Our 15th Year

# Grassroots Fundraising Journal

# Writers' Guidelines

*The Grassroots Fundraising Journal is happy to consider articles for publication. Please submit copy **typed**, **double-spaced**. If computer-generated, please submit highest quality printing possible (no dot matrix print-outs, please). Please do not submit material typed in all capital letters.*

*Articles will be considered for publication during the nine months following submission. When an article is accepted, you will be notified in which issue of the **Journal** it will appear, receive three copies of the published article, and $75 per article after publication.*

*If you want unpublished articles returned, please provide a self-addressed envelope with adequate postage.*

# Subscription Inquiries

# Advertising Rates

### Classified:
$.75/word, minimum 10 words

### Display:
(width precedes depth)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1/8 page, 3½" × 2¼" | $75 |
| 1/4 page, 3⅜" × 4½" | $150 |
| 1/2 page, 3⅜" × 9" | $250 |
| 1/2 page, 7¼" × 5" | $250 |
| Full page, 7½" × 9¾" | $400 |

### Deadlines:
February issue: December 1
April issue: February 1
June issue: April 1
August issue: June 1
October issue: August 1
December issue: October 1

Camera-ready copy only. Full payment must accompany ad, unless other arrangements are made in advance.

# In This Issue

# LOOK
# Before You Leap Into New Fundraising Software

*by Maryann Osmond*

*Editor's note: If your office has invested in a computer system and you're wondering what kind of software to get for your fundraising program, this series of articles is for you.*

*One word of caution: be sure that once you start moving your donor data to the computer you have someone (or, preferably, two people) familiar with the computer system and patient enough to learn the program thoroughly so as to make the best use of it. Remember that each new computer program has a (usually steep) learning curve before it works best for you and that it's better to have more than one person who can run the program and maintain the files so that things don't come to a screeching halt if the person you're counting on is out.*

Few of us need to be convinced of the important role of computers and fundraising software in a development program. Secretly, we may actually believe the hype and promises, and hope that a new software program really will improve our managing abilities, help us find new donors, re-energize lapsed donors, prepare us for all Board meetings and increase our fundraising dollars. Ultimately, we know, however, that a fundraising software program, at its best, can simply assist us in keeping better records on donors, improving communication, and managing information more effectively.

We have all received in the mail glossy marketing pieces on the "best" software program, or talked with colleagues who promoted or bemoaned their fundraising software.

How should you evaluate the software possibilities and choose a program that is appropriate for your organization's size and needs? How do you choose one that is affordable, relatively user-friendly, and does not require weeks of training?

It would be foolish to purchase a program simply because of a sales pitch from a company or because of the enthusiasm of a colleague. Whether you are purchasing fundraising software for the first time or changing from your present software, it's important to be clear about your needs, fundraising goals, budget and staff abilities. In the end, you want the software to work for you and not you for the software.

## Know Your Program Needs

Choosing a new software program is similar to hiring a new employee. How many of us would hire someone based on just a glitzy resume and video? We do a good job of hiring a new employee when we have identified a need, written a job description, interviewed potential employees and received recommendations from current or former employers/co-workers.

A software purchase is a major commitment, and necessitates a similar process. In beginning the search for your first development software or in replacing your existing one, it is important to know your organization's needs, both program and staff. Be specific, practical and as concrete about these needs as possible.

The following questions are offered as examples of program needs for you to consider and then modify, based on your particular circumstances:

- Do we need to maintain accurate records of donor/prospect/client names, addresses, professions, interests, relationships and connections with our organization, other affiliations (volunteer, philanthropic), family, etc.?

- Do we need a system that can handle special gifts and pledges, e.g., in-kind, stock, payroll deduction, split gift, etc. as well as the standard kind?

- Do we have several different types of fundraising events each year? Do we need a system that can manage events like walk-a-thons, concerts, auctions, raffles, ticket purchases, seat assignments, special needs?

- Do we need to keep track of our volunteer corps: expertise, hours committed and completed, special concerns, etc? Are we involved in special programs like membership, subscriptions, premiums, merchandise sales, client services, etc? Do we need software that can accommodate the uniqueness of these fundraising activities?

- Do we have a pledge program and need a system that can keep track of all facets of the process?

- Do we anticipate beginning a capital campaign?

- Do we need a system that can track all phases of the solicitation process for major donors?

- Do we need to produce clear, accurate and easy-to-understand reports for Board members and others?

## Know Your Staff Capabilities

Perhaps one of the worst development nightmares is realizing that the development office's new computer and fundraising software are beyond the capabilities of the staff. I know the nightmare; I've lived it.

After months of careful research, our office purchased a new software package and we began to convert from a combination of index cards and a database program designed in-house to a professional software program. The staff person who had been responsible for maintaining donor records for almost a year had been quite content with the simple card system we had grown out of, and did not fully appreciate the need for a more sophisticated program. In spite of her misgivings, she tried to shift to the new system and phase out the hand-written one. Several months later, I discovered that she was secretly maintaining the index cards ("just to be sure"), while at the same time, reluctantly entering information into the computer. Against her wishes, the index cards were locked up (saved for archival/museum purposes!). She suffered withdrawal symptoms for a while, caught on to the basics, then realized that she was not meant for the job. (Ironically, her next job was teaching computers in an elementary school!)

