Crowdfunding a Library Makerspace

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The Gloucester County Library System consists of five branches and one independent association library, with 14 member communities in Gloucester County, New Jersey.
GCLS Strategic Plan 2013-2016

Our Vision:

GCLS libraries are the center of an informed, engaged, and connected community.

Our Mission:

The Gloucester County Library System provides welcoming community spaces where people gather to learn, create, and have fun.
GCLS Strategic Plan 2013-2016

Technology Goal:
“Expand and enhance library services by improving the existing technology infrastructure and staying current with emerging technologies.”

Objective, III-A:
“Provide new technology services in response to community interests and needs.”

www.gcls.org/plan
“For the Future of Libraries in New Jersey”

Support’s New Jersey State Library & LibraryLinkNJ’s Statewide Strategic Plan by reinventing “our methods, models, products, and services to keep pace with the ‘new normal’ of transformational social and technological change.”
Why a Makerspace?

In creating an attractive, open-access Makerspace, GCLS provides the surrounding community with the opportunity to socialize, learn, experiment, create, and grow by increasing exposure to cutting-edge technology and the increasing popularity of “DIY culture.”
Glassboro Branch
Glassboro began as a “maker” community: it was the center of the glass-making industry in the 1700s.

The people of our town are extremely interested in “learning by doing” and improving themselves.
THE NEED AND THE IDEA

Young Engineers programming in our meeting room.

Our original staff room/storage space that would be converted into our makerspace.
Is Crowdfunding Right for You?

Survey the Community
● Ask about interest in STEM programming
● Gauge computer usage/tech savviness of patrons
● Familiarize yourself with local businesses
  ○ Possible PR platforms
  ○ Creative users of the makerspace/possible special programming
  ○ Search for previous community campaigns
Is Crowdfunding Right for You?

Legal Barriers

- Fundraising may not be allowed by government entities
- Most Friends of the Library organizations are registered non-profits that will fundraise for you
  - All funds raised will go to them and they will earmark it for your project.
  - All donations that are not cash should be made out to them and all publications and flyers should state that the campaign is "Sponsored by the Friends"
Get It Approved

“Pitch” your idea to decision makers/stakeholders
● Prepare a written proposal
● Create a presentation
● Be enthusiastic!
● Be prepared to answer questions
Prepare Your Proposal

Survey Your Resources

- Decision Maker & Stakeholder Support
  - Director and Board/Commission
    - May be adverse to the idea of asking community for money
    - May prefer/be required to get funding only through grants
  - Friends of the Library
Prepare Your Proposal

Survey Your Resources

● Time
  ○ Make a general timeline/deadline
  ○ How long are you willing to run the campaign?
    ■ Some sites charge for running the campaign for longer periods
    ■ More time may not necessarily equate to more money
Prepare Your Proposal

Survey Your Resources

• Dedicated staff to run campaign
  ○ Creating initial content
  ○ Updating the campaign site every few days
  ○ Advertising in community
  ○ Preparing for grand opening
Prepare Your Proposal

Survey Your Resources

- **Money**
  - Need money to make money!
  - Some campaign sites charge a flat fee or a percentage of profits
  - Donation incentives cost money
Prepare Your Proposal

Choose a Platform

“Kickstarter collects a 5% fee from a project’s funding total if a project is successfully funded. There are no fees if a project is not successfully funded. Pledges on Kickstarter are collected and processed by our payments partner, Stripe. These payment processing fees work out to roughly 3-5%. Creators never give up any ownership of their work to Kickstarter or backers. You keep 100% ownership and control over your work.”

(https://www.kickstarter.com/learn?ref=nav)
Prepare Your Proposal

Choose a Platform

Generosity.com

- An extension of IndieGogo that caters specifically to non-profits.
- Smaller user base.
- No site/fundraiser fees, only transaction fees
- No limitation on campaign length.
Creating the Campaign

What is the mission of your campaign?

