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### Fundraising in the Arts and Education Using Social Networking

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*Bridgewater State University*

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# Arts and Education Funding Using Social Media

Ed Tech Day 2011  
Bridgewater State University

James Bohn

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# EdTech ☐Day slogan:

Too much tech, too little time - What's right for me?



My Answer:

\$

# Bias

My investigation of Arts Funding and Social Media is based solely on my personal interest as a composer trying to raise additional funds for music projects.

# State of the Arts: Funding

Arts funding in America is primarily achieved through grant organizations.

# Funding from Grant Organizations

I personally am dissatisfied with funding opportunities from most grant organizations for a couple of reasons: time and requirements.



# Funding from Grant Organizations: Time

Applying to grants is a very time intensive process. That being said, it is well worth it if you are relatively sure you will get funding from one or more sources. Otherwise, it can appear to be a pit into which you invest time and effort, at the expense of making art.

# Funding from Grant Organizations: Requirements

Many grant funding organizations for the arts have restrictions. Based on a cursory overview of currently available arts grants, I see four general types of restrictions: Geography, Ethnicity, Social Action, and Education.

# Grants requiring Geography

“Open To: California-based composers.”  
ACF-SFBAC Chapter Subito Grants

“Seeks proposals for new collaborative  
dance works involving live music from  
Minnesota-based composer /  
choreographer teams . . .”  
American Composers Forum

# Grants requiring Ethnicity

“Seeks applicants for First Nations Composer Initiative (FNCI) Common Ground grants for the creation of newly-composed works by American Indian, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian composer . . .” American Composers Forum

“A part of the Folk Arts and Heritage Program, apprenticeships support the teaching of traditional arts that are specific to a particular folk group or ethnic community.” Massachusetts Cultural Council

# Comments on Geography & Ethnicity:

Geography giveth, and geography taketh away. If you are eligible for a grant based on geography, it does decrease competition, increasing your chances.

The American Composers Forum currently offers NO grants without geography or ethnicity restrictions.

# Grants requiring Social Action:

“Extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations.” NEA: Challenge America Fast-Track

“Support through the disbursement of cultural economic development grants including grants for cultural activities that have the capacity to revitalize communities, stimulate income, create or enhance jobs, and attract tourism.” Massachusetts Adams Arts Program

# Grants requiring Education:

“The Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth category offers funding for projects that help children and youth acquire knowledge and understanding of and skills in the arts.” NEA: Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth

“Seeks applicants for their Arts Teachers Fellowship Program grants for the artistic revitalization of outstanding arts teachers in public arts high schools.” Surdna Foundation

# Funding from Grant Organizations: Requirements

Few arts grants are free of the sort of requirements enumerated earlier.

Such requirements often put the artist in a position where they have to either alter their plans or artistic goals to accommodate these requirements, or abandon the possible funding source.



# Crowd Funding:

I was inspired the business model of President Obama's fundraising during the election of 2008. That is, rather than seek out a small number of large contributions, his campaign sought a large number of small contributions.

Or to put it in Art History terms, do not be dependent upon the Medici family.

# An Aside: Free Content:

Most musicians make little money from music sales (CDs) or ticket sales. This problem is furthered by market pressure for artists to give away free content.

Author Cory Doctorow actually gives away free pdfs of all of his books.

# Free Content:

A perspective from Cory Doctorow: “For me -- for pretty much every writer -- the big problem isn't piracy, it's obscurity (thanks to Tim O'Reilly for this great aphorism). Of all the people who failed to buy this book today, the majority did so because they never heard of it, not because someone gave them a free copy.” ([craphound.com/littlebrother/about](http://craphound.com/littlebrother/about))

# Sphere of Influence:

The goal in a Crowd Funding model is to find a body of fans that are willing to pay to support content, even when it is given away for free.

# Crowd Funding:

I recognized the ability of social media to play a central role in connecting artists with funding. That being said, a quality tool for this connection was lacking. That is, until Kickstarter came along . . .

# Kickstarter:

Launched in April, 2009, Kickstarter is a social media based, fundraising tool for the arts. The artist in question proposes a project, sets a funding goal, and sets a timeline (1-90 days) for the goal to be met.