A certain amount of anxiety and insecurity is inevitable in leaving any comfortable, familiar system, no matter how bad it is, for one that is new. The difficulties inherent in the transition, however, can be anticipated and minimized if there is an honest appraisal of staff capabilities for computers and change. How computer literate is the development staff? How many people need access to the new system, and how much office space do you have available?

Whether people are ready or not, getting a new computer system demands flexibility, openness to change, and a willingness to learn and to make mistakes.

## What to Look for in Choosing the Best Software for Your Needs

The following questions may help you in evaluating software programs and choosing the one best suited for your organization:

- How many names and what types of information can the software hold?

- Can donors/prospects/clients be found quickly and easily?

- Is there more than one way to locate a given record?

- Does the system adequately accommodate two-name records, and do mailing labels show both names automatically?

- If you have many two-person records with separate giving histories, can the system keep them distinct but linked?

- How does the system guard against duplicates (sometimes inadvertently made by misspellings)

or does the system alert you that the record (based on name or address) may be a duplicate?

- How many different ways can you segment or categorize a prospect or donor?

- How user-defined is the system? That is, does the system allow the user to make changes to the screens?

- Can you add fields to increase segmentation possibilities?

- Is it easy to move around the program with a minimum of keystrokes?

- Can you move forward and backward on a single screen?

- Can the system accommodate lapsed donors without deleting them?

- Can you design reports that match your needs and specifications or are you limited to the system's established reports?

- Does the software have the possibility of multiple passwords for different user levels?

- Is the gift and/or pledge entry process easy and straightforward? Does it keep track of the amount, purpose, campaign/solicitation? Are the acknowledgment steps easy?

- Is it possible to enter non-accounting (in-kind) gift credit?

In addition to asking these specific software questions, it is equally important to make other inquiries, as well.

- *About the manufacturer*: Is the software company reliable? Will it be around to meet your long-term needs?

- *About the data conversion process*: How will the transition work between your current system and the new software? Is the process for data conversion clear and easy to follow?

- *About training and support*: Is the technical support timely and helpful? What does it include? Is there a warranty? Is there a service contract? A toll-free number for support? Are consultants available locally, should you need them? Does the purchase cost include installation and on-site training? Is there a tutorial built into the system? Is the manual readable and comprehensive?

- *About upgrades:* How often are enhancements and/or upgrades made? What do they cost, and how do you get them?

- *And about references*: Is there a list of non-profits using the system that you can call for references? ■

*Next: Fundraising software programs for Macs and Windows systems.*

*Working in fundraising for the past 14 years, Maryann Osmond has dealt with the pluses and minuses of a self-designed database program as well as several professional development software systems.*

---

## No Comment DEPARTMENT

### Some thoughts from Ted Turner

"I talked to both Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, the two richest men in the country, and they would be inclined to give more if there was a list of who did the giving rather than the having. What difference does it make if you're worth $12 billion or $11 billion?...They are fighting every year to be the richest man in the world. Why don't they sign a joint pact to each give away a billion and then move down the Forbes list [of the richest people] equally?"

# Who's Doing What on the Internet?

*by Nick Allen*

How many of your donors or members have e-mail addresses? One-tenth? One-quarter? One-half? How many surf the World Wide Web or belong to America Online or CompuServe?

Whatever these percentages, they'll probably double by next year.

Many nonprofit organizations are starting to use their Web sites, as well as forums on AOL or CompuServe, to acquire new donors—and these efforts are beginning to pay off for some.

Far fewer groups are identifying donors who want to have an electronic relationship with them and then using e-mail and the Web tools to provide rich, personalized, two-way relationships. "E-members" can be educated, activated, cultivated, and even renewed in effective yet inexpensive ways impossible with the usual paper and phone contacts.

## Prospecting for New Donors

An organization's own World Wide Web site is the main route for online prospecting. Most organizations have a "join" button somewhere on their site, and more and more sites can accept online credit card contributions. An organization's forum on AOL or CompuServe (the two biggest online services) and the free-offer "FreeShops" on the two services are other places to attract donors. Web malls like CharitiesUSA and Canada's Charity Village also enable groups to accept contributions, but the malls have not proven effective at motivating potential donors.

For the American Civil Liberties Union, online is working. The ACLU's forum on America Online, operating since May 1995, brings in 12 to 15 e-mail pledges a week, plus some income from AOL usage fees.

The group's big success has come from its hand-some Web site, which premiered in February 1996, the same week that President Clinton signed the Communications Decency Act, hotly opposed by the Internet community. That month, the Web site—featuring a "Keep Cyberspace Free" home page—brought in $18,000 via online credit card contributions, plus some money from online "bill me" pledges paid by check. The 580 credit card donors gave a $31 average gift.

