

## Section 6. Promotion and Funding

### Promoting the Information Center

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Why is promoting the center important? Because an information center is like any service — people can only use it if they know about it! But to have others really “know” about the center often means more than just telling them the center exists. Often it means actively offering services so people discover through experience how valuable the center can be.

An important step before starting to promote the center is to first think about those the center wishes to serve. Try to answer these questions — What are the issues that concern them? What kinds of materials do they find useful? What can the center do to assist them? How do these groups or individuals get their information?

If the center is sponsored by an organization, the same questions need to be asked. What is important to the organization? How can the center help the organization be more effective and visible? What can the center do to demonstrate its ability to help? Who are the people in the organization the center should try to serve? Is the organization having special problems that the center’s services may help solve? Who are the people in the organization who need to learn about the center and its services? If the center is supported by an organization, the center’s success will ultimately be defined by its ability to assist that organization.

Different kinds of promotional activities are needed. Some promotional activities will be special projects or programs; others may well be regularly occurring activities. There is no single activity that will succeed in telling everyone about the center.

### Suggestions for Promotional Activities

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*Brochure About the Center.* The center’s brochure might include: the services the center offers, the types of information it has, where the center is located, its telephone number, and when it is open. The brochure should be professionally designed with an uncluttered appearance and printed on good quality, colorful paper. Send it to people who should know about the center and strategically place it in your organization and community so people can pick it up – the public library, supermarkets, the town hall, and schools.

*Posters.* These can provide the same kind of information as the brochure. Make them colorful, attractive, and small enough to be easily posted on bulle-

tin boards.

*Newsletters.* Prepare a newsletter for the center or provide information about the center to others who write newsletters. Tell about new publications in the information center, changes in services, and meetings or events. This can be a very effective means of promotion. Each time a new issue arrives, people are reminded of the center. Some publishers of books and newsletters will offer free “review copies” of books to the center if a book review and/or notice is published in the newsletter. Exchanging your newsletter with other organizations can bring newsletters to the center without subscription costs.

*Displays and Exhibits.* These are also good ways to promote the center’s services. If the display includes books, prepare a list of the books on display with the center’s logo or letterhead. Visitors won’t have to copy titles and the center will receive increased visibility.

*Talks and Presentations.* Presentations about new resources and how to find them may be of interest to schools, health care providers, and others in the community. Ask members of your organization to mention the center’s services and distribute center brochures whenever they make presentations.

*Attendance at Meetings.* Look for opportunities to attend meetings within your organization. Offer to help prepare reading lists for projects and programs, or offer to find current statistical information and research materials for the presenters.

*Provide Quality Services.* All the services the center provides must be of the highest quality. A user may mention to one or two people the good assistance received at the center, but will tell nine or ten about a rude or intimidating response from someone working in the center.

Successful promotion and public relations activities will not only increase the use of the center, they can also help improve the funding of the center. If the host organization perceives the information provided by the center to be essential to the materials it is developing and the speeches its members are writing, the organization will have a self-interest in protecting and expanding the resources of the center.

In addition, the increased visibility that results from the promotional activities may make it easier for the center to seek funding from foundations and other organizations or agencies. Even if the center does not seek general funding, the center may choose to seek funding for a special project such as book-marks, an exhibit, or a complementary newsletter to a broad audience. However, this must never be undertaken without approval from the director of the

host organization. The center and agency must choose carefully the organizations they accept funds from. No fund-raising activities should be initiated by the center without written, advance approval from the host organization.

## Budgeting

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A budget is the “library or information center’s central planning document and it is also the authorization to proceed on those plans.”<sup>1</sup>

A budget is a planning document that justifies recommended expenses. A budget can make it possible to undertake exciting and vital library operation. Resources in an organization are allocated in response to budget presentations. A budget is much more than a list of where money has been spent.

Developing budgets is an inevitable part of an administrator’s tasks. It is a general requirement within agencies, even when the agency is the sole source of a center’s funding, and it is also a requirement for all grant applications. A bit of thought as to how to approach this budgeting process is helpful. Typically there are three major categories of expenses: personnel, non-personnel and indirect costs.

*Personnel Costs.* In addition to salaries and wages, personnel costs include fringe benefits. Fringe benefits cover an employer’s contribution for health insurance, disability, retirement, and the like. Agencies generally have a formula for determining these costs as a fixed percentage of the employee’s salary. The percentage may be as much as 35% of the salary. The personnel portion of a center’s budget is inevitably the single largest budget item.

