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**Crowdfunding the Museum:  
Fad or Future?**

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**Crowdfunding the Museum:  
Fad or Future?**

**by**

**Elise Kathryn Erb, B.A.**

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## **Dedication**

To my Grandpa John for always supporting me and making this degree possible. And, to my Grandma Vonnie, who I am sure was sitting with me during my final months of writing. There are no words to adequately express my gratitude to them.

To my mom, who started my *Gone with the Wind* story.

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## **Abstract**

### **Crowdfunding the Museum: Fad or Future?**

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In recent years, fundraising professionals and scholars have studied the potential use of crowdfunding as part of a well-rounded fundraising plan (Bœuf, Darveau, & Legoux, 2014; Boyle, 2013; Bump, 2014; Spierer, 2014; Tugend, 2014). As more museums experiment with crowdfunding, little in-depth study into this form of fundraising has occurred. Because crowdfunding is a technology-based method of fundraising, it has the potential to engage donors all over the world in meaningful relationships with museums. This thesis attempts to answer the question of whether crowdfunding is a passing fad or part of the future for fundraising in museums.

This illustrative case study (Yin, 2009) focused on the applications and implications of the use of crowdfunding in museums. Specifically, it examined the campaign run by the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at The University of Texas at Austin (UT) in the summer of 2010 to raise \$30,000 to conserve five costumes from the film *Gone with the Wind*. The dresses would be on display in the HRC's 2014 exhibition *The Making of Gone with the Wind*. This research sought to determine the implications of

crowdfunding for organizational culture, fundraising strategies, audience development, education, and uses of technology. This research used case study research methodology (Gerring, 2007; Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2009) to gather and analyze data including interviews with six staff members directly involved in the campaign, the campaign website, and written comments from donors, and quantitative reports relating to the HRC crowdfunding effort provided additional data sources. The ultimate goal in researching this topic was to contribute to an understanding of the role fundraising could play in reaching contemporary audiences and donors.

From the data, nine themes emerged that reveal the study's key findings. Synthesis of the data also yielded recommendations for successful crowdfunding campaigns in museums.

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## Chapter One: A Fundraising Tool of the Future? - An Introduction

“The world is full of many things and many people.” –Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, in *Gone with the Wind*<sup>1</sup>.

There is a change occurring in museums; a transition from old to new. Museums are faced with audiences who interact with the world in an increasingly virtual manner. Friendships are cultivated on social media, news is spread through e-mail, and financial transactions occur without ever opening a checkbook. The traditional ways of museums are being tossed into the wind to make way for new methods of engagement. This transition from traditional to contemporary manifests in all departments of museums, including curatorial, membership, education, and fundraising. Changes in the way museums operate happen through shifts in the organizational culture of the museum. These modifications manifest in many places, through many different tools and many different people.

This transition from old to new has been facilitated by what Thomas Friedman (2007) refers to as the “flattening” of the world through the rise of the Internet over the past twenty years. Because of the rapid growth of the Internet and the connectedness of society, modern museum supporters expect choices as to where their money goes, and demand convenient ways to donate (McPherson, 2007). Museum fundraising departments are faced with the challenge of finding new tools to engage donors in meaningful and lasting relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> All film quotes are from Selznick, D. O. (Producer), & Fleming, V. (Director). (1939). *Gone with the Wind* [Motion picture]. United States: Selznick International Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

One such tool that has gained publicity in recent years is crowdfunding. Crowdfunding is a method of online fundraising where people come together through small gifts to support a specific cause, as opposed to gifts submitted toward general operating expenses or given as discretionary funds (Varbanova, 2013). Using crowdfunding is just one way museums can continue to evolve to meet the needs of the present. In 2013, the New Media Consortium identified crowdsourcing, and its offshoot crowdfunding, as one of the changes occurring in museums in the next year. However, in order to make an informed decision about the widespread implementation of crowdfunding, studies need to be undertaken on the potential risks and benefits of such an endeavor. The introduction of new methods of fundraising is just one more step in innovating the museum into the twenty-first century and engaging visitors in ways that are familiar and comfortable to their lifestyles.

In summer 2010, the staff at the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at The University of Texas at Austin (UT) undertook their first crowdfunding campaign. The staff set a goal of raising \$30,000 to conserve five original costumes (Appendix A) from producer David O. Selznick's iconic film, *Gone with the Wind* (Harry Ransom Center, 2010). The film is part of the American imagination, and has fans all over the world who know and love the story of Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler. The film is set against a backdrop of change during the Antebellum South and the American Civil War; a change from the traditional to the modern. In this research, the film serves as a metaphor for the HRC. The methods and organizational culture of the HRC changed during the staff's first foray into crowdfunding. The old gave way to the new; tradition gave way to the contemporary. Unlike the film, this transformation was not a struggle, but it was a marked change in the way of life, just as the changes occurred in the Antebellum South. Through the stories of the HRC staff members who worked on this campaign to preserve the costumes, here I

examine the implications and applications of crowdfunding in the modern museum in order to discover if crowdfunding in the museum is part of the future or simply a passing fad.

### **CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions initiated and directed this research: What can museum professionals learn from the Harry Ransom Center's application of crowdfunding? What implications can be derived for organizational culture, fundraising strategies, audience development, education, and uses of technology?

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Technology is changing the way audiences interact with museums. Visitors walk around museums using their cell phones as guide tools. After a visit, individuals share photographs of their experiences online. These interactions extend beyond the galleries to the way supporters choose to give to the institution. Those who are interested in making contributions can give electronically, rather than by check. Donors increasingly desire a concrete and immediate connection with the organizations they support (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). The Internet provides a tool for these connections, and offers a chance to reach people outside their normal sphere of influence. Museum fundraisers should take advantage of these new technologies in order to reach a broader audience.

Crowdfunding is one such method of engaging potential audiences and donors through the Internet. It is a relatively new method of raising money, but has received press in the museum world due to the successes of institutions like the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, DC, and the Marina Abramovic Institute in Hudson, New York (New Media Consortium, 2013). Crowdfunding campaigns allow museums to engage with potential donors all over the world through specific projects. In a new field like

crowdfunding, every study has something to add to the discussion and deepens our understanding of the uses of this new tool for fundraising.

Accompanying and framing this change in the use of technology in the museum is a change in organizational culture of museum staffs. Teegarden, Hinden, and Strum (2011) wrote that, “This increasing role of the Internet in organizing and managing social networks has challenged nonprofits whose fundamental beliefs about participation assume face-to-face interaction” (p. 21). Organizational culture provides the framework for this study. Every choice related to the campaign is influenced by the culture of the Ransom Center.