# Kickstarter:

Kickstarter's funding model is an all or nothing one. If the funding goal is not reached by the time the timeline runs out, the artist gets nothing. While it costs nothing to propose a project, Kickstarter takes 5% of any successful funding.

# Kickstarter: Payments:

Payments are handled exclusively through Amazon Payments. Charges are not made until the funding deadline passes. Amazon Payments also takes a credit card processing fee out of the proceeds.



# Kickstarter:

The artist posts a text description and a video which explains their project. The artist can also specify awards for donating at various levels.

# Kickstarter: Backers:

Backers can select any funding level they choose, and can change or cancel their pledge (though canceling their pledge is discouraged). While the backers are listed on the project site, the amount they've donated is not revealed.

# Kickstarter: Updates

The artist can post blog-like updates that can include text, images, and / or video. Backers and followers of projects are automatically notified of the update. The artist can choose to post backer only updates, which can only be viewed by donors.

# Kickstarter case study

60 day project to raise \$1,000 towards the composition of “Metropolis: the Oratorio”, a large piece for choir, soloists, percussion, synthesizer and piano. This piece was performed in March, 2011 simultaneously with a version of the 1927 silent movie “Metropolis” edited down to 40 minutes.

# Kickstarter case study

Social media:

425 friends on personal Facebook page

25 friends on composer Facebook page

25 followers on Twitter

Numbers are approximate. During the duration of the project, I actively pursued adding more Facebook friends.

# Kickstarter promotion

Posted weekly updates to personal Facebook page and twitter feed, for example . . .

“Thanks to nine backers, I am now at 59% of my funding goal . . .

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/278545316/metropolis-the-oratorio>”

8:45 AM Jul 23rd via web

# Kickstarter promotion

In the last week of fundraising I allowed myself to post more frequently (any day I hadn't met my funding goal - \$25 / day), for example . . .

“Only 7 days to raise \$100! That's only 4 \$25 donations!

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/278545316/metropolis-the-oratorio>”

8:10 AM August 24th via web

# Kickstarter email promotion

Any week that I didn't make my funding goal (\$125 / week), I emailed 10 people a day (20 people during the second month). The addresses came mostly from email lists I have compiled over the years for promoting myself as a composer.



# Kickstarter email promotion

During the 60 days of the fundraiser, people on my email lists received no more than 3 emails, separated by at least a week. I compiled 10 lists of 20 individuals each. Individuals known to be unemployed were not approached for funding.

# Kickstarter promotion

One of the more effective elements of promotion was having friends repost my status updates. I had originally intended to request supporters to repost the updates, but I did not need to do so, as enough of them did it without prompting.

# Kickstarter promotion

Another effective promotion technique I started using partway through the project was to tag donors in my status updates. Not only did this ensure that they would know I had publicly acknowledged their donation, but it also caused the update to appear in their news feeds.

# Kickstarter promotion

Generally my best suggestion is to keep updates positive.

Acknowledge donors through status updates. This strategy can lead to what I call the “they gave? Maybe I should give.” effect.