*Non-personnel costs.* These include expenses for the purchase of materials for the center, such as books, journal subscriptions, and videotapes. It also includes equipment costs for computers, office furniture, computer software, and other related items.

Office expenses and supplies form a sub-category of non-personnel costs which cover telephones, duplication expenses, stationery, etc. Travel makes up another separate sub-category, and special fees for organizational memberships, consultants, or vendor services make up one more. Printing costs, which can be substantial, are another sub-category. Agencies and grant applications generally will indicate the particular categories to be used in designing a budget. For the center’s purposes, the categories selected should reflect the different kinds of expenditures it plans to utilize.

*Indirect costs.* These represent the costs associated with rent, heat, and electricity that an agency allocates to its different programs.

<sup>1</sup> Koenig MED. *Budgeting Techniques for Libraries and Information Centers.* New York: Special Libraries Association, 1980. p.1.

*Types of costs.* Another useful distinction to make in considering a center's budget is the portion of expenses that represents fixed costs versus those which are variable. *Fixed costs* are expenses that represent simply the costs of "being in business." For example, personnel and salaries are constant, predictable, and incurred independent of the level of activity. In a sense, one has to hire people even before one opens the door. There are other costs that vary with the level and type of activity; these are "variable costs." Variable expenses include such things as long distance telephone charges, costs for printing and the cost of materials. These costs can change. Also they are not incurred until particular projects or activities take place. In constructing a budget, fixed costs are easier to estimate. Variable costs represent a "guesstimate." The estimates can be reasonably accurate if one sets down the expected activity, reviews the expenses that are involved, reviews similar costs for prior years, and keeps in mind anticipated or desired changes.

***Budgets as Tools for Planning***

It is easy, once a budget has been developed and monies set aside, not to think about it again until the time comes to revise it. However, regularly reviewing expenses which relate to particular kinds of efforts can be a very useful device in planning and determining how particular projects will be conducted. One very simple example might be the preparation of handouts which a center wishes to provide. As part of its outreach efforts, a center may wish to distribute to schools a list of resource materials. It wants to list materials the school might purchase for its library, as well as local resources that can provide speakers or lend films. At first glance this might appear to be a very low cost item and something the center can "easily" do. In reality, this may not be the case.

To estimate the cost associated with the effort, there are different things to be considered. For example: Is this information already on hand, so that the project involves primarily compilation? If not, how much professional and staff time is required to identify materials, secure copies, and review them in order to make informed decisions as to what will be included on the list? How much time will be needed to prepare a draft of the list, on a word processor, and to proofread it so as to have camera-ready copy for either printing or duplicating?

If these factors are taken into account, the minimal cost of preparing such a wholly new resource list might be considerably more than one had expected.

*Professional Time*

20 hours x \$ 20/hr.      \$ 400.00

tasks: identifying materials, reviewing materials, drafting annotations, contacting local agencies, proofing final copy, drafting cover letter for distribution, other

*Staff Time*

20 hours x \$ 12/hr.      240.00

tasks: identifying sources of items, securing copies, word processing, proofing final copy

*Non-personnel Costs*

items:

duplication (10 pages x .05 page x 50 copies)	25.00
materials purchase	50.00
postage (50 packets x .50)	25.00
miscellaneous	<u>15.00</u>
	115.00

Total Costs: \$754.00

With a sense of the actual cost of a particular item, one is in a better position to make choices between doing A or B or C. One is also prompted to consider alternative means to accomplish the same objective. In the above case, it probably would be wise to determine if a colleague has already developed a suggested core collection for school libraries. If so, one can request permission to duplicate the list, crediting those who developed it. Also, one might decide that rather than trying to include a section on local resources, one might simply list the center, or another organization, that is able to provide further assistance. If one looks at the costs associated with this second alternative, both professional and staff time are significantly reduced, possibly by as much as 75%, and other expenses are essentially only those associated with preparation of the material for duplication and associated printing and mailing costs, for a total cost of approximately \$275.00.