Examining the experiences of the staff at a single institution that used crowdfunding, like the Ransom Center, provides other museums the opportunity to better understand the applications and implications of crowdfunding. The decision to implement a new fundraising strategy can be daunting, but understanding the potential gains from crowdfunding campaigns eases this decision. Sharing the stories of the staff at the HRC will help accomplish this goal.

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATIONS**

### **Personal Motivations**

*Gone with the Wind* is known throughout the world, and wherever the story travels people relate to it. It is logical to share my connection as one of the personal motivations for this thesis. My story is very much my mom’s story. I can remember her telling me about how when she was in her teens she dragged her younger brother to see the film when it was playing in a theatre in her hometown. She owned three copies of the book and kept a poster of Clark Gable as Rhett Butler on her wall into her late teens. My first memories of *Gone with the Wind* are of my mother’s one remaining copy of the book

sitting on the shelf in the family room. I can still see the yellow dust jacket, torn from repeated reading, nestled among all the other books. I remember wanting to read *Gone with the Wind* because I knew how much the book meant to my mom. I never got further than fifty pages into the book; I have seen the film multiple times. Although I cannot remember the exact year, I know I watched *Gone with the Wind* for the first time when I was in my early teens. While I am not a die-hard fan, I enjoy the theatricality and romance of the film, and will stop to watch when it is on television. This research has deepened my own unique connection with the film, which is now a major part of my *Gone with the Wind* story.

I am seeking a master's degree in Art Education, but I plan to be a fundraiser in an art setting. This may sound like a strange and circuitous route to reach my goal, and I have spent a large part of the last two years trying to reconcile these two facets of my identity, both for myself and for those who ask. For my undergraduate degree, I went to a university that did not offer an art history major, so I chose to study history with an art history minor. I had become interested in art history in high school, and thought I might want to work in a museum. While in college, I wanted to pursue a career as a museum educator so I could share my passion for art with others. In the fall of my junior year, I completed an intensive internship in Washington, DC. While I hoped to be placed in a museum education internship, I accepted one in development. That was the first time I was exposed to fundraising, and I found I enjoyed the field very much. When I returned to my home university, I took a part-time position working in development. As much as I liked my job, I still wanted to secure a master's degree in Art Education. However, once I arrived in Texas and started my degree, I missed working in development and sought ways to continue learning about this field that was becoming so important to me.

When it came time to pick my thesis topic, it seemed only natural I would find a way to incorporate my two interests in fundraising and education. I continue to search for the intersection of art education and fundraising. I have come to see myself as an educator/ fundraiser. This thesis is one step in that process.

### **Professional Motivations**

I am interested in how education and fundraising departments can work together to engage audiences. Educators and fundraisers both seek to deepen connections made between the visitor and the museum; they simply pursue different end results. Fundraisers hope to foster financial engagement, while educators seek to foster an engagement of inquiry. Although education and fundraising departments very rarely work together, I believe collaboration could be mutually beneficial.

Within fundraising, I am interested in engaging the contemporary donor. This audience communicates primarily through virtual means. Financial transactions occur online as much as they do in person, and news is spread through social media. The modern donor is comfortable with a different type of engagement than previous generations, and can be approached differently because of this. It is important for museum professionals to understand this new type of supporter, and how best to involve them.

Similarly, new technology has given rise to new methods of fundraising. Crowdfunding is just one of these new methods of giving. Undertaking a crowdfunding campaign affords museums the potential to gain national and international distinction through the media attention gained by such undertakings. Because these campaigns are targeted, they may reach specific audiences who would have otherwise never engaged

with the museum. All of these are reasons to undertake this research on the applications and implications of crowdfunding.

### **SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION**

Through this research, I expected to find that crowdfunding could provide a viable way to raise money for museums as long as it is not the sole form of income. Because crowdfunding has a mixed record of success (Olson, 2014), it is a risk; but through this study I hoped to better understand why museum staffs are turning to this method and what they are gaining from the endeavor. I also anticipated finding that donors to crowdfunding campaigns felt more connected to the museum and the project because they chose to give money to a specific project that is meaningful to them. I also believed the accessibility of these campaigns was appealing to modern donors.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

Understanding how to undertake a successful crowdfunding campaign is important to museums considering using the method. Generally, the success of a fundraising campaign is measured in dollars and cents, but what if a study looked at the stories of those involved, rather than the bank accounts of the museum where the campaign took place? In this study, I wanted to examine the stories of those involved in the Ransom Center initiative from a holistic viewpoint. I was interested in learning about the process of crowdfunding, including the lessons of this specific campaign and the implications it may hold for other institutions.

Because of this, I chose an illustrative case study approach (Yin, 2009), with the Ransom Center as my site. Illustrative case study enables the researcher to examine a case and make connections with the everyday world (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2009). Using illustrative case study gave me a holistic and in-depth understanding (Becker, Dawson,

Devine, Hannum, Hill, Leydens, Matuskevich, Traver & Palmquist, 2012) of the crowdfunding campaign the Ransom Center conducted, and what lessons other museums may gain from the experience.

Because I was interested in the personal stories of those who participated in the campaign, I conducted in-person interviews with the relevant people at my case study site. I chose semi-structured interviews because this form of interview provided me the freedom to delve deeper or change course if it felt natural during the interview (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). I interviewed six staff members who had worked on the campaign in various capacities. I also utilized various documents to support the interviews. First, I used the comments donors made when they contributed funds for the project. I also analyzed comments from an HRC blog posting after the campaign concluded. Finally, I studied the campaign website. Case study can be undertaken in either a way that views the case as a whole, or in a manner that identifies and studies themes (Becker et al., 2012). In order to analyze this information, I poured over my interviews for story and themes (Becker et al., 2012).

In addition to the interviews, I reviewed quantitative data about the campaign, including information on where the donors were from, how they found out about the campaign, and statistical information about the average gift size and if contributors had given to the HRC before the campaign or since. When data is drawn from multiple sources at the same case study site it creates corroboration through context and use of referential materials, which is called a multi-modal approach (Becker et al., 2012). Triangulating various data sources helped create validity in the research and counter research bias.

Finally, I read and analyzed the data for themes relating to my central research questions. I found themes pertaining to both the outcomes and mechanisms of the

campaign. The research was presented based on the themes that arose from the data. These methods enabled me to build a comprehensive understanding of crowdfunding at the Ransom Center and consider its lessons and implications for organizational culture, audience development, fundraising strategy, use of technology, and education.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **Crowdfunding**

Crowdfunding is a subtype of crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing capitalizes on the power of a group to contribute ideas and knowledge using the Internet as a tool to reach out and gather information (New Media Consortium, 2013). In the same way, crowdfunding is an effort to raise money through a network of people via the Internet (New Media Consortium, 2013). Crowdfunding raises funds for a specific project through a large number of donors, generally making small donations (Bœuf, Darveau & Legoux, 2014).