Through April (less than three months), the site had brought in $25,000 from credit cards, plus additional pledge money. The average gift remained about $31, according to online coordinator Lynn Decker. New online members are folded into the regular membership stream, but eventually a special program will be started for them.

A much smaller and very different organization, the American Canoe Association, launched its Web site in April and now gets one or two new bill-me members per day (online credit cards coming soon). The premium is a free instruction manual. In addition, the association gets about 20 e-mail messages a day, ranging from information requests to messages for instructors and board members.

Rainforest Action Network's Mark Westlund says credit card contributions from its Web site "covered the initial investment of machines and staffing in the first eight months of its operation." But he cautioned that "the returns from our Web page are not astronomical. Most of our money comes through the traditional channels of direct mail, telephone, foundations, and major individual donors."

Like most other good sites, Rainforest Action Network's has many objectives other than raising money: education, activism (you can send faxes or e-mails to campaign targets right from the page), and even entertainment.

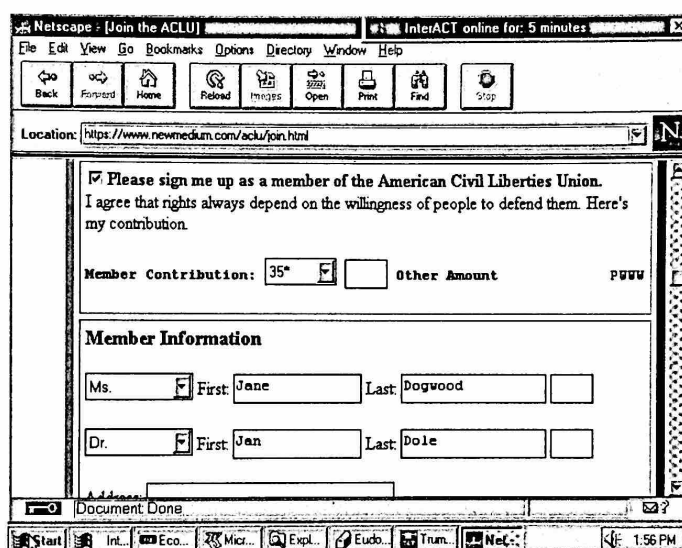WPLN, the NPR station in Nashville, urges listeners
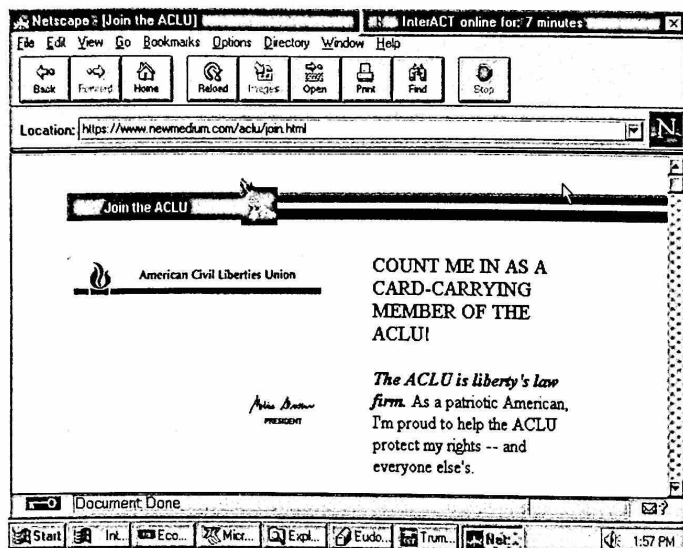
to e-mail their pledges. The station raised over $6,000 in one week—$10,000 in a month—from e-mailed pledges. Average gift was $75; premium was a WPLN mousepad. About 40 percent of online donors are new members, says former development director Greg Pope. In addition to pledges, the station recently began to accept credit card donations online too. "We mention our Web page address, on-air, at least once each hour," says Pope. "We need to make our site a "hot site" that people use every day so that we can lead them toward membership contributions."

By trading advertising with a local Internet service provider, the station gets free e-mail and Web services. Since NPR and PBS audiences are educated and upscale, it's surprising that more affiliates don't make similar use of the Internet for fundraising.

The American Red Cross has been successful in getting Web contributions, especially during the kind of natural disasters it's well known for helping with. While the Red Cross has not been taking donations online, up to 30 percent of the donors calling its toll-free number, 800-HELP-NOW, say they found the number on the Web page. Internet donors average $5 more than donors from print or TV, according to Edward A. Stern of the Red Cross. And 95 percent of donors from the Web give by credit card rather than make pledges. Convincing news organizations like CNN and ABC to provide hot links from their Web sites to the Red Cross site in news stories about disasters could probably further increase donations.

The National Audubon Society has advertised in the AOL FreeShop (GO FreeShop) on and off for about 18 months and brought in about 750 orders. The offer: a free trial issue of Audubon magazine, plus a free backpack upon payment of the $20 dues. Even though the conversion rate is low compared to other alternate source programs, the competitive advertising rate and volume of orders has nearly paid for itself, says market-

ing director Jennifer Doxsee.

