way they can do this is to collect and articulate those stories in a centralized database. This can be as simple or elaborate as capacity allows, but even a Word or Excel document that contains the stories a museum uses to connect with audiences would be an important tool to utilize. Having a digital collection of stories would allow the museums in this study as well as maritime and small museums in general to strategically select the stories that would most identify with a specific donor. These stories can be easily pulled up for use in grants, membership and annual fund appeals, online giving pages, annual reports and other development communications. And each of the three museums in this study identified stories and history as the key to their ability to use one-on-one fundraising.

Strategically utilizing stories would help museums to engage with communities, which was another theme that emerged through the SWOT analysis. Each museum identified areas of their community that they believed were an opportunity for them to be more effective in fundraising. The Columbia River Maritime Museum and Harbor History Museum both identified that there was a fundraising opportunity to engage the businesses in their communities. A centralized database of stories would be a great tool to have to strategically tell stories that are tailored to the interests of corporations and move

them into meaningful giving relationships with a museum. There is certainly literature available to support this strategy, showing how corporate sponsorships can benefit museums. Julie Nightingale in *Museum Practice* (2008) writes, “[c]orporate sponsors can be a lucrative source of money for museums” (p. 56). Research like this shows that maritime museums from this study are doing so in conjunction with common fundraising strategies for nonprofits and museums, and that there is a theme in general of trying to engage their communities using strategies that are consistent with the donor centered style of fundraising presented in the literature. Their strategies are pretty common across nonprofits and museums, but being that their best assets are their stories, being able to pull from a centralized database for the purpose of created a targeted and tailored approach those corporations would be beneficial.

The Northwest Maritime Center believed there was more opportunity for their museum to engage their community through legacy giving. Currently they use planned giving as a fundraising strategy but also see potential for growth within that fundraising strategy.

This leads to another tool museums can use that falls under the recommendation of using those stories for development efforts. Having museums in this study identify aging constituents as well as an opportunity to engage that community through legacy giving suggests that maritime museums and small museums who share some of those same self-identified attributes should use their stories to create a comprehensive planned giving program, including a printed brochure. The aforementioned centralized database of stories could be used to for the brochure, and would work as a way to connect with donors who may be planned giving prospects. Furthermore a planned giving program

would be effective at addressing some of the other challenges in the SWOT analysis such as building endowments and an aging donor base.

Yet another theme that emerged through the SWOT analysis was that staff was both a strength and weakness for the maritime museums in this study. Like the challenges of donor acquisition and retention, staffing is an issue identified in nonprofit literature as a problem many nonprofits and museums face. The attributes that led to staff being identified as a strength were training/experience and low staff numbers. Ironically, weakness of staff was also low staff numbers. Museums in this study found that while having a few trained/experienced staff employed was asset, there simply is not enough staff to accomplish all the fundraising tasks that need to be done. This is important for maritime museums in general because it shows that there is a struggle, within at least some maritime museums, between having enough qualified staff to meet all their fundraising goals, and the cost of having a larger fundraising staff. It also presents both sides of the spectrum showing that within one organization like the Columbia River Maritime Museum, there are very well trained and experienced staff working there, but the threat of increasing overhead keeps them from hiring fundraising support staff that might improve their ability to do some of the behind the scenes fundraising work like prospect research and mailings.

Another takeaway from the SWOT analysis is that there are unique differences across these three case study museums that could be applied to each other and maritime museums more generally. Within the analysis there were strengths identified by one case study museum that were then identified as a weakness by another. There are definitely similarities across the SWOT analysis, but the differences at times provide suggestions

for how to address opportunities, weaknesses or threats facing maritime history museums. The Harbor History Museum for example sees opportunities to increase the exhibit sponsorship role as a fundraising strategy, while the Northwest Maritime Center identified sponsorships as a current strength for their organization. The SWOT analysis and overall study gives an exact instance and context of a museum finding success in a specific fundraising strategy that another maritime museum is considering as an opportunity, but not yet a strength.

Perhaps the biggest difference was in the disparity between revenue breakdowns across the three museums. The fact that the Columbia River Maritime Museum relied so heavily on earned revenue and less on fundraising, while the Harbor History Museum relies mostly on contributed revenue shows that not only are their different models for success within maritime museums, but that even within those different models many of the same fundraising strategies are still being utilized. Regardless of the fact that the revenue distribution was so diverse between these three museums, they still each identified donor retention and donor acquisition as key weaknesses and opportunities and still reinforced the nonprofit literature and suggest that that general literature is relevant to maritime museums and small museums in general.