### **Democratization of Philanthropy<sup>2</sup>**

The democratization of philanthropy means that giving has become accessible for all people (Fulton, 2007). This is largely influenced by the spread of the Internet, which provides access to projects in which potential donors might be interested (Wingard, 2011). The democratization of philanthropy is based on the idea that big things can be accomplished by a group of strangers coming together to support a project (Hobsbawm, 2007). The democratization of philanthropy empowers donors to know exactly what their money is funding (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013), and enables broad participation in a cause, regardless of geographic barriers or previous knowledge of the organization.

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<sup>2</sup> In some publications, this is also referred to as “democratization of giving” or “democratization of fundraising.” In this thesis, I use the term “democratization of philanthropy” since it seems to be the most commonly used term for the phenomenon.

Everyone who wants to engage in philanthropy can become a part of something and make a difference in the organization of their choice.

### **Donor Engagement**

For the purpose of this study, donor engagement means the donor has a relationship with the institution or the cause beyond the financial transaction. They see themselves as more than a donor, but as a contributor who has a role to play within the organization. This creates a meaningful relationship between the donor and the cause, where the participant feels part of the organization and has a personal connection with the institution. Spierer (2014) posits that this level of engagement is crucial to running a successful crowdfunding campaign.

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizational culture is a pattern of assumptions that is employed by a given group in order to cope with problems of internal integration, and proves effective enough to be taught to new members of the group as the proper way to act and respond to problems (Schein, 1990). This includes everyday operations within an institution; from the way an office is laid out to how the employees interact with one another (Schein, 1990). Stable organizations use their culture and shared history in order to survive (Schein, 1990).

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research examined a single crowdfunding campaign for a specific project at the Ransom Center. Due to time constraints, the study was neither longitudinal within the HRC, nor comparative with other institutions. While there are many implications for the use of crowdfunding, I focused on the five specific areas of organizational culture, fundraising strategies, audience development, use of technology, and education.

There were also limitations because I studied a campaign that occurred in the past, rather than an active campaign as it happened. Because of this, the research must account for the potential errors in memory in the four years elapsed between the campaign and my research. It should also be noted that this research did not focus on education, but rather on fundraising. The implications for education occurred independently, and were not outcomes I intentionally sought.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The twenty-first century is a time of evolution in how audiences connect with museums. This extends to both gallery experiences and giving experiences. The integration of technology means that someone who has never visited a museum can become a donor under the right circumstances. This thesis is centered on the implications of crowdfunding at the Harry Ransom Center, as expressed by the staff who worked on the campaign, the donors themselves, and as supported by statistical data about the donations. Pursuing this study provides a deeper exploration of a crowdfunding campaign as a whole than previous studies undertaken on the same topic. As the staffs of increasingly more institutions consider crowdfunding, it is valuable to document one campaign in depth.

The field of museum fundraising benefits from qualitative research on new trends in the field due to the information provided through the personal reflections and perspectives of participants. Serving as a single illustrative case, this research could help museum fundraising professionals better understand the implications and applications of using crowdfunding in their museums.

## CONCLUSION

While this research is not about *Gone with the Wind*, the film plays a central role in the thesis as a whole. The campaign was to conserve five costumes from the 1939 film, and the connection donors felt with the iconic film plays a key role in the campaign. Because of this, I chose to incorporate a quote from the film at the beginning of each chapter. These quotes serve as a motif, drawing the thesis together. Each quote was carefully selected to reflect the purpose of the chapter.

The following five chapters center on crowdfunding, and the campaign to conserve the *Gone with the Wind* dresses at the Harry Ransom Center. Chapter 2, the review of literature, includes the viewpoints of scholars and professionals, as they relate to the research. The background of the Ransom Center and its operations, as well as its traditional fundraising methods, is outlined in chapter 3. The methodology of qualitative, illustrative case study research, discussed in chapter 4, and grounded in sources addressing the specific methods of data gathering employed in this study. The implications of a crowdfunding campaign are discussed through interviews, documents, websites, and quantitative data in chapter 5. Chapter 6 draws the research together to form conclusions and inform suggestions for further research, as well as discusses the relevance and significance of this investigation.

## Chapter Two: Review of Pertinent Literature

“Take a good look my dear. It’s a historic moment. You can tell your grandchildren about how you watched the Old South fall one night.”

–Clark Gable as Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind*, watching the burning of Atlanta from a distance.

Fundraising in the museum is at a historic moment where old norms are being challenged and new paradigms are rising and changing the landscape. While this is not an overnight change, a burning of the old to clear the way for the new, it is an ongoing internal discussion in the field. Crowdfunding campaigns are a result of the natural progression of fundraising as the audience museums are trying to reach changes within a new technological paradigm. In order to reach potential donors, fundraising professionals at museums are exploring new methods to engage twenty-first century donors. Examining the outcome of this progression requires understanding where multiple fields come together to create the study of crowdfunding in museums represented in this thesis. By studying the ideas and strategies that have already been set forth, the nuances of crowdfunding can be better understood.

Various scholars and practitioners in the fields of museum management and fundraising (Levy, 2009; Lloyd, 2006; Rentschler, 2002; Varbanova, 2013), donor engagement (Boyle, 2012; Gelles, 2014; O’Neil, 2014; Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013), and technology (Friedman, 2007; McPherson, 2007) have covered the areas that come together to provide a foundation for this thesis. Because some of the subjects I explore are recent, literature is drawn from museum and fundraising professionals as well as scholars. The areas of literature for my thesis can be segmented into six basic areas: organizational culture, the basics of museum management and fundraising, donor

engagement, digital engagement, the democratization of philanthropy, and crowdfunding. My research takes into account all these areas.

These fields come together to create a space for my thesis research at their intersection. This area where technology and crowdfunding are used to foster engagement with donors must be studied because of its implications for organizational culture, connecting with museum visitors and the future of fundraising. However, museum professionals can only guess what these implications might be unless someone undertakes a comprehensive exploration of a successful crowdfunding campaign.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE**

The first ember in the fires of change that my thesis examines is organizational culture. All the elements of the daily work environment come together over time to create organizational culture (Schein, 1990). This includes everything from the way the office is laid out and how employees dress and interact with each other, all the way to the communication of implicit norms and expectations (Schein, 1990). While elements of culture build over time, there are forces that change the culture to prevent the organization from dying when ideas stagnate and threaten the well-being of the people within the culture (Schein, 1990).

Organizational culture is difficult to study empirically, and therefore hard to define (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg & Martin, 1985). Edgar Schein (1990) provides a lengthy definition of the topic that covers many facets of the concept:

Culture can be defined as (a) pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore (e) is taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems. (p. 111)

This extensive explanation provides the basis for Schein's (1990) overview of organizational culture from a psychological standpoint. He explains that all stable organizations use their shared history to create a culture as a part of their survival (Schein, 1990). He says that organizational culture can manifest in three ways: through artifacts, values, and assumptions (Schein, 1990). An observer can study artifacts, and interviews with members of the culture can help ascertain values. Schein (1990) argues that organizations can guide the direction of their own evolution through the introduction of new elements and ideas during the lifecycle of the organization.