The Nature Conservancy forum, on AOL since November 1994, has welcomed more than 1,000 new members, most at an introductory rate of $15, with a free tote bag (GO Nature). More than 50 have renewed.

The Conservancy's gorgeous new Web site offers a $25 membership with the tote bag. Forty-six new members signed up—and one existing member renewed online—in the site's first 10 weeks. The site gives visitors numerous opportunities to get involved. They can sign up for $25 or join the "National Leadership Circle" for $1,000 or more. They can "adopt an acre" or enlist as a volunteer. Or they can buy T-shirts and other branded merchandise. Visitors are asked to take an online survey in exchange for the free downloading of a Nature Conservancy screen saver! Asked if they may be contacted by e-mail, 90 percent say yes.

The Christian Children's Fund has been in the CompuServe mall for about two years (Go CCF) and gets about 50 responses a month. Ten of them make $21 contributions to sponsor a child for a month. The others request a sponsorship information packet. CCF welcomes the responders by e-mail, mails the package within 5 days, and phones them 15 days out. Then they enter the same membership stream as hot leads from other sources.

The FreeShop rate card lists $2,300 a month for AOL—way too pricey for nonprofit offers—but 21st Century Marketing says nonprofits usually negotiate (much) lower rates.

Web sites that offer visitors the opportunity to choose among many groups for donations often seem to have trouble. The "Cookin' on the Net" Web site offered recipes from famous chefs in exchange for contributions to help poor kids get access to computers. Nonetheless, the project raised little online, despite widespread paid advertising, great free media, and big name sponsors like Microsoft. "Much of the money

raised came through traditional mail as a result of the mainstream press coverage rather than through the site itself," according to Steve Glikbarg of Impact Online.

ReliefNet, which links visitors to dozens of relief organizations, has not been generating a lot of contributions in the last year, says Cliff Landesman.

In an AOL posting, Glikbarg said: "In my opinion, online fundraising is still at least a year away from being effective...In the long run, I think online fundraising can be a good supplement (not replacement, just a supplement) for nonprofits. Don't look for thousands to come in, but it is a good way to reach new donors."

Amen!

Of course, small, local organizations can't bring in contributions like large brand-name national organizations. Most nonprofit Web sites get few or no donations, or don't even ask. Many sites don't make it easy to give. The "join" button is buried and not tied to Web pages that might motivate visitors. Even though most successful online fundraising is still small potatoes for big organizations like the ACLU or Audubon, their experiences demonstrate that people will join online. Web and AOL programs are already paying for themselves, even if response rates are low by traditional measurements.

Things can only improve as more people use the Internet, online credit card transactions get more secure and more common, and nonprofits get more savvy about using the Internet to find and relate to members.

Sending credit card numbers over the Internet is not 100 percent secure yet—but neither is giving it to the waiter.

Many donors are "still skittish," says WPLN's Pope. However, soon Visa, MasterCard, and other vendors will introduce "secure" systems. AT&T is already guaranteeing its new Internet customers against fraud when they use their AT&T-issued Universal Visa and MasterCards for Internet purchases.

As credit card transactions are more accepted and



Internet usage skyrockets, getting donations should become easier.

## No Free Launch

Since most organizations with a Web site or online forum use them mainly for education and activation, it's hard to allocate costs to the few pages within a site devoted to fundraising. The main ongoing Web costs, according to the ACLU's Decker, are salary for the online coordinator; monthly charges for server use, consulting, and services from their technical service provider; credit card processing; and creative and production services for frequent updating of the Web site.

## Who's Tuning In?

The American Red Cross got some interesting information from a month-long survey on its Web site, though it may not reflect frank answers from a representative sample.

- Sixty-nine percent of survey takers were men; 33 percent ages 21–30, 22 percent ages 31–40, 21 percent ages 41–50.
- Annual income was less than $35,000 for 46 percent and more than $75,000 for just 7 percent.
- More than one-third volunteer for a Red Cross chapter, 55 percent for other organizations.
- Just over half said they were currently contributing to the Red Cross; 57 percent said their annual charitable giving was less than $1,000. (Amazingly, 17 percent said they'd be interested in including the Red Cross in their wills.)
- Forty percent of visitors used a 14.4 modem, 31 percent a faster 28.8. The rest had very high-speed connections.
- Sixty percent spent at least 15 hours a month on the Internet. How did they get to the Web site? 31 percent from another site, 42 percent from Yahoo or another search engine.
- 80 percent said they would approve of the Red Cross accepting corporate sponsors for its Web site "if it supports your efforts and is done professionally."
- 58 percent would be interested in getting monthly e-mail news to learn about the Red Cross' "regular and/or large disaster operations."