# Kickstarter project outcome

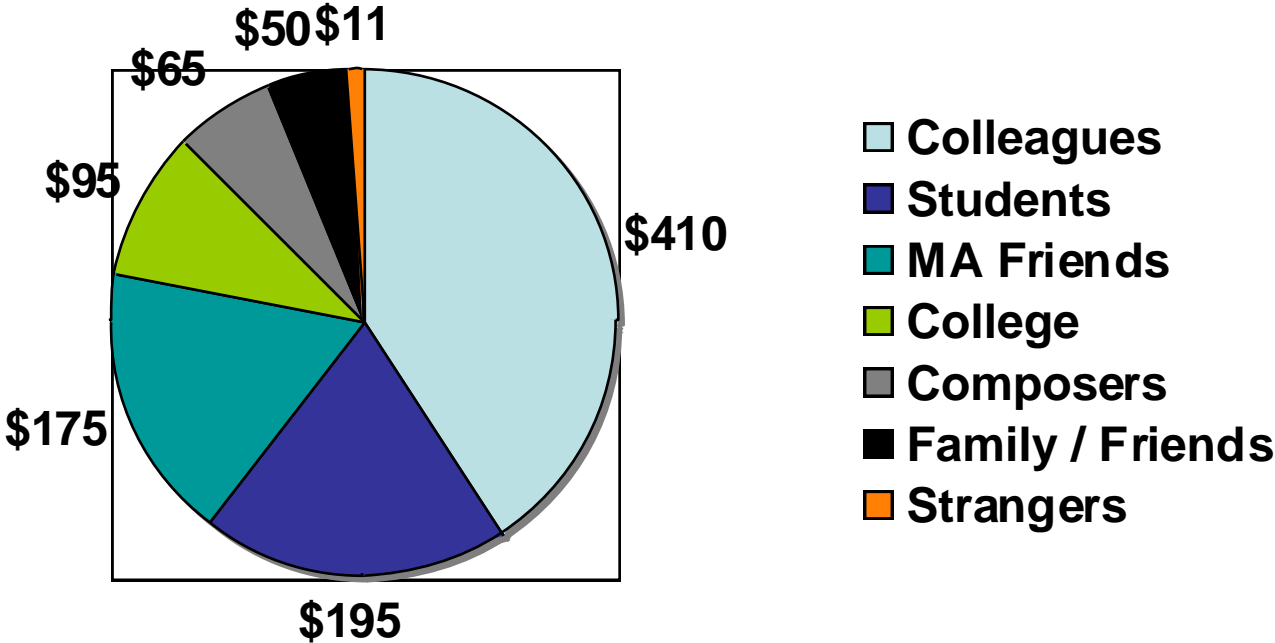
Raised \$1,001 in 59 days.

\$914.79 after fees.

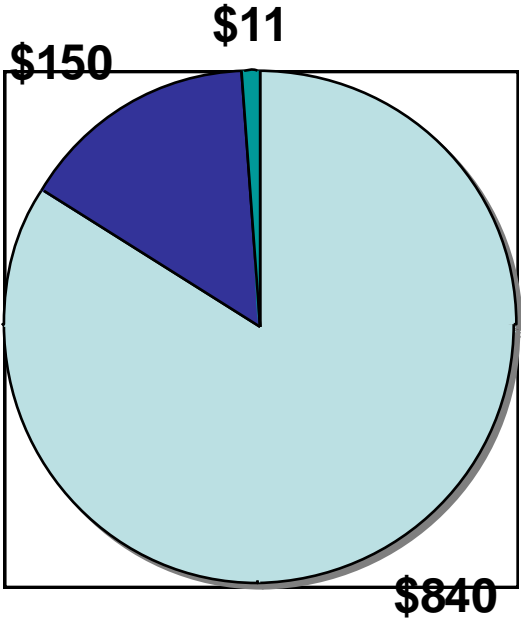
Other costs included \$19.39 (100 business cards - put in colleagues' mailboxes - not effective)

\$35.24 (100 postcards - used for thank you notes and promotion of the concert)