Organizational culture is found in every type of work environment (Van Mannen & Barley, 1985). Each environment has practices and customs that could be classified as cultural in some way (Van Mannen & Barley, 1985). Organizations create culture in order to manage uncertainty (Teegarden, Hinden & Strum, 2011). Despite the common reasons organizational cultures are established, each organization must be evaluated and understood on its own unique terms since there is no such thing as a perfect or ideal organizational culture (Teegarden, Hinden & Strum, 2011). It is important to remember that the culture of each institution is different when it comes to evaluating how change comes about, and its long-term effects.

In academic environments, employees tend to distinguish themselves based on specialization; Van Mannen and Barley (1985) refer to this development of subcultures as ideological differentiation. It is ideological differentiation that can lead to tension when changes occur within the organization (Van Mannen & Barley, 1985). Because organizational culture can become deeply ingrained in employees, these tensions and divides can be hard to overcome should that become necessary to change procedures. The specific situation of academic environments is important to consider since the Ransom Center is first and foremost a research institution and part of a major university.

Organizational culture can easily stagnate if it is left without intervention. This is a dangerous situation for an organization. Hedgepeth (1994) argues that change in the culture of institutions comes from forces within institutional staffs. Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson (2008) argue there are six internal and external forces for change in an organization's culture: political, technological, cultural, demographic, economic, and market (p.14). For the purposes of my research, I am particularly interested in technological, cultural, and demographic changes being the cause of organizational change since these are all key elements in my research. Change can also be affected through a major success within the institution (Teegarden, Hinden & Strum, 2011). These catalysts for change are important because I speculate both technology and the success of the crowdfunding campaign may have provided impetus for long-term organizational change in the case of the Ransom Center. The advent of a new tool provided the opportunity to change the organizational culture. I am interested to explore if there was a particular catalyst for change in the case of the Ransom Center igniting their success in crowdfunding for the first time.

The employment of the Internet as an organizing and networking tool can also affect organizational culture (Teegarden, Hinden & Strum, 2011). Teegarden, Hinden, and Strum assert that, "new technologies are pushing assumptions about how nonprofits should effectively organize and sustain participation" (Teegarden, Hinden & Strum, 2011). This is particularly interesting to my study since I examined the shifts in organizational culture around the implementation of a new technological tool in the fundraising plan of the Ransom Center.

While nonprofit organizational culture does not necessarily function any differently than corporate organizational culture (Teegarden, Hinden & Strum, 2011), the argument can be made that the cultures in nonprofit organizations are stronger since the

staff is working together for a cause and values about which they are passionate (Deal & Baluss, 1994). Organizational culture provides a sense of meaning to every task that is undertaken, and in the fundraising world, it is inextricably linked to everything the fundraiser does (Deal & Baluss, 1994). When the values of the organization change, so must the organization's approach to fundraising (Deal & Baluss, 1994). This is particularly true in the case of organizations or goals that have the potential to connect with people on an emotional level, rather than a purely logical one because of how personally potential donors view such causes. I am interested in whether even a temporary shift in the focus of an institution towards a project with the potential for emotional connection can permanently change the culture.

Organizational culture shapes every decision that is made within the organization, whether the staff making and carrying out these decisions is aware of it or not. Understanding the culture, both how it normally exists and the cultural changes that may have occurred for and during the crowdfunding campaign at the Harry Ransom Center (HRC), will be a crucial part of my research. While the researcher can only understand an organization's culture to a certain level (Schein, 1990), it is an important part of the story of the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign that must be considered.

## **THE BASICS OF PHILANTHROPY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT**

Understanding the foundational ideas of museum management is important in my study for two reasons. First, the field is specialized, and a basic knowledge of how museum management functions is important for understanding the impact of crowdfunding on museum operations. Second, in order to analyze change, I must first understand what was happening before this juncture.

The input of museum and fundraising professionals provides me as a researcher with a stronger technical understanding of what I am writing about so I can better explain to the reader what is going on behind the scenes in these organizations. Because I have worked in development for over three years, I generally know what is happening on a practical level. Because I have no formal training, however, I am often unable to explain the rationale behind specific choices. Foundational material on the museum and fundraising profession will help me bridge this theoretical and practical gap. Incorporating knowledge shared by professionals provides crucial background to the mechanics behind these two areas, as well as their intersections noted between them.

There are researchers and professionals who devote their entire practice to the study of the best way to operate an arts organization (Lloyd, 2006; Rentschler, 2002; Varbanova, 2013). Best practice information can be found on just about any aspect of running an arts organization, from organizing the staff to funding programs (Varbanova, 2013). It is the best practices when it comes to funding that interest me most in this study. To understand why crowdfunding is a break from traditional fundraising, it is important to define traditional fundraising and arts management styles.

Fundraising in a museum setting is generally approached with a multi-faceted plan, combining elements of membership, fundraising, and educational outreach such as public programs (Levy, 2009; Varbanova, 2013). Revenue streams for arts organizations can be segmented into internal and external sources, with the minority being internal sources like retail sales, entrance fees, and memberships (Varbanova, 2013). External sources of income are the focus of this research, so for my purposes I will not be discussing theories on how to manage internal sources of revenue with any depth. Ronald Levy (2009), a seasoned arts fundraising professional, says, “too great a dependence on any one source [of income] puts [the institution’s] operating budget at risk. Balance and a

sense of proportion are the order of the day” (p. 18). This serves as reason why museums should be open to integrating new sources of income into their funding plan.

Professional fundraisers spend large portions of their time meeting with potential major donors (Levy, 2009). The relationship between museum fundraising staff and donor can be highly personal and nuanced (Lloyd, 2006). Generally, these relationships are focused on building up to soliciting a donation, referred to by those in the profession as “the ask” (Levy, 2009). While this report may take years to build, the time is worth it when a fundraiser can fund an entire project with a single, well-planned lunch (Levy, 2009). This standard is important to bear in mind since crowdfunding projects require hundreds, or even thousands of donors, when one donor could achieve the same financial outcome.

As much as researchers and practitioners can write about how best to approach management and fundraising, the area between theory and practical application can be difficult for museum professionals to navigate (Varbanova, 2013). This difficulty can be particularly apparent when it comes to widespread institutional change. Alexander (1990) suggested a need for museum staff to innovate in order to enact sweeping changes. Infusing the same creativity that goes into the product on the walls of museums can facilitate new ideas to engage audiences and reinvent organizations that may have stagnated (Rentschler, 2002).