The third research question supported the themes of the SWOT analysis because the maritime museums studied here are making changes that they believe will take advantage of maritime history and stories to increase donor numbers and retention. All three of these museums have indicated that they are independently making changes to the proportions of their fundraising strategies in relation to their overall revenue. The proportions of revenue each strategy accounts for are being changed to try and address a

universally identified need to keep current donors and increase their overall donor pools. In order to make these changes more effective the recommendation for these three museums and small museums in general would be to strategically utilize those stories by creating a central database from which stories can be pulled from to cater to specific donors. Diving deeper into the strategic use of those stories, they can be pulled to create brochures for a more extensive planned giving program, encourage corporations to become sponsors or donors, and deepen engagement and retention of individual donors.

Lastly, under the same broad recommendation to more strategically use stories to strengthen the current fundraising strategies, it is recommended that an online case for support be created and up-dated as needed using the stories from a centralized database.

On the whole, despite differences identified with fundraising strategies, strengths weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and changes being made to address those, two main themes permeated these case studies. There is an identified need to acquire and retain new donors to address problems identified by the three museums in this study. To do that the case study museums have adopted strategies that are at times consistent with each other and at times are different when compared to the other museums. But the consistent theme for addressing the issue of expanding the funding donor base is to do so by utilizing the history and stories that they believe all maritime museums share and can relate to those donors. The case study museums for this study did not have a case for support document, but based on their answers for the SWOT analysis it may be a tool that makes sense for them to create. A case for support would give maritime history museums the opportunity to highlight the history and stories that were identified in this study as

being vital to the three case studies and their ability to relate to donors. In an article describing what makes up a case statement, Simone Joyaux (2014),

“The case statement serves as your organization’s communication document, targeted to a particular audience to raise money. You communicate the community need / opportunity and your organization’s response and merits. You explain the benefits to the donor in order to stimulate a gift in return” (pp. 1).

New visitors could be influenced toward becoming new donors by knowing who the museums are, what they do, and how it relates to them.

That being said, creating a published document can be both time-consuming and costly, especially since the museums in this study have indicated bandwidth as an issue at times. The alternative, and possibly better alternative is to make that case online. It could be as simple as a few paragraphs that explains what the museum is doing currently and why they should give, but the content can be updated regularly, and once again the centralized database of stories would aid in portraying the stories that best connect to their target constituents. Time and time again, the maritime museums in this study indicated the importance of their stories and history, and creating an online venue to display those stories tailored to donors would be very beneficial to their fundraising efforts.

This study identified similarities and differences in fundraising based on the self-assessment of three local maritime museums in the Pacific Northwest. Results suggest potential implications for maritime museums more broadly. The most important recommendation discussed above is to create a system for strategically utilizing the stories and history that have been identified as such an asset for these three museums. It would be safe to say, as well that other maritime museums and even small museum may

find this recommendation useful as their stories can also be utilized to create more compelling and donor specific approach that is so important in one-on-one fundraising.

Another implication of this study is that there appears to be an opportunity for an exchange of ideas through communicating with or partnering to utilize the strategies implemented by other maritime museums, specifically in regards to attracting new and young donors. Currently there is growing evidence that partnerships between similar institutions can have substantial benefits for all involved. A report by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2008) stated,

“Libraries, archives and museums are often natural partners for collaboration and cooperation, in that they often serve the same community, in similar ways. Libraries, archives and museums all support and enhance lifelong learning opportunities, preserve community heritage, and protect and provide access to information” (pp. 5).

The report goes on to explain that “[p]artnerships of various kinds can help all three institutions fulfill these goals and serve the community to the best of their collective abilities” (pp. 6). By communicating more openly across maritime museums there is opportunity to take advantage of the strengths displayed by other museums. Each museum in this study is trying to attract young new donors, and the idea that an aging population of maritime enthusiast is threatening maritime museums may be a more overarching issue for maritime museums broadly. The theme identified of using history and stories as a way to address those issues could be addressed at least partially by partnerships and sharing of information. The Columbia River Maritime Museum, for example, has added a 3-D movie theater to attract younger audiences; the Northwest Maritime Center is gearing its marketing around younger constituents for their Wooden Boat Festival; and the Harbor History Museum has brought in exhibits that include

interactive features like a maze. There is certainly an identifiable push to attract youthful individuals within the three museums in this paper, but data regarding the success of those attempts to tell stories in innovative ways needs to be shared across museums. Partnerships and an open sharing of data and ideas would allow these museums to see how other maritime museums are using their stories, successfully or unsuccessfully to appeal to new and younger audiences.

Finally, the fact that themes were identified across the three museums in this study implies that it would be advantageous to expand on that research so that data representing a much larger population of maritime museums could be available. This study has shown that with these three museums, and possibly maritime museums more generally, nonprofit fundraising best practices and fundraising challenges seem to correlate. It is reasonable to suggest that the general nonprofit literature has direct application to the maritime museums in this study. In order to make a more sweeping statement that all maritime museums would fall into this same classification of relevance, however, there would need to be more data sources and from a larger geographic area. This is important in order to identify fundraising trends, which cannot be determined through only three museums described in this paper.