## Dealing with the E-Mail

If your site is inviting and you invite feedback, you'll get a lot of e-mail requests for information and assistance. Internet users expect quick—if not instant—responses, and good customer relations demands greater speed on the Net than via the mail or fax.
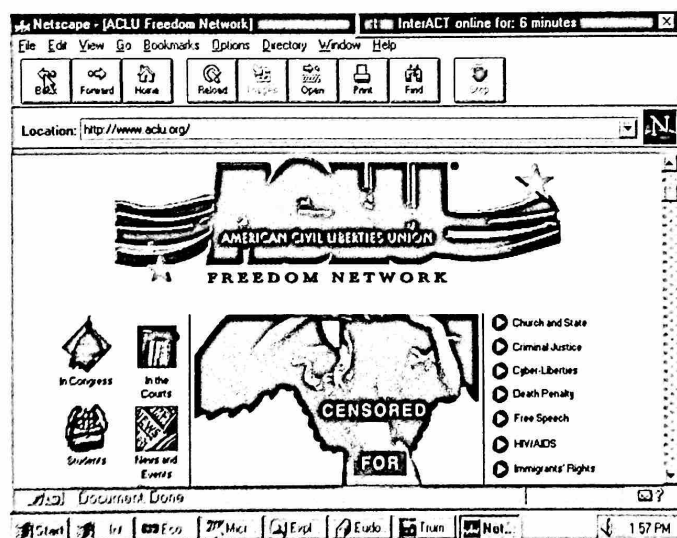
Betsy Jubb of the American Cancer Society says her assistant spends 90 percent of her time answering the more than 100 e-mail queries they receive every day. With little promotion, their site receives over 150,000 hits a month.

## Membership Services

Wondering how you might use the Internet to build relationships with your members or donors?

Imagine messages like these in their e-mail boxes:

- "Thanks to your generous gift, we were able to…"
- "Here's what we're doing to help the flood victims in Oregon…"
- "Click here to fax your member of Congress urging support for H.B. 229. Or write the fax in your own words here and click to send it."
- "Visit our Web site to hear the 'All Things Considered' story about us from last night…"
- "Join me for a breakfast briefing next month when I'm in your city…"
- "Please take 5 minutes to answer these questions about Urgent Issue X and e-mail me your comments."
- "Want to participate in our Run Against AIDS next month?"
- "Our publications are cataloged at www.yourorg.org. Order them online, or download them free."
- "Moving? Click here to E-mail us your new address…"
- "Renew now on-line and get a free BMW!"

Apart from computer-connected organizations like the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, our (limited) research didn't locate any big organizations that systematically use e-mail and the Web for relating to members acquired online, or regular members who might like to communicate electronically (and environmentally).

But we believe the Web is tailor-made for this purpose.

E-mail messages are far less intrusive than dinner-time phone calls—and they cost virtually nothing. While e-mail comes only in plain-vanilla, one-font format, your e-mails can direct members to your Web site's interactive graphics, sound, video, searchable databases, instant-response quizzes, and more.

If Environmental Donor A loves wildlife, she can "subscribe" to a "listserv" that will automatically send her e-mail updates on wildlife issues. A member who wants to lobby can join your rapid response system, receive automatic alerts, and fax Congress right from the members-only section of your Web site.

The ACLU, for example, offers free subscriptions to four e-mail lists. Their Action Alerts list has over 2,000 subscribers, and their electronic newsletter on cyber-liberty has over 1,500. The Natural Resources Defense Council's

## ONLINE AUCTIONS

Online auctions have also reportedly raised money, though renewing these "donors" would probably require another auction. Ken Margolis Associates runs the Artrock Auction, which raised $15,000 from 100 buyers in April for the Save the Earth Foundation. The most expensive item was a signed Eagles poster, which went for $1,005. Bidders have to pay a $5 registration fee in advance, which "brings up the age of the bidders," Margolis says. The Entertainment Promotions Network says its silent online "Celebrity Internet Charity Auction" raised $4,000 for the Hollywood-based Family Assistance Program, which helps homeless families. Online bidders paid $325 for a "Seinfeld" script, the most expensive item.

Given the cost of setting up attractive home pages with photos of the items for sale and the technology to make bidding work, auctions of this size must depend on donated Internet and Web construction services. However, the economics might be different for large local or national organizations that could draw thousands of bidders for solar-powered cars, Himalayan treks, and posters of the Eagles (rock or bald).

"State of Nature" list has thousands of subscribers.

A Web site is open to 30 or 40 million Internet users from Sacramento to Shanghai, but you can also set up password-protected pages as a benefit for "members only." There your members can:

- Tell you their views (via surveys or e-mail forms)
- Get updates on your work, your successes, upcoming media interviews, and events
- Order books, videos, T-shirts or anything else, and pay with a credit card (and member discount!)
- Change addresses and perform other housekeeping tasks, or request a call from one of your staff
- Renew their membership or make special contributions
- Correspond with other members who share their interests or are members of the same chapter.

## Taking the Next Step

First, every time you communicate with your members and donors, ask if they have an e-mail address and if it's OK to communicate with them that way sometimes.

Make sure there's an e-mail field in your database. Put your electronic addresses on all your printed mate-

rials. Then start slowly testing what works—and what you can handle—in electronic communication with your members.