It is these changes in the way museums operate and innovate where organizational culture of the institution as previously discussed begins to play a role in decision making. The cultural preference of a specific museum to certain management and fundraising styles affects choices related to the area I explore next, donor engagement.

## **DONORS AND DONOR MOTIVATION: WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT ANYWAY?**

Exploring crowdfunding is impossible without first understanding who is giving to these campaigns. Part of my research is directed toward learning what draws people to give to crowdfunding campaigns, a very specific form of giving. Research on donors is a recent field of investigation, but an important one to understand as I examine why participants were drawn to a specific campaign. These contributors become the audience for the campaign through engagement with the institution.

Donors are no longer happy being passive players in the giving process (Grace & Wendroff, 2001). They want to be engaged in the process and are no longer willing to blindly trust institutional staffs to use donations wisely. The modern donor wants to know what their money is used for, and see proof that their dollars are making a difference (Grace & Wendroff, 2001). When addressing the topic of giving strategy, Lloyd (2006) states, “donors increasingly want to see the impact of their support. This goes beyond outputs...to address the longer-term outcomes and impacts on beneficiaries...”(p. 20). This is interesting when considering crowdfunding because these campaigns generally fund very specific projects with measurable outcomes. It would make sense that museum staffs could capitalize on the desire to see outcomes by reaching out to donors after the campaign and showing the outcome of the project.

Givers are also interested in making a tangible and specific impact on their chosen organization (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). This means potential givers can be enticed by the specificity of crowdfunding projects and by the fact that the goal of the campaign is advertised from the start (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). It is important to recognize and understand why donors support campaigns because crowdfunding campaigns enable the donor to feel intimately connected to the giving process. This connection is key to being drawn to give.

A recent topic of interest for fundraising professionals and culture writers for newspapers alike is how museums can attract younger donors as the traditional donor base ages out. Younger donors tend to favor education and community development causes (Boyle, 2012). When this is applied to an arts institution, it means donors are looking to give to arts organizations that champion education within their programming. Young donors also seek out causes to which they feel connected (Tugend, 2014). In general, potential donors are more likely to respond to personal appeals from friends, regardless of the cause or what gimmick might be tied to the specific request, such as a video sharing campaign or the promise of merchandise (American Red Cross, 2014). The idea of donors seeking to give to causes they personally identify with is further supported by Jason Wingard (2011), the vice dean of executive education at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He argues:

Rather than seeking a long-term legacy, [younger] donors are highly motivated to make a difference in the world. The ‘new givers’ are looking to charity as a form of empowerment in a bigger and more impersonal world, which is why they tend to gravitate toward causes such as disaster relief or broader social issues that greatly concern them. (para. 10)

This desire to make even a small difference is especially evident in crowdfunding campaigns where donors are giving any little bit they can to help a project they believe in move forward. There is often no long-term recognition in these gifts, only the personal satisfaction of contributing to a cause.

Nonprofit institutions, and museums in particular, are suffering from the fact that younger donors are moving away from the institutions their families traditionally supported, and are instead contributing to causes close to them personally (O’Neil, 2014). Museum staff must be aware of this trend since Gelles (2014) argues that attendance and giving will suffer if museum staffs do not make an effort to reach out to patrons under the

age of 50 in the near future. Gelles (2014) suggests steps the staffs at major museums around the country are already taking to address this group, including adapting board membership to be better suited to the needs of young patrons and adding crowdfunding campaigns to the fundraising portfolio of the institution. Essentially, he suggests museum professionals need to change their culture if they want to survive in the new millennium.

While it is tempting to focus on the millennial donor, those born between the years of 1980 and 2004<sup>3</sup> (Saratovsky & Feldman, 2013), it is more accurate to look at today's donor. The modern donor is not a reference to biological age, but to a way of life that is steeped in the constant connection and instant gratification technological innovations provide. Technology plays a major role in the life of the contemporary donor, and they are comfortable making financial transactions online (McPherson, 2007). Furthermore, a young donor for most museums is anyone under the age of 50 (Gelles, 2014). This is a massive number of people in the United States, so as a researcher I am cautious to make sweeping generalizations about what these donors are looking for in an organization. Since I am interested in how crowdfunding campaigns impact audience development in museums, looking at why donors are attracted to these campaigns is important.

### **THE NEW FRONTIER: DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING**

The use of technology in fundraising is the next major spark of my thesis. Connecting through technology is a regular occurrence in modern day life. People think nothing of checking the day's news on Twitter while sitting on the bus or of sharing an interesting article with a friend through Facebook. We trust our credit card information to

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<sup>3</sup> Although this entire section of the population is included in the definition of millennial, I will focus the term on those over the age of 22 who are more likely in a financial position to be giving (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013).

online shopping services simply because its more convenient than going to the store. For the first time in human history, we can communicate with someone on the other side of the world in mere seconds, all because of digital engagement. In the same way individuals use these resources, museum and other nonprofit professionals must harness the power of the Internet to connect with potential supporters. Not only is this constant and instant contact possible, but also it is expected in order to operate sucessfully in the modern world.

The use of the Internet by nonprofits has evolved over time. In 2008, Linda Kenix discovered the majority of nonprofits were not using the Internet in the way she expected. She found a disconnect between nonprofits and technology and attributed this to “a fear of the technology; perceived costs of time and money; and possibly apathy” (para 67). I argue this view might be outdated, since it would be difficult to run a nonprofit today without technology. In the case of my research, I speculate it might be correct to say that, prior to their success with crowdfunding, the staff at the Ransom Center was hesitant to incorporate technology in ways they were not sure the institution would benefit from or be successful in trying.

McPherson (2007) examined trends and tools in online giving. He identified three trends: the democratization of media, the democratization of philanthropy, and the relentless demand for convenience (pp. 5-6). He found social impulses associated with contemporary uses of the web, and argued they play a key role in online fundraising (McPherson, 2007). This means people are constantly seeking to share their actions and connect with peers via social media (McPherson, 2007). Seeing peers post their philanthropic actions on Facebook and Twitter can create social pressure to give as well and not be left out of the giving trend of the moment. The democratization of philanthropy and a demand for convenience also play directly into my study. Although

the next section of this chapter explores the democratization of philanthropy in greater depth, some discussion is needed here. The theory of the democratization of philanthropy suggests that the modern tendency in philanthropy is to find ways to make giving accessible to all people, no matter their financial means or geographic location (McPherson, 2007). Convenience is the cornerstone of all online fundraising. Gifts can be made to organizations the donor wants to support all over the world, without ever leaving the comfort of home. These trends and movements are constantly evolving and changing to fit the technology available at the time.

