Grant funding for Irish academic libraries – some opportunities

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PREAMBLE

Academic libraries continue to operate in financially restrictive environments and often under increasing external economic pressures. There is frequent mention in the literature of 'budgetary pressures';[1] Moyer refers to a 'budget cut world',[2] Holt to a 'funding crisis';[3] Nevo et al. write of a 'world of increasing budgetary pressure'.[4] Huang declares that funding is 'increasingly problematic and competitive'.[5] Suffice to say, 'it is no great insight to note that academic libraries are having budget problems'.[6]

Libraries are expected to provide services to match the expectations of their users. Managers and financial administrators, as well as customers, expect, and rightly so, a business-like approach with cost-effective services and what auditors are rather fond of calling 'VFM' – value for money. These expectations have become progressively more heightened in the era of Web 2.0 and amongst Net Gen users. Semesterisation, the internationalisation of the student body, demographic changes, increased blended learning and distance learning modes have placed not only operational, technological and strategic burdens on libraries and their staff, but also a very real financial weight. Patrons expect instant connectivity, 24x7 integrated access and 'more bang for their buck'. In this context, libraries need to become more financially savvy, to develop better marketing and public relations skills and, critically, to acquire more expertise in matters financial. These matters financial relate not just to the management of budgets and resources, but to actually increasing and generating additional revenues. The SCONUL 2010 Vision document[7] recognised this under the 'management skills' strand:

'LIS [Library and Information Services] will increase recruitment of staff with skills in areas such as finance and marketing … fundraising will become more central to our activities.'

Put in stark terms, for libraries to meet these increased needs and if we are to sustain our existing services and add value, we need more money. Gotwals describes it thus: 'clearly for most libraries, needs go beyond the capacity of the operating budget provided by the institution'.[8] Shrinking budgets and, in particular, lack of discretionary budgets mean that libraries will need to look more vigorously at alternative income streams and more non-traditional ways of raising finance. Despite this vulnerability, it is not all doom and gloom. Many libraries have successfully attracted additional funds, shared or reduced costs, participated in projects with other libraries and partners and forged strategic alliances that have resulted in economies of scale. Many others have reacted positively and creatively and have become adept at managing resources and budgets, often invoking those good friends Peter and Paul to stay on top of things. Libraries have developed collaborative strategies and partnerships that have become well established, such as consortium approaches to buying electronic resources, datasets and databases.

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF GENERATING FINANCE

Traditionally, academic libraries have raised additional or non-core funds through tried and tested activities. Many of these funds are offset against other costs such as training, conference attendance or, in the case of Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) libraries, payment of student shelvers from late and overdue fees. Over the years these traditional methods of generating revenue have included:

- patron fines (for late / overdue loans)
- photocopying, printing
- membership fees
- training
- external borrower schemes
- corporate borrower schemes
- commercial searching or business information services.

Co-operation, resource-sharing = savings?

Many academic libraries in Ireland have also been involved in cost-saving and resource-sharing schemes, although it would be fair to say that most of the formal schemes are based around the university sector. These range from national groups to access co-operatives and to formal and informal inter-library loan (ILL) arrangements. Some examples well known to those in the Irish academic libraries community might include:

- **SHIRL** (*not published since 1994*) – shared holdings in Irish research libraries
- **ALCID** reader cards (academic libraries co-operating in Dublin)[9]
- **SCONUL** research extra (SRX) – many members of ALCID would also participate in SRX
- **Institute of Technology** (IoT) reader cards
- **IoT librarians group** (currently actively researching a union catalogue)
- **COLICO** (Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland; http://www.librarycouncil.ie/colico)
- **CONUL** Consortium of National and University Libraries (http://www.conul.ie)
- **IRIS**: multiple searching of Irish university and research catalogues through IRIS OPAC (similar to COPAC) (http://www.iris.ie)
- **IIIUG**: this group represents all the institutes of technology in Ireland, who all use the same Library Management Sysytem – Innovative Interface's *Millennium*
- **'Joining forces'**: a 'milestone report on a framework for a national policy on libraries and information services in Ireland', produced by the Library Council of Ireland in 2000[10]
- **ANLTC**: Academic and National Library Training Co-operative, founded in 1995 (http://www.anltc.ie).