If your organization doesn't have a Web site yet, you need to figure out if you need one—how it will advance your mission and goals. Don't put up a Web site just because everyone else is.

If you have a Web site, it makes sense to incorporate fundraising and membership services. Think about how you can use the Web's special dynamic to invite visitors to get involved, learn, and join.

Check out some of the sites listed here to see how the pioneers are experimenting. Consider hiring a consultant who can help. And let me know what's working and what's not. ◼

*Nick Allen is a Senior Consultant at Mal Warwick & Associates, Inc. Much of this material first appeared in their newsletter, Successful Direct Mail & Telephone Fundraising (July 1996).*

# CHECK OUT THESE SITES!

www.aclu.org
**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION**

www.ran.org
**RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK**

www.redcross.org
**AMERICAN RED CROSS**

www.panda.org
**WORLD WILDLIFE FUND**

www.wpln.org
**NPR STATION**

www.tnc.org
**NATURE CONSERVANCY**

www.cancer.org
**AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY**

www.charitiesusa.com/charitiesusa
**CHARITIES U.S.A.**

www.charityvillage.com/cvhome.html
**CHARITY VILLAGE**

www.epn.com/auction
**CELEBRITY AUCTION**

www.commerce.com/save_earth
**ARTROCK AUCTION**

www.cooknet.org
**COOKIN' ON THE NET**

www.impactonline.org
**NONPROFIT SERVICE CENTER**

www.reliefnet.org
**RELIEF NET**

All World Wide Web addresses start with http://, but you can omit it with Netscape and most other browsers.
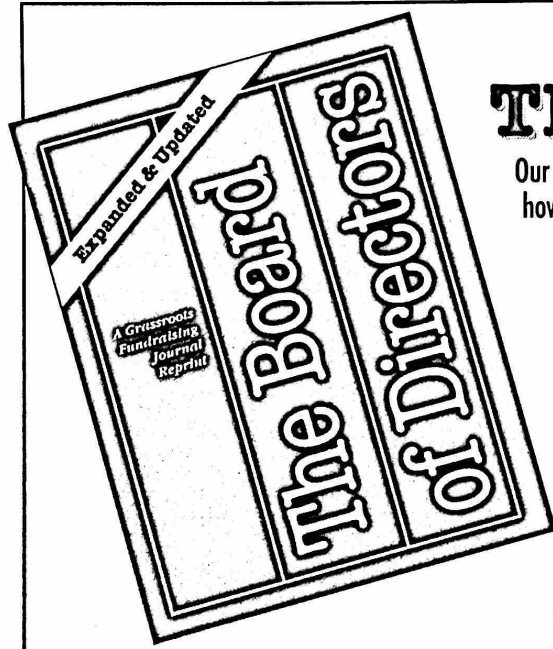
# Grassroots Grants: Words & Layout Mastering the Basics

*by Andy Robinson*
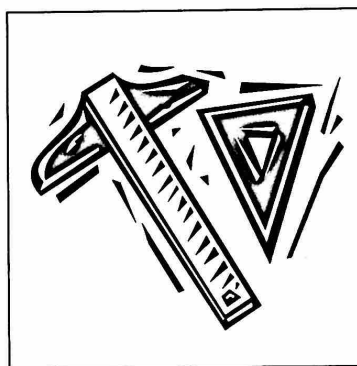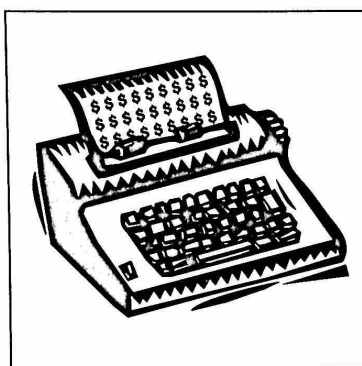
I have a friend who serves as a volunteer grant reviewer for a regional foundation. Every grants cycle—about twice each year—he comes home with a twenty-pound box of proposals. He clears off his dining room table, grabs a cup of coffee (or maybe a beer, depending upon his mood), and makes a first pass through the box, spending a minute or two with each application. In the process, he sorts them into three stacks: "likely," "maybe," and "forget it."

As he flips through the pile of proposals, my friend is a lot like you or me going through our daily "junk mail." Which pieces will we open? Which will we read? Which groups will receive our contributions? On what basis will we make these decisions?

The proposals that grab his attention—"the like-lies"—are well organized and cleanly laid out, with wide margins and lots of white space. Something on the first page—the project title, the group, the name of a board member, a sentence or two in the executive summary—grabs his attention. The main goal is clearly and effectively stated.

Most of these projects will eventually get funded because a) a positive first impression naturally leads to a more generous and careful reading of the material, and b) he will read the most well-written and attractive ones first, before he gets tired and irritable. As Dan Petegorsky, formerly of the Peace Development Fund says, "When I'm going through a stack of proposals, I naturally gravitate to the ones that look like they won't give me a headache."

No matter what you're writing—a grant application, newsletter, annual report, or fund appeal—your skill with words and layout will have a big impact on the reader.