The rise of the Internet has changed the way people connect with each other and how nonprofits connect with people. Online fundraising and crowdfunding have made financial transactions of all kinds commonplace on the Internet (McPherson, 2007). Using the web as a way to reach donors is a successful strategy for more than just the millennial generation who cannot remember life before the World Wide Web. Connecting to and through the Internet is a commonplace occurrence for the vast majority of Americans in the twenty-first century (Friedman, 2007).

#### **GIVING FOR ALL: THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF PHILANTHROPY**

The moment the first website went up on the Internet on August 6, 1991 (Friedman, 2007), the way people interact with each other was completely changed. Suddenly, information could be acquired from the entire world without ever leaving the comfort of home. People could come together to support projects from anywhere the Internet reached. In the same way the Internet overcame geographic boundaries, it also made philanthropic participation more accessible. Donors could research the causes they wanted to support, connect with organizations, and become a part of something no matter where they were located or how much they were planning to give.

The idea of the democratization of philanthropy<sup>4</sup> is relatively new, so comparatively little has been written on the topic. Similarly, the definition of the idea has variations depending on who is writing. Katherine Fulton (2007) argues that the democratization of philanthropy is the way in which the act of giving has become something for all people. Jason Wingard (2011) argues this democratization is because of the Internet and the accessibility it enables. Hobsbawm (2007) maintains that the democratization of philanthropy means big outcomes can now be accomplished through many smaller things coming together. This includes many people pooling small donations to make a single major project happen. All of this comes together to mean that the democratization of philanthropy takes the decision making out of the hands of fundraisers, boards, and executive directors and puts it into the hands of donors (McPherson, 2007). At its foundation, the democratization of philanthropy is about empowering donors to know more about where their money is going and enabling them to do more with their gift no matter the dollar amount (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). The most pertinent point to understand for my research is that the democratization of philanthropy opens the door to allow broad participation in an act (giving), which was previously limited to the elite and those in direct proximity to a cause. Democratization of philanthropy is a fancy way of saying that everyone is invited to participate and make a difference.

As early as 2002, Nina Kressner Cobb included the idea of the democratization of philanthropy as one of the facets of the new philanthropy of the twenty-first century. This idea of donors supporting causes that they may have never heard of without the Internet is particularly important with younger people (Wingard, 2011). In an interview, Jason

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<sup>4</sup> In some publications this is also referred to as “democratization of giving” or “democratization of fundraising.” In this thesis, I use the term as identified here since “democratization of philanthropy” seems to be the most commonly used term for the phenomenon.

Wingard (2011) argued that the advance of the Internet, and the resultant social media, has sent the development of the democratization of philanthropy into hyperspeed. He explains that philanthropy is as deeply woven into the American conscience as democracy, and that both have found new definition in the present era. He says that volunteer organizations were crucial in the infancy of the United States and that people often saw membership in these voluntary organizations as a key element in being an American (Wingard, 2011). Now, this importance of philanthropy to democracy is highlighted through tax codes that provide incentives to donate. Wingard (2011) also points to the speed at which Americans respond with financial and tangible assistance when there is a disaster at home or abroad as demonstrating the importance of giving in the culture. The culture of philanthropy has evolved with the changing times and situation of these actions.

Others see the democratization of philanthropy as a product of innovation. New options in payment methods have made it simple and affordable for everyday people to give to the causes they support (Weichert, 2011). There are now dozens of ways to give financial support online, many of which the average American consumer encounters daily. Margaret Weichert (2011) claims that the democratization of philanthropy through innovation is what enabled some charities to fare well through the recession that occurred in the United States from December 2007 to June 2009. Thomas Friedman (2007) agrees with this valuation that innovation has led to what he refers to as “the flattening of the world” (p. 8). He says the innovations of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have created a level ground, where the majority of the world can connect and learn (Friedman, 2007). This “flattening” is foundational to the democratization of philanthropy because it breaks down the barriers to reaching potential donors.

There are those who are critical of the idea of the democratization of philanthropy. Christine Ahn (2007) states that nonprofits need to move toward grassroots fundraising and away from centralized practices, like directed crowdfunding campaigns. Her concern is that centralized practices put the power of decision-making in the hands of a select group rather than the public, even though the idea behind crowdfunding is supposed to open up the decision to fund a project to anyone who donates (Ahn, 2007). She raises an interesting point. Once the money is donated, the donor no longer has control over what is done with the funds and must trust that the organization is using the gift in a way that aligns with the donor's original intention. Elizabeth Clemens (2006) maintains that models of democracy will always be reflected in philanthropy, meaning that the democratization of philanthropy is simply newly named and embodied, not entirely newly created. She contends that philanthropy in the United States has been democratic as long as the nation has been democratic. The democratization of philanthropy is a new and somewhat controversial idea. For some people it makes sense, but for others it is a step in the wrong direction for philanthropy, with the potential to become "chaotic, polarizing, and subject to manipulation" (McPherson, 2007, p. 5). There is resistance and skepticism to the idea that the democratization of philanthropy will work well enough to become mainstream, but this could be expected with any new idea.

I take a somewhat neutral stance on the importance and presence of the democratization of philanthropy. On one hand, I agree that technological innovations have made it simpler for people to donate to causes they support. However, people could always donate—an organization would never turn down a donation unless there was an ethical reason to not accept the gift. I tend to align myself with Jason Wingard (2011) in believing that the democratization of philanthropy has always existed, and has changed

how it presents itself over time with changing ways of connecting the donor to philanthropy. Perhaps its current iteration is more pronounced because of the pervasive presence of the Internet and its leveling effect on the world and how we connect with others.

The democratization of philanthropy is a crucial element in crowdfunding campaigns. The breakdown of barriers draws together donors from all over the world in a single cause, where every gift makes a difference no matter the size. Thanks to the flattening of the world through technology, people can hear about and support causes they are interested in whether they live down the street from the organization or on the other side of the world.

#### **CROWDFUNDING: WORKING TOWARD A SINGLE GOAL**

The final spark that fuels my thesis is crowdfunding, the convergence of digital engagement and the democratization of philanthropy. Crowdfunding, or raising large amounts of money through numerous small donations made via an online giving platform, has become a central topic in popular media and research since the 2009 introduction of Kickstarter, a popular crowdfunding website specifically for arts projects (Bœuf, Darveau & Legoux, 2014). The starting point for this research on crowdfunding was The New Media Consortium's *Horizon Report* (2013). The New Media Consortium (NMC) is a collaboration of technology companies that identify how their field can benefit education. Every year The NMC seeks to identify the upcoming trends in technology in educational institutions, including museums. In 2013, the NMC recognized crowdsourcing, and its subset crowdfunding, as one of the technologies on the immediate horizon (New Media Consortium, 2013, pp. 15-16). The NMC asserted that crowdfunding is a promising way to reach a large number of individuals in diverse

geographic areas and from diverse backgrounds (New Media Consortium, 2013). The report claimed that forms of crowdsourcing generate an emotional connection between the patron and the institution in new and innovative ways (New Media Consortium, 2013).