- Campaign video - the front line of your campaign
  - Our campaign page!
  - Cute videos = more attention
- Outline your mission
- Set your financial goal
Creating the Campaign

- Tell the public about your organization (and what you will do with their money)
  - Post a projected budget and possible equipment
  - Get letters of support or quotes from patrons and businesses
  - Use your library’s graphics and create a project logo/theme for a professional look

Examples of the makerspace logo and a preliminary idea for the gear theme we used for the campaign.
Creating the Campaign

Incentives
- Have different tiers and incentives
  - Bigger donations warrant better incentives
  - To encourage donations for equipment, not incentives, offer to “dedicate” equipment in someone’s memory or in their honor.
  - Naming rights can be an incentive or fun competition
Creating the Campaign

Incentives

● Every donor should feel like they matter
  ○ Thank you email for every donation
  ○ Invitation to come use the makerspace

● Celebrate!
  ○ VIP preview party for donors
  ○ Grand Opening Celebration
    ■ Invite local elected officials and VIPs
CreativityStudio@GCLS

This makerspace and the equipment in it would not have been possible without the generous support of the people and organizations in this community.

The Friends of the Gloucester County Library System would like to thank all of these individuals and organizations who supported the GCLS Glassboro Library with their contributions:

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Entrepreneurship Across the Campus and Rohrer College of Business

Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering
Anthony M. Lowman, Dean
Sue Lehrman, PhD, Dean

College of Science & Mathematics
Karen Magee-Sauer, PhD, Dean

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Claire Alexander
Stephanie K. Smith
Christopher J. Neuteboom
Scott P. Muir
Kevin R. Sandahl-Sands
James O'Connor
Michael F. Drewes
Ruth Ann May
Jonathan Aney
Getting the Word Out

Use all available outlets
- Social media
  - Shared Facebook posts were critical to reaching more people
- Email newsletters
- Traditional media
  - Local newspapers
  - Community newsletters
- Flyers - deliver to local schools and businesses
Managing the Campaign

● Update regularly!
  ○ Give your backers encouragement
  ○ Provide regular shout outs for donations
  ○ Updating keeps your online presence alive
  ○ Share and share some more!
    ■ Passing it along may lead to reaching the right person or organization

● Make the first donation yourself!
  ○ A little money in the pot adds incentive to add to it
  ○ Many donations get your campaign featured on the site
Wrapping Up the Campaign

● Make a final push to meet your goal
  ○ If you take in-person donations the grand total will not be reflected on the site.
  ■ Be sure to publicize the total amount raised

● End your campaign
  ○ Set an end date and stick to it
  ○ Record all donations and contact info for sending incentives
Wrapping Up the Campaign

- Thank your donors!
  - Throw a wrap-up party for your involved staff and send out thank you letters or emails to donors
  - Have a “soft opening” only for donors before the grand opening to work out potential problems and thank participants

Incentives table at the soft opening.
Wrapping Up the Campaign

- Get the space open!
  - Donors to your crowdfunding campaign want to see the results
    - Opening the space on time will establish rapport for future projects
    - More equipment can be added later

(Wrapping up, get it?)
Lessons Learned / Surprises!

- People wanted to pay by cash or check - not on the website
- Even Generosity.com takes out a transaction fee
- Rowan University departments were our biggest donor after administration saw the campaign in the Glassboro newsletter
- Things don’t always work as planned - be sure to allow time to set up your technology before the opening
Lessons Learned / Surprises!

- More expensive is not always better, especially when on a budget
  - Be sure to think of what will serve your community best when planning your goal... the newest and most expensive thing won’t always be used

- Provide coffee for your campaign manager and get a cheese plate for the Grand Opening
Sustainability

You have your makerspace. Now what?

- Secure ongoing funding from the library’s annual budget
- Develop community partnerships
- Survey your users - programs, tools, etc.
- Codify policies & procedures
- Provide staff training & development
- Keep getting the word out
CreativityStudio
@GCLS
Thank you!

www.gcls.org/make