**Revenue**

The above discussion focused upon expenses. The opposite side of the coin is revenue or income. There are generally three different sources of revenue for a center. The first is the basic *operating funds or subsidy* which a center receives from its host agency. Another income source is from *contracts, grants, or monies* that the center receives for *special projects*. This might be a grant or contract from a state agency to develop a set of materials that they would then distribute and make available. In such instances, the center has contracted to provide a specialized service for which a fee is paid. Another source of potential income is *user fees*. This latter category may be the most troublesome for centers. In many instances user fees cannot be set at a level to wholly reimburse costs. In this case, any income helps to offset or reduce costs, but the services are in fact partially subsidized by the host agency.

**Fees**

*Setting Fees.* In setting fees one needs to take into consideration several factors. One is the actual cost of providing the service. How much staff time is involved? Again, there are likely to be real costs that may not be immediately apparent. If the center allows, and even encourages people to use the collection, how much staff time must be devoted to explaining how to locate materials, orienting users to the files, demonstrating how to search on a computerized

database, responding to questions, printing out the results of a computer search, or locating *and* re-shelving materials the patrons browse through? Or, if the center has a circulating collection, how much staff time is consumed by checking out and retrieving materials that are borrowed? What is the volume of materials that need to be reshelved or that are never returned and/or otherwise lost? Is there special equipment the center needs to have on hand to accommodate users? For example, does the center need a separate computer terminal or photocopy machine designated for clients? Recognizing that there are real costs, centers may want to consider categories of clients, differentiating between those they have been established to serve versus those affiliated with other groups. Centers may well wish to distinguish between staff of a for-profit treatment program versus personnel of a local, not-for-profit community agency.

Another important item in considering fees is the cost of collecting and processing monies. Do people pay as they go? Is prepayment required on orders? Or, must the center generate a bill, send it out, and deal with collection issues? Are there some regular users for whom the most cost-effective way to handle fees is to send out statements on a quarterly basis? If so, it may be useful, so as to avoid later misunderstandings, to designate a maximum amount that can be charged.

*Types of User Fees.* Typically there are different kinds of fees that a center may charge which reflect different types of services. One obvious area is a charge for materials, such as a fee for resource lists, or a mailing and handling fee even if the materials themselves are free. There are also fees that might be levied for specialized professional services, such as conducting specialized literature searches or responding to a special information request. In establishing fees for these services, the major item to consider is the personnel time involved. Some centers have a policy of responding to questions that can be answered in 15 minutes or less without charge. However, depending on the volume of such requests, such individual small services can add up and reflect a significant amount of staff time. The center definitely benefits from the time invested in responding to users. That is, without a doubt, the most effective way of learning what the interests of users are and how well the center's materials respond to those interests. The center also learns of the need for new kinds of materials and may wish to assemble information packets for frequently asked questions. The packets, pre-assembled, can be handed out with a minimum of effort.

The above discussion serves primarily as background on the kinds of questions a center needs to answer as it considers the matter of fees, cost recovery, and income. Beyond books on this topic, a source of assistance is other centers, as well as administrative and fiscal personnel within one's own host agency.

## Suggested Reading

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### Promotion

Herring MY. *Organizing Friends' Groups : A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1993. ISBN 1555700624. 144pp.

Includes chapters on preparing for and organizing an advisory or friends' group, setting up programs and annual events, and developing public relations activities. Bibliography.

Sherman S. *ABC's of Library Promotion*. 3rd edition. Scarecrow Press, 1992. 263pp. \$29.50

### Budgets

Barber P; Crowe L. *Getting Your Grant : A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1992. \$35

Shaver M. *Public Funding Resources for Alcohol and Other Drug Programs*. Piscataway, NJ: NJ Alcohol/Drug Resource Center & Clearinghouse, 1993. \$14.95. Phone: 908/932-0787.

Useful to those seeking public funding for alcohol/drug education and prevention. It includes information on —

- 1) How to access federal grant funding programs
- 2) Currently active programs and contact sources
- 3) Listings for both activity and research programs
- 4) Understanding and using the *Federal Register*
- 5) Using the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*.

Koenig MED. *Budgeting Techniques for Libraries and Information Centers*. New York: Special Libraries Association, 1980. 71 p. ISBN 0 87111 278 7. Currently available as a reproduction of the original edition.

A handbook for the budgeting process from the perspective of planning and justifying the library's future operations.

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *CSAP's Foundation Resource Kit*. Rockville MD: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (undated).

3 audio tapes and a loose leaf notebook. Includes useful information for those charged with accessing philanthropic organizations- grant proposal development, selection of organizations to approach and bibliographies.