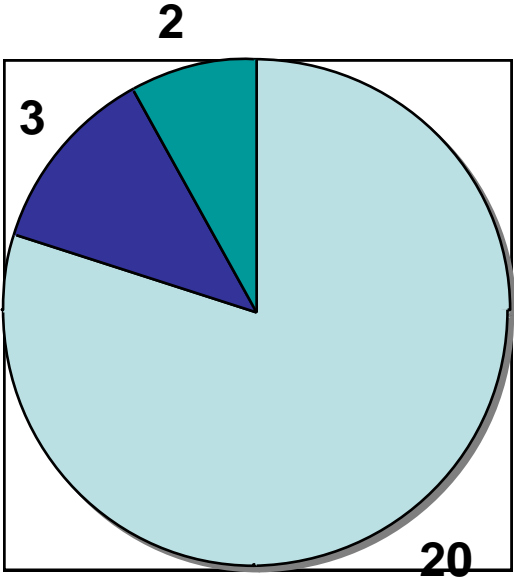
# Kickstarter project donors



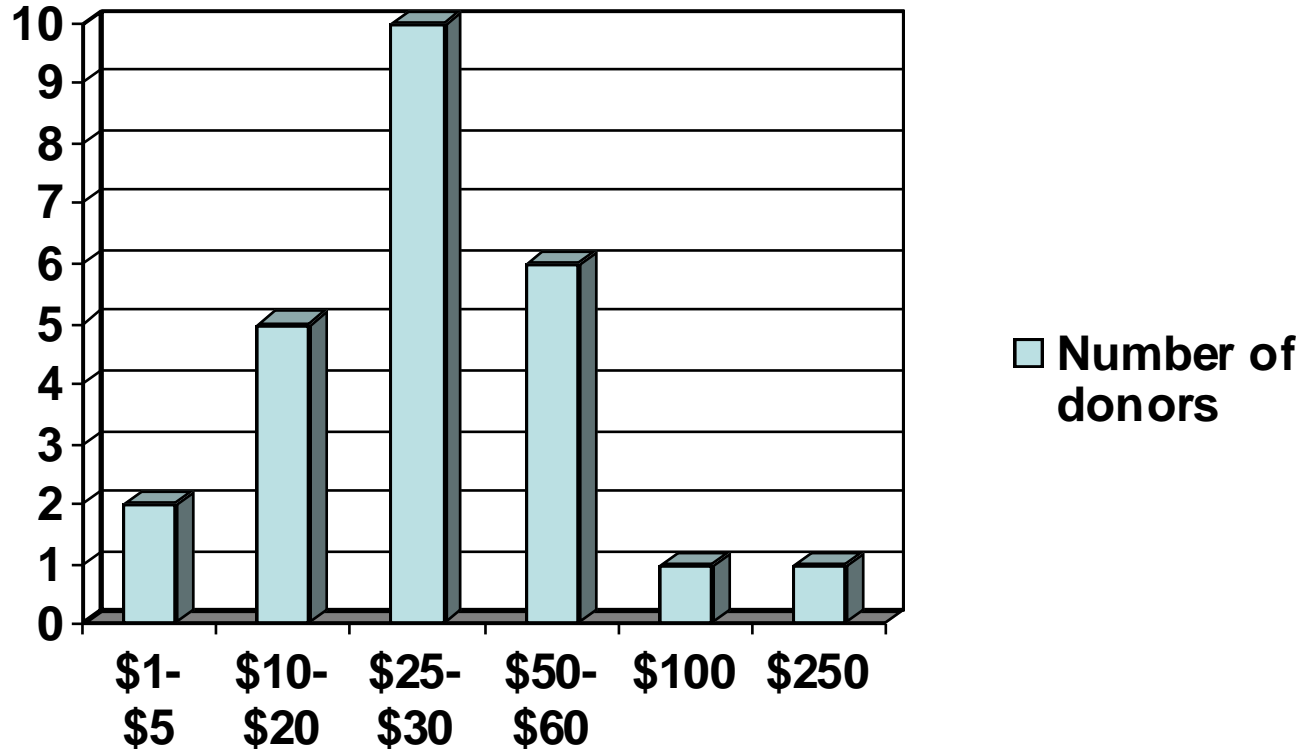
# Kickstarter project donors



- Facebook
- Email
- Kickstarter



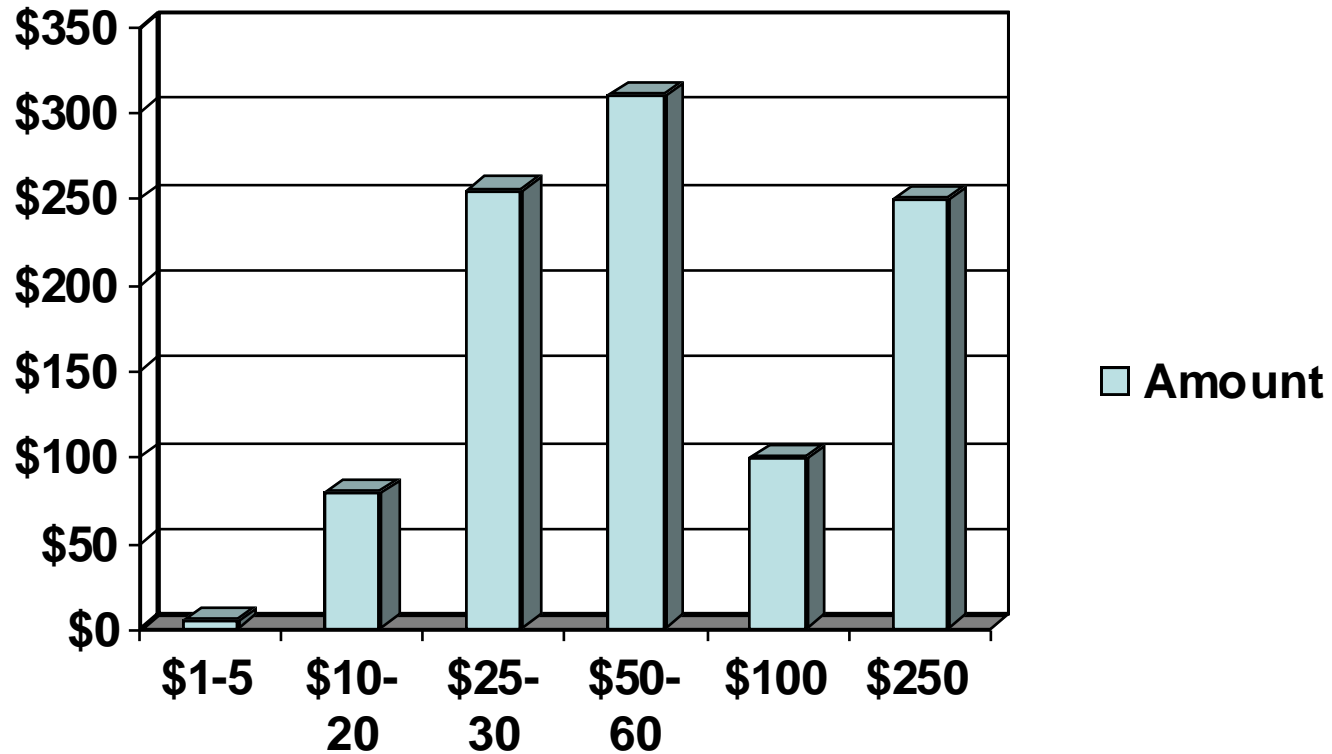
# Kickstarter project funding





# Kickstarter project funding

Amount of money raised in each funding category . . .



# Another Perspective

From Matt Bergstrom (American Ruins in 3D):

“I wrote to any and all strangers who had emailed me in the past year about other project I’ve worked on. Then sending the link to other bloggers, clubs, reviewers, librarians, and shopkeepers who might be interested in carrying the finished project in stores. This got some good responses and got the project listed on several local blogs.”

# Another Perspective

From Matt Bergstrom (American Ruins in 3D):

“My only negative experiences were not with the site itself: just the realization that trying to publicize the project was far more difficult than I’d anticipated.”

# Personal Reaction

One other outcome of this project is that I give much more to other people's causes.

# Crowd Funding Criticism

Using crowd funding to fund one's artistic output could lead an artist to lean towards ever more spectacular projects, attempting to create projects with wide appeal and enthusiastic support.

That being said, in a time where attention to the arts are dwindling, this might not be so bad.

# Alternatives:

SellaBand

FirstGiving

PledgeMusic

# DonorsChoose.org

Has raised over \$55 million dollars for 138,000 projects, aiding some 3.4 million students.

Works only with public schools.

# DonorsChoose case study

Brianna Leech (former student working in the Providence Public School System)

\$2,427 raised for her program through 10 successful projects (she's never had an unsuccessful project)



# DonorsChoose case study

DonorsChoose gives you 6 months to fund your project. Ms. Leech has never had a project go on for more than 4 months before getting funded. The briefest funding period for one of her projects was one day.

# DonorsChoose case study

Ms. Leech doesn't promote her projects at all through email or through any social media. Her projects have been funded solely through strangers. She speculates that her success may be due in part to the fact that she tries "to be really inspiring and enthusiastic when I write my proposals."

# DonorsChoose case study

Ms. Leech doesn't keep statistics on donation sizes, but she estimates that a lot of donations are around \$166. She usually has somewhere between 1 to 3 donors per project.

# DonorsChoose comments

“I have nothing but positive things to say about donorschoose.org. I don't know what I would have done without them . . . . If it weren't for donors choose I wouldn't be able to do my job nearly as effectively . . . . It is totally worth the time I spend writing the proposals.”