While online giving has been present for some time, crowdfunding platforms<sup>5</sup> streamlined the process and made it flashier. When a user launches a new campaign on most commercial crowdfunding platforms, they set a fundraising goal and create a video about their project that can be shared through the web (Spirer, 2014). Other organizations choose to run their campaigns through their own website, since commercial crowdfunding sites come with fine print about fees and what happens to the money if the goal is not reached (Perry, 2014). These campaigns allow nonprofits to draw in a wide variety of supporters from groups they might not normally reach (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013).

A successful crowdfunding campaign involves an emotional connection between the project and the donor and a compelling story (Spirer, 2014). While crowdfunding is commonly seen in for-profit ventures, nonprofits can also benefit from the exposure gained through crowdfunding. When successful, crowdfunding campaigns can reach people far outside the normal sphere of influence of an organization. While a traditional membership drive or annual giving campaign might only reach those who are already connected with the organization or live nearby, the extent of the Internet and people's personal networks are the only limits to a crowdfunding campaign. At the same time, a campaign that attracts media attention has the possibility to garner the institution free publicity, which is a priceless commodity.

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<sup>5</sup> There are multiple crowdfunding platforms, many of which are geared towards or even exclusive to certain fields. For example, GoFundMe is known for raising funds to support those in personal crisis, while Kickstarter is exclusively for creative projects (Perry, 2014).

In 2012, it became clear that crowdfunding is a valuable tool. That year Kickstarter raised more money for the arts than the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (Boyle, 2013). The NEA had a federal appropriation of \$146 million, while Kickstarter raised \$323.6 million for arts related projects including video and design based projects (Boyle, 2013). Boyle (2013) argues this shows that individual donors are the backbone of fundraising, and that crowdfunding is a way to reach new, younger donors. The fact that an independent online platform can provide more funding to the arts than a government endowment dedicated specifically to that cause shows clearly that research must be undertaken on the implications of this fundraising method.

The revelation of the potential of Kickstarter brought the phenomenon of crowdfunding to the attention of researchers in the field of philanthropy. One extensive study of 875 theatre projects that were funded by Kickstarter found that many donors to these campaigns were motivated by the public acknowledgement of their gift on the campaign website (Bœuf, Darveau & Legoux, 2014). This would suggest that giving to a crowdfunding campaign is not necessarily a selfless act, but is, in fact, to some degree done to garner recognition from peers. This public acknowledgment can actually be used to attract others in the same peer group to support the campaign. After all, this age of connection through the Internet is also an age of social impulse where people want to be connected and part of something larger than themselves (McPherson, 2007). Giving has become trendy, something that is not only expected, but also in vogue (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). This can easily be leveraged to entice further giving when potential donors see that their peers are supporting a cause and want to join and be a part of something greater.

Just like the democratization of philanthropy, there are those who are skeptical about the viability of crowdfunding. Elizabeth Olson (2014) took a critical eye to

crowdfunding arguing that, although crowdfunding has worked for individual artists, it can be very risky for museums. She points to several examples of well-known museums where crowdfunding was successful, but she is also quick to point out comparable museums with failed crowdfunding campaigns (Olson, 2014). One such example is the Hirshorn Museum in Washington, DC, which unsuccessfully attempted a crowdfunding campaign on Causes.com to raise \$35,000 to bring sculptures by Ai Weiwei into the collection of the museum (Olson, 2014). These campaigns involve significant labor, yet positive results are not guaranteed (Olson, 2014). It is also true that while crowdfunding gifts are increasing, overall giving to nonprofits is not (Tugend, 2014). Skeptics also argue that crowdfunding donations are based on reward and not true philanthropy since they tend to come with some sort of token for making the donation (Tugend, 2014). Additionally, professionals have raised questions about the ethics of crowdfunding campaigns (Bump, 2014). In her study on crowdfunding, Bump (2014) laid out specific guidelines museums using crowdfunding should follow, including making sure the staff do not violate the code of professional organizations such as the American Alliance of Museums, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and the International Council of Museums. She also pointedly highlighted the responsibility museum staffs using crowdfunding have to ensure whatever platform they use for their campaign “provides sufficient documentation of the donor’s charitable contribution for tax deduction purposes” (Bump, 2014, p. 72). Even articles in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, a leading publication for fundraisers, acknowledged there are hidden dangers to crowdfunding, including the fees that are often hidden in fine print on the corporate crowdfunding platforms (Perry, 2014). Commercial crowdfunding platforms can charge three to five percent of money raised to use their services, as well as charging donors processing fees on the gift (Perry, 2014). Crowdrise and Kickstarter also impose extra fees if the

fundraising goal is not reached in the time allotted to the campaign (Perry, 2014). There are obvious concerns with using crowdfunding, and plenty of skeptics about the effectiveness of the tool. However, even as critics raise concerns about the sustainability of this method of fundraising, they also acknowledge that it is leading to organizations reaching new audiences who they might have never touched otherwise. In the case of the Ransom Center, a single organization in the middle of Texas could reach potential donors not just across the state or the country, but also around the world. Crowdfunding campaigns enable institutions to extend beyond their normal sphere of influence, and beyond their wildest dreams.

Arts organizations, such as the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Galleries, have recently started to turn to crowdfunding as a new form of online fundraising (New Media Consortium, 2013). These campaigns are prime examples of people coming together from all different walks of life for a common goal. When used correctly, crowdfunding campaigns can mobilize existing donors to connect with a new and larger audience (Gore & DiGiammarino, 2014). Crowdfunding is the keystone in my research, and all the other bodies of literature feed into it. The concept of crowdfunding could have never been imagined just twenty-five years ago, and now venture capitalists and museums alike are turning to the practice. Crowdfunding is the highpoint of the old ideas of fundraising being burned to the ground and replaced by a new paradigm. I believe this paradigm shift should be accepted with a cautious embrace. While museum staff needs to make sure they are keeping up with trends and meeting donors where they are, staff should also be aware of the fact that there can be too much of a good thing (Levy, 2009). There could be a temptation to use crowdfunding every time a fresh, exciting project arises because the approach is still a novelty. However, it must be cautiously incorporated into the existing fundraising plan as a slow but powerful flame of revolution and change.

## **MESMERIZED BY THE FLAMES: CONCLUSION**

The literature surrounding my research on the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign lays the framework for significant changes in the way fundraising is conducted within museums and cultural institutions. Where the basics of museum management and fundraising, organizational culture, donor motivation, digital engagement, the democratization of philanthropy, and crowdfunding converge, there is a place for my research into the implications of crowdfunding on institutional culture, fundraising strategies, donor engagement, and technology. In a new field like crowdfunding, any research builds the field and lays the groundwork for future research, discussion, and application.