## Wrestling with Words

When it's time to put words on paper, or type them onto the computer screen, most of us freeze up. Somewhere back in grammar school we learned that the written language is supposed to be formal and proper, and consequently we can't, or won't, write the way we speak. We haul out the big words and try to impress the reader with our vocabulary. We use lots of jargon and technical terms. We create elaborate sentences that are hard to read and even harder to understand.

I once asked a student of mine to describe her group's mission. She said, "Intervention for case management."

"Excuse me?"

"We work with disabled children and teach them how to use their bodies."

Can you see the difference? The first sentence sounds impressive but means nothing. The second sentence paints a picture using simple, clear words. After enduring my criticism with a smile, she wrote a marvelous mission

## When you write...

- It's okay to use an informal, we're-all-in-this-together tone. Think of the reader as an interested friend.

- Avoid jargon and fancy language. Keep it simple.

- Write the way you speak. If you're having trouble, try talking into a tape recorder, then transcribe and edit your words. If tape recorders make you uncomfortable, ask a friend to write down your spoken words. If you can talk, you can write.

- You won't get it right the first time, so leave time for a rewrite. Let your words sit overnight before reading (and writing) them again.

- Ask a co-worker or friend who writes well to read your work and make sure that it's clear and concise.

statement describing what it was like to watch a 2-year-old pick up a ball and hold it in her hands for the first time. The class was practically in tears. We were all reaching for our checkbooks.

The voices of your constituents and clients—the people who benefit from your work—can make your fundraising materials more informal and increase their emotional appeal. Nothing involves the reader like a good story or a compelling quote. Just make sure to get permission before you use other people's words; most folks are flattered to be asked.

As Pam Rogers of the Haymarket People's Fund says, "Let your constituents speak. They speak from the heart. Their stories are moving...You can do this in a way that does not exploit people's pain or their situation."

A thoughtful, well-written appeal will improve your odds of getting funded. In a crowded field, you want your organization to stand out, and the written word is one of the best tools available. Use it. Without getting too fancy, write the cleanest, sharpest prose that you can. Whack the reader on the nose with clear, direct language.

### Layout: Easy on the Eyeballs

The basic principles of layout can be summed up with the cliche, "less is more." In general:

- The less type on the page, the easier it is to read.

- The less clutter on the page, the easier it is to understand.

Dan Petegorsky sums up the most common layout problems: "Bad copies, faint typewriter ribbons, proposals with tiny type, words running to the edge of the paper. If you can't read it, you can't get it."

You don't need to be a graphic artist to create an attractive document. Just keep in mind the following points:

**1. Leave lots of white space.** Leave margins of at least one inch on all sides of the page; a bit more is helpful. It's okay to make the text single spaced, but if you do, add an extra space between paragraphs.

**2. Use 12-point (or larger) type.** Twelve-point type is the standard size for most computer fonts. Do not switch to a smaller type face to squeeze more words onto the page—figure out a way to tell your story with fewer words.

**3. Break up the page.** Nothing tires the eyes more than repetition. If your paragraphs and pages all look the same, the reader's eyes start to wander, and his or her mind won't be far behind. Use bold text, underlining, italic text, bullets, lists, and indented paragraphs to build some visual variety into your pages. These techniques, used judiciously, also guide the reader through your written materials, highlighting the most important points.

As you use these techniques, be selective. Dan Petegorsky warns about "bullet abuse": "Some people don't make enough use of bold face and underlining to prioritize, or else they overuse these tools. When the whole document is presented in bullets, I don't know what's important. I can't understand the flow of strategy."

**4. Don't justify the text.** "Justification" means that the words line up on both sides of the page. This works fine in narrow columns, like a newspaper, but it's harder to read across the width of a standard page. Unless you're setting up multiple columns (as in a newsletter), leave the right side of your text "ragged."

**5. Use graphics where appropriate.** Some information just can't be reduced to words, or is better presented in other ways. In these situations, graphs, charts, maps and even artwork and photographs can be incorporated directly into your funding letter, annual report, grant proposal, or newsletter. There are dozens of computer programs available to help you create graphics, and the most popular operating systems allow you to "paste" these design elements right into your document.

**6. Use a good printer.** Laser or ink jet printers are best because they produce the cleanest, darkest type. If you don't have access to a high-quality printer, many photocopy shops will rent you time on theirs; they generally charge by the page. ■

# Grassroots Grants
## AN ACTIVIST'S GUIDE TO PROPOSAL WRITING

Andy Robinson
Foreword by Kim Klein

"If you work for social change and you write proposals, this is the book to buy."
— Gary Delgado, co-founder, Center for Third World Organizing

Author and activist Andy Robinson describes in plain English just what it takes to win grants for social justice.