Fundraising and other potential sources of income

Some of the more non-traditional or alternative methods of raising finance aren't yet especially developed in Irish academic libraries. There is no great tradition of fundraising or endowment fundraising, at least outside of the major research libraries. As a source of alternative funding in Ireland, these types of sources are very much uncharted territory. Many libraries, WIT included, receive regular book donations and ad hoc collections are bestowed from time to time. As a further consequence, special collections that are bequeathed to libraries may often require additional levels of funding or expertise if the library does not already have sufficient competency. As a source of direct funding, fundraising does not generate large amounts of revenue. Notwithstanding the legacies of Andrew Carnegie and Andrew Mellon, there are social and cultural reasons for this. Huang argues that, although fundraising for academic libraries in the US is a relatively recent trend, it has in fact become 'integral' and 'the norm'.[11] There is a strong practice of benefactions and endowment in the USA through private and corporate benefactors, as well as charitable foundations such as the Gates Library Foundation; the public exchequer model of funding for libraries in Ireland is radically different and not likely to lend itself to outside investment (at least on a non-capital basis). Foley identifies endowment fundraising as a potentially 'long term source of revenue' for libraries.[12] In the Irish context, however, although there may be potential for some benefits, it is questionable whether or not libraries could rely on fundraising to sustain a level of income generation. In many instances, a matched funding element is required and this for many IoT libraries could be a serious inhibitor. Foley also contends that there is a link between the ability of a library to market itself (in the wider sense) and its ability to attract endowment fundraising. In this regard, some Irish academic libraries may face challenges or lack some experience in marketing strategies. Further constraints on attracting private monies might centre on conflicts in licensing arrangements and carrying out commercial research using copyrighted material and public funds. All that said, we can certainly learn from many of our international colleagues and the following are just some of the alternative income streams that represent core activities in many international academic and research libraries:

- fundraising
- endowments
- public–private partnerships
- marketing and public relations
- 'friends of the library' support groups
- benefactors
- alumni and foundation offices
- cross-sectoral library partnerships such as OHIO Link[13]

- donations / special collections
- joint-use libraries (libraries that serve multiple user groups).

CURRENT FUNDING MODEL

In the Republic of Ireland, the public higher education sector – comprising universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education – although self-governing is to all intents and purposes state-funded by central government. Funding is administered under the auspices of the higher education authority14for both capital and revenue budgets. State spending on all education has increased dramatically over the past few years, up 140% from 1997 to over €7 billion by 2006; spending in the third-level subdivision is up 100% in the same period to €850 million. Taking capital funding out of the equation, as well as inflationary and pay increases, the levels of operating budget for many academic libraries continue to be in the context of 'growing needs and limited budgets'.[15] Academic library budgets are assigned by their parent institutions and as such are vulnerable to any cutbacks that may affect them. Individual academic schools or departments may, subject to their own finances, contribute additional funds from their own budgets.

Fixed costs such as permanent salaries (not withstanding the experience of the Bangor University library staff) are normally not affected; the 'squeeze' usually relates to discretionary budgets in the areas of temporary or contract staff, book and journal budgets and electronic resources. Project work may depend on outside sources and is also often particularly susceptible to restraint. We are all aware of the demands print journals and the traditional modes of scholarly communication have been placing on budgets for years now; schemes like the Open Access Initiative (OAI), Open Archives Initiative and institutional repositories are attempting to go some way towards redressing the balance. Budgetary pressures or lack of funding can have consequences operationally and may result in what Boadi calls a 'negative impact on the quality of services.'[16] The effect may also be seen in terms of research outputs; a study by McNicol[17] cites a lack of financial resources as the second most significant barrier to research in libraries. Cox has made the point that libraries frequently don't benefit directly from research grants: 'research grants should assist in the purchase of library collections'.[18]

In response to some of these budgetary pressures, Waterford Institute of Technology libraries (WITL) embarked on a scoping exercise to try and identify some potentially unconventional methods of attracting or attaining additional funds. The remit was to look at what was available to Irish academic libraries, specifically – but not exclusively – in the realm of grant aid. Of course, the need to source and acquire additional funding and grants is not exclusive to WITL. A cursory look at the strategic plans of many academic libraries will surely reveal a section on investigating or identifying additional revenue streams.