Overall all, this study answers three research questions by using interviews with three maritime history museum professionals as case studies. Important themes emerged from those interviews showing that current nonprofit literature does have relevance in maritime museums and possibly small museums, because they are using strategies that are considered best practices and are facing challenges that they would be expected to face based on the challenges nonprofits as a whole have articulated. Though the sample is

too small to identify larger trends, the data certainly has relevance to many maritime history museums and the data that has been collected analyzed could prove of use to those museums and their future fundraising efforts.

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Appendix A

From: mattmc13@uw.edu

Subject: UW Graduate Thesis Study Participation Request

Date: (TBD)

To: (TBD)

CC: jjluke@uw.edu, morriss8@uw.edu

Dear (Director of Development/Executive Director),

My name is Matt McCallum and I am a graduate student at the University of Washington. I am a candidate in the Museology master's program, which focuses on the study of museums. I am also a non-profit management certificate candidate.

I have an interest in fundraising in museums, and am conducting a thesis study on fundraising in local maritime history museums. I have identified your institution as one that I would like to use in my study and would like to formally ask if you would be willing to participate?

Your contribution to my study would consist of an in person interview lasting around 45 minutes.

I want to make it very clear that you are not obligated to participate, and if you do you can remove yourself from the study at anytime if you so choose.

Please feel free to contact my advisors or I, whose information is in the "cc:" line of this email, if you have any questions or concerns.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration, and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, Matt McCallum

Appendix B

Fundraising Strategies in Local Maritime History Museums

Interview Guide

Matt McCallum // Email: mattmc13@uw.edu

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jessica Luke, Museology Graduate Program, University of Washington

Phone: 206-685-3496 // Email: jjluke@uw.edu

I am asking you to participate in a research study that is part of my Master's Thesis work at the University of Washington. The purpose of this research is to identify and describe the current issues and trends in the financial development of local maritime history museums in the Seattle area. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits, and you may discontinue participation at any time. If you have any questions now or in the future, you may contact me, or my advisor using the contact information I have provided above and will leave with you. Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been involved in fundraising?
2. How long have you been with your current institution?
3. How long have you held your current position?
4. Could you please give me a brief history of how you got started in fundraising and your professional history leading up to your current position?
5. I'm interested in what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your museum's fundraising program.

- a. Let's start with the strengths. What would you say are your organization's biggest fundraising strengths?
 - b. Why are these your museum's biggest strengths?
 - c. Do you see any of those strengths as being unique to maritime museums?
 - d. What would you say are your organization's biggest fundraising weaknesses?
 - e. What makes those weaknesses?
 - f. Do you see any of those weaknesses as being unique to maritime museums?
6. Now let's talk a little about what you see as opportunities and threats to your museum's fundraising program.
- g. What would you say are your organization's biggest fundraising opportunities?
 - h. What makes them opportunities?
 - i. Do you see any of those opportunities as being unique to maritime museums?
 - j. What would you say are your organization's biggest fundraising threats?
 - k. Why are they threats?
 - l. Do you see any of those threats as being unique to maritime museums?
7. What are the various fundraising strategies your museum uses within its overall fundraising program?
8. Could you please give me a rough break down of the museum's total revenue from these various fundraising strategies? For example, maybe 25% of the museum's revenue comes from grants, and another 25% from unrestricted gifts....

I know we talked a lot about strengths and weakness in the SWOT analysis breakdown. I'd like to shift gears a little bit and focus on any challenges your organization faces in fundraising.

9. What are your organization's biggest fundraising challenges?
10. What strategies has your museum used to deal with those challenges?
11. Do you see those challenges as chronic for your museum?
12. What do you consider to be your most effective fundraising strategies?
13. What makes those strategies effective?
14. Do you have an annual fundraising plan?
 - a. If no, move on.
 - b. If yes, how far into the future is this plan laid out?
 - c. Looking at your current plan, what are the core elements of the plan?
 - d. In what ways does the plan maximize the strengths you talked about above?
 - e. In what ways does the plan counter the weaknesses you talked about above?
 - f. In what ways does the plan take advantage of the opportunities you talked about above?
 - g. In what ways does the plan counter prevent against the threats you talked about above?
 - h. In what ways does the plan address the challenges we talked about previously?

I'd like to revisit the percentage breakdown of your fundraising revenue I asked you to come up with earlier.

15. What do you want those percentages to look like at the end of next year?

- a. For each percentage they indicate as wishing to see changed I will ask them to explain why they want that specific percentage to change.

16. Looking specifically at the contribution individual donors make, what percentage of those donors make multi-year donation commitments?

17. What do you want that percentage to look like at the end of next year?

To conclude this interview I want to ask you some very broad questions to give you a chance to give your overall viewpoint of the fundraising environment for maritime museums.

18. What trends do you see in fundraising museums?

19. Other than those we discussed earlier, what elements of your fundraising program are unique to maritime museums and what elements do you see as consistent throughout most museums maritime or otherwise?