## In Grassroots Grants you'll learn about:

The pros and cons of chasing grants • How grants fit into a complete fundraising program • Designing fundable projects
Using your grant proposal as a community organizing plan • Grants research: how to find the money
Developing relationships with foundation staff • Building your proposal, piece by piece
Grants administration and reporting • The long haul: stamina, persistence, resilience

**Grassroots Grants includes four complete proposals, plus suggestions from forty foundation staff who fund groups working for social justice, human rights, and environmental conservation.**

PHOTO: MOLLY MOORE

During his sixteen years as a grassroots fundraiser and community organizer, Andy Robinson has written 100 successful grant proposals. Andy now provides training and consultation to nonprofits across the country.

*Grassroots Grants:*  ISBN# 0-9620222-5-X  195 pgs  $25  Chardon Press, P.O. Box 11607, Berkeley, CA 94712

# Back Issues
## Use order form on page 15

*The Classic How-To Fundraising Text...*

# Fundraising for Social Change

*By Kim Klein*

Everything you need to know to raise money successfully from individuals. Now in its Third Edition. Completely revised and expanded. Learn how to:

- Motivate your board of directors
- Analyze your constituency
- Use direct mail techniques successfully
- Plan and implement major gifts campaigns, endowments and planned giving programs
- Deal with anxiety
- Use computers for fundraising
- And more.

*Use order form below. Special discount prices for orders of 5 or more books.*
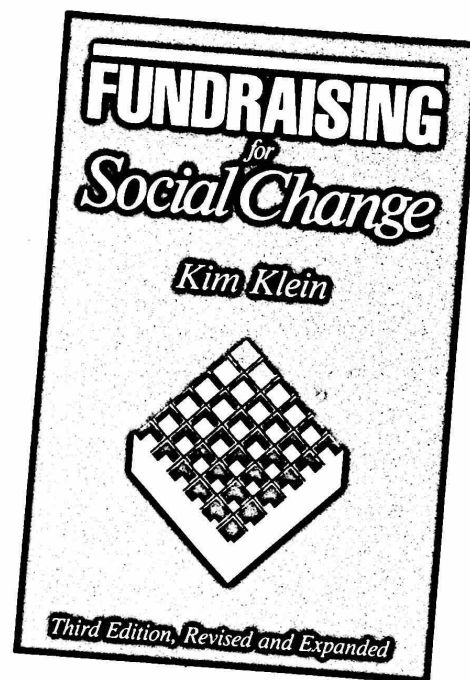
## ORDER FORM

### Grassroots Fundraising Journal

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**
*Please allow 6 weeks for processing new subscriptions.*

| United States | ☐ 1 year @ $25 | _____ |
| | ☐ 2 years @ $48 | _____ |
| | ☐ 3 years @ $70 | _____ |
| Canada & Overseas | ☐ 1 year @ $32 | _____ |
| | ☐ 2 years @ $62 | _____ |
| | ☐ 3 years @ $91 | _____ |

**SUBTOTAL: $ _____**

*There are no tax or shipping charges for subscriptions.*

**SPECIAL EDITIONS: $10 EACH**
- ☐ The Board of Directors _____
- ☐ Getting Major Gifts _____

**BACK ISSUES**
- ☐ All Available Back Issues: $150 _____
- ☐ Individual Back Issues: $4.20 each
*Single articles not available.*

| QUANTITY | VOLUME & NUMBER | COST |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

**SUBTOTAL: $ _____**

### Books

☐ **Fundraising for Social Change**
by Kim Klein  (ISBN 0-9620222-3-3)
- ____ 1–4 copies @ $25 each _____
- ____ 5–9 copies @ $20 each _____
- ____ 10+ copies @ $15 each _____

☐ **Grassroots Grants**
by Andy Robinson  (ISBN 0-9620222-5-X)
- ____ 1–4 copies @ $25 each _____
- ____ 5–9 copies @ $20 each _____
- ____ 10+ copies @ $15 each _____

**SUBTOTAL: $ _____**

### Shipping/Handling Charges

| ORDER TOTALLING | SHIPPING FEE |
|---|---|
| $10.00– 25.00 | **$4.00** |
| $25.01– 50.00 | **$6.00** |
| $50.01– 75.00 | **$8.00** |
| $75.01–100.00 | **$10.00** |
| $100.01 or more | **10% of order** |
| ☐ 2nd day air | **+$5.00** |
| ☐ Overnight | **+$10.00** |

*Please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery.*

**Overseas (including Canada & Mexico):**
For each shipping & handling level above, multiply by 2 (Payment in U.S. dollars only).

Special Editions/Back Issues: $_____ + Books: $_____ = $_____
In CA add 8.25% sales tax $_____
Shipping & Handling (see chart above) $_____
SUBSCRIPTION $_____
**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: $_____**

Name _____
Organization _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
☐ **Change of Address:** Enclose mailing label and write new address above.
**Credit Card Orders:** ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA  Card #: _____

Expiration date: _____  Signature: _____

Make checks payable to: **CHARDON PRESS**, P.O. Box 11607, Berkeley, CA 94712
Phone: (510) 704-8714  Fax: (510) 649-7913  E-mail: Chardn@aol.com

**Grassroots Fundraising Journal**
P.O. Box 11607
Berkeley, CA 94712

Address Correction Requested