There is an internal struggle in fundraising because digital engagement changes the way museums interact with donors, contributing to the democratization of philanthropy. This same interaction impacts the way organizations operate, changing their organizational culture with shifting times. The convergence of these circumstances creates the possibility of crowdfunding in the museum. When these ideas and procedures combine, they have the potential to ignite change. However, change is not coming to the field of philanthropy in a giant blaze like the burning of Atlanta in *Gone with the Wind*. This is a moment that will be marked in the history of fundraising as a time of transformation. While it may seem that social, cultural, and technological trends converged and changed fundraising overnight, the fire that was stoked will continue to burn and change the landscape of philanthropy for years to come. The way fundraising functions is fundamentally different from what it was at the turn of the twenty-first century, and there is very likely more change to come. In order to be prepared for this alteration, crowdfunding campaigns that have already occurred should be studied so

museum professionals entering this time of transformation can learn from the experiences of others.

### **Chapter Three: The Harry Ransom Center and Fundraising**

“There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton Fields called the Old South. Here in this pretty world, Gallantry took its last bow. Here was the last ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair, of Master and of Slave. Look for it only in books, for it is no more than a dream remembered, a Civilization gone with the wind...”

-Opening text card, *Gone with the Wind*.

The exhibition space at the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) is unassuming. There is no colonnade, grand foyer, or marble staircase. There is just a space on the first floor of a research library. The wealth and prestige of the collection lies in the archives in the remainder of the seven-story building. As the visitor enters the Ransom Center, it becomes quickly apparent this is a place steeped in tradition. Items that embody this tradition surround the visitor from the moment they enter the lobby of the Ransom Center. The earliest known surviving photograph made in a camera, one of the first printed books, a copy of the Gutenberg Bible all reinforce a sense of reverence for old objects and ways. As in stalwart museums and archives around the world, signs direct the visitor that photography is off limits.

However, in the fall of 2014, a second sign was placed next to the original sign prohibiting photography. For this exhibition only, photographs could be taken as long as there was no flash; a small break in the old ways of the Ransom Center. As visitors walked around the exhibition, people are taking advantage of the relaxed photography rules and connecting with the artifacts on display through personal images taken on smart phones and tablets. Visitors were particularly anxious to take photographs of five dresses on pedestals, the centerpiece of the exhibition space and Scarlett’s gowns. The decision to allow photography was not the first instance of long established rules of the Ransom Center being uprooted by the winds of change for this exhibition, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*. In summer 2010, the Ransom Center’s first foray out of the traditional

realm of fundraising and into crowdfunding had raised enough money to conserve these gowns so they could be shown to the public during the exhibit marking the 75th anniversary of *Gone with the Wind*. Slowly, the institutional traditions of the staff at the Ransom Center were changing. In order to understand the changes, it is important to first understand the ways in which the Ransom Center staff had been conducting business throughout the previous decades.

### **THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER AND THE DAVID O. SELZNICK ARCHIVE**

The Harry Ransom Center, situated on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin (UT), is a multi-faceted institution that includes massive archives, a conservation center to maintain those archives, and a space for rotating exhibitions<sup>6</sup> (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). The archives serve the students of the university as well as writers from all over the world who come to research books, movies, and plays. The first floor of the HRC contains galleries that host approximately two exhibitions a year. The majority of these exhibitions come solely from the archives at the HRC, but some are supplemented by collaborations with outside groups. Often, in order for objects from the archive to be shown in the exhibition space, they first have to go through the conservation department. The Ransom Center focuses on conserving objects in their current state, rather than restoring them to their original condition (S. Wilson, personal communication, November 19, 2014). What exists today is the full realization of the dream of one man, Harry Ransom, nearly 60 years ago.

Originally named the Humanities Research Center, the Harry Ransom Center was founded by its namesake Harry Hunt Ransom in 1957 on the campus of UT (Harry

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<sup>6</sup> Although the Harry Ransom Center is an institution that serves many purposes, my research deals almost entirely with the exhibition space. For that reason, I refer to the Ransom Center either as a museum or an exhibition space. Although neither of those are in the name of the institution, they are the most relevant terms for my purposes.

Ransom Center, 2013b). Ransom started his tenure in Austin as an English professor and moved up through the ranks over the years, eventually retiring as UT Chancellor in 1971 (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). He believed that a strong library was crucial to every major university, and founded the Humanities Research Center as a resource that could rival the libraries of private universities, which he held as a paradigm for all research institutions (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). Ransom envisioned the collection as “the center of a cultural compass...of the only state that started out as an independent nation (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b, para. 2).” Ransom also served as the first director of the library, a position he held until 1961 (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b).

Traditionally, research libraries collected early printed books, but Ransom decided to focus the collection on modern and contemporary English and American writers (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). It was from this foundation that perhaps the first conscious break with the traditions the Ransom Center occurred. Over time, various directors came through the museum, each with a different focus for collecting and programming. The HRC now has extensive holdings in different areas. Their broad photography collection totals more than 5 million images (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). Since the HRC was founded with the idea of collecting the works of contemporary writers it has the manuscript collections of many major writers who have been active since the 1950s. The Ransom Center also has a large collection of theatre manuscripts and artifacts, including early copies of Shakespeare’s plays. The film archive holds the works of such modern popular actors and filmmakers as Robert De Niro and Jay Presson Allen, as well as the collections of producers of the Golden Age of Hollywood like David O. Selznick, who produced *Gone with the Wind* (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b).

The mission and focus of the Ransom Center evolved with each director. The exhibition space at the Ransom Center became a focus under the leadership of Dr.

Thomas Staley, who was director from 1988 until 2013 (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). In 2003, Dr. Staley oversaw a \$14.5 million renovation, which upgraded the exhibition space and made it a highlight of the HRC (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). These galleries on the first floor serve as a place to showcase the vast archives of the Ransom Center through rotating exhibitions. This began to alter the former identity of the Ransom Center from a dusty research library, to a space for displaying cultural artifacts by placing emphasis on exhibitions and presenting public programs to accompany them (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). The wind was blowing in a new direction, but also creating a dual identity, which the organizational structure and culture of the Ransom Center staff would need to bend to accommodate.

#### **THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER**

The HRC is one of several research libraries at UT (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). As a part of the larger university, the Ransom Center staff must function as an organization within an organization. The staff consists of 81 people working in various departments and programs (Harry Ransom Center, 2015). Under the leadership of director Stephen Ennis, staff is identified into departments with specific duties. These departments could be simplified into 2 basic areas, as well as departments that work with both areas. First, there are the staff members who work with objects. These departments include cataloging services, conservation, building management, library services, exhibitions, and acquisitions (Harry Ransom Center, 2015). On the