SOME PROSPECTS FOR FUNDING

ANLTC

An example of co-operation between libraries to address training needs is the Academic and National Library Training Co-operative (ANLTC). The ANLTC was founded in 1995, its aim being 'to identify training needs within member Irish academic and national libraries to form the basis of an ongoing co-operative training and development programme'.[19] It has 12 member libraries from the whole island of Ireland, comprising mainly universities but also including Dublin Institute of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons. In addition to providing the opportunity for a wide range of affordable training for library staff, the ANLTC also offers two awards (one para-professional and one professional) for ANLTC member libraries' staff. These are:

1 **CONUL staff development award for library assistants**: the award is open to staff who aren't in the librarian grades, to encourage and facilitate their career development. The award is for a sum of €1,500 that can be used by the staff member for study, conference fees and any other activities which would contribute to their development. The winner must report on their activities within 18 months of receiving the prize. SCONUL also run a staff development award scheme.

2 **ANLTC/Swets research fund**: this fund is open to staff in the librarian grades and its purpose is to promote 'practitioner-based research among librarians in ANLTC member libraries'.[20] The award is co-funded by the ANLTC and Swets Information Services up to a maximum of €2,000.

Traineeships

A number of academic libraries – such as University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, Dundalk Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tallaght – offer funded library traineeship

programmes. FÁS, the Irish National Training and Employment Authority, offered such a scheme up to 2004 but has since discontinued the programme. In most instances, candidates undertake either the master of library and information studies or the graduate diploma in library and information studies programme at University College Dublin, following a period of employment of one year at library assistant level. SCONUL also runs a graduate trainee scheme aiming 'to help graduates intending to work for a year before taking a university course in librarianship, information science or a related subject'.[21]

Heritage Council Grants programme
The Heritage Council Grants programme generally becomes available every autumn and offers genuine potential for academic library funding. Under this scheme in 2007, the Heritage Council is financing heritage projects to the value of €3.2 million for 377 projects under various grant schemes. These schemes include local heritage, publications, museums and archives, wildlife, architecture research, and archaeology.[22]

Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI)
The PRTLI is one of two major sources of state funding in Ireland that are open to applications from academic libraries. Since its launch by the Department of Education and Science in 1998, the PRTLI has allocated €605 million to third-level institutions. The purpose of the programme is to 'provide integrated financial support for institutional strategies, programmes and infrastructure and ensure that institutions have the capacity and incentives to formulate and implement research strategies, which will give them critical mass and world level capacity in key areas of research'.[23] Of the €605 million allocated to date, just two third-level institution libraries have been successful in funding applications: Trinity College Dublin's Ussher library received €25.7m infra-structural funding and University College Cork's research library received €28.6m funding. Despite the key role that libraries play in the research process of third-level institutions, less than 10% of the overall funding has gone directly to libraries. There is an amount of €230m to be provided within cycle IV of the programme over the period 2007–2011.

Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF)
The other key state funding that academic libraries can potentially profit from is the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). This is a €300m five-year fund established by the government in 2006 'to promote collaboration, support change and

enhance quality in Irish higher education so that it is equipped to meet the challenge of driving Ireland's development as a leading knowledge economy'.[24] Under the first cycle of the fund in 2006, €42 million was awarded to 14 major projects. These projects covered a broad range of areas including:

- supporting institutional restructuring
- enhancing teaching and learning
- enabling fourth level
- improving access and lifelong learning.[25]

The selected projects place a strong emphasis on inter-institutional collaboration and in this context there is ample scope for partnership and strategic synergies amongst academic libraries. The university sector – the Irish university academic (IUA) libraries – has benefited enormously from the SIF (in conjunction with the HEA) through the IReL Initiative (Irish Research eLibrary), which is making €20m available up to 2008, ostensibly for the purchase of electronic journals and datasets for research purposes. The IUA has naturally, as a result, been in a strong negotiating position with vendors and suppliers through centralised and collaborative purchasing. More recently (2007), the seven (IUA) libraries had further success with an SIF proposal to put in place a network of institutional repositories, aspiring to making publicly funded published research available to all. To date, the institute of technology library sector has had little success with the SIF, although there are some potential proposals in the pipeline.

Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
Under the Research Projects Grant programme, the IRCHSS[26] funds cutting-edge research in the humanities, social sciences, business and law, with the objective of creating new knowledge and expertise beneficial to Ireland's economic, social and cultural development. Funding is 'bottom-up' and, although research should be academic-led, the scheme does not preclude academic libraries from submitting a research proposal. Applications are invited from academic staff employed at higher education institutions in Ireland for research-project funding in the following schemes:

a) small research projects grants
This scheme is for academic staff employed at third-level institutions in Ireland for research-project funding in the range of €2,500 to €50,000, tenable for a maximum duration of two years.

b) thematic research projects grants
This scheme is for academic staff employed at third-level institutions in Ireland for research-

project funding in the range of €6,500 to €300,000, tenable for a maximum duration of 3 years.

Bursaries

Another prospective source of funding for library staff is the area of bursaries. One such bursary is the John Campbell Conference/Travel Bursary, funded by the John Campbell Trust in the United Kingdom. The trust makes a number of calls for applications from library and information professionals every year. The bursary is designed to 'help an information professional to attend a conference, and/or to undertake a programme of travel, which financial constraints would otherwise put beyond his/her reach'.[27] The bursaries are open to applicants in the UK or Ireland, for attendance at a conference outside the UK/Ireland. The bursary can be awarded up to a maximum of €1,500. In addition to this bursary, library staff should consider presenting papers at conference, as this can result in conference fees being waived.

Europe

In addition to the opportunities available in Ireland, Europe – the European Union (EU) – has major funding potential for academic libraries. Under the seventh Framework Programme (FP7), one of the most significant programmes for funding in education and training is the 'Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013', which replaced the 'Socrates' programme.

This programme 'comprises four sectoral programmes on school education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig)'.[28] The programme was established to fund projects for the enhancement of lifelong learning in the EU. It has a total budget of some €6.9 billion, to be distributed over the period 2007–2013. Two of the objectives of the 'Erasmus' higher education programme are to 'facilitate the development of innovative practices in education and training at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others and to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning'. The 2007 call for proposals asked for 'projects which help institutions to develop lifelong learning strategies and become 'open learning centres' for their region.[29] There is undoubted scope for further exploration amongst academic libraries.

Private sector

The private sector may become a growing source for additional funding in the future. In many research libraries and public library sectors, this practice is well established. Sumerford asserts that 'it is important to remember that donors want to support projects that will empower citizens and result in long-term improvements in the community'.[30] If libraries approach the private sector for direct corporate sponsorship, it is vital that it be part of a coordinated plan and an overall strategy. Library staff themselves might have a role in sourcing funding and grants. Doran, as far back as 1990, in her case-study article on fundraising in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland library, asserts that 'there may be people on the library staff with a flair for this kind of work or who have extensive business connections and these should be utilized'.[31] In addition to harnessing the skills and connections of library staff, many higher-level institutions have specialized sections that deal with acquiring funding. In WIT, the foundations office undertakes this role and its expertise and advice could prove a useful reserve in a funding campaign. Ultimately for libraries, to maximise revenues they must continually explore new avenues of funding and grants.

CONCLUSIONS

Attempting to raise supplementary revenues can be a 'daunting experience and an exciting challenge'.[32] There are often social and cultural constraints and many libraries are reluctant or inexperienced in grant applications, marketing or fundraising. There is, according to Peacock, a 'narrow appreciation of the role of the library as an active contributor to the teaching and learning process … and a reluctance to engage the library in teaching learning partnerships and projects, either by exclusion or oversight'.[33] In order to overcome these constraints libraries need to actively cultivate more partnerships and foster more strategic links. Non-traditional approaches to generating additional revenues should be investigated and should become part of the normal process of the business of libraries. To conclude, in this article we do not claim to have definitive answers on how to source funding/grants for academic libraries, or indeed to provide a template for doing this successfully. Rather it is an attempt to highlight some potential revenue-raising opportunities for Irish academic libraries. To begin moving in this direction, libraries should consider:

- cultivating and enhancing links with business and industry as well as the wider community
- being proactive
- planning
- remembering that it is a competitive process: success may take time,
- Involving library staff and utilising their skills and contacts
- getting documentation, statistics and library data up to date
- making funding a strategic goal and outlining how and why this can be achieved
- looking at developing partnerships and alliances with other libraries, stakeholders and like-minded suitable collaborators
- exploration, through applications, travelling, conference attendance
- advocacy
- stimulating debate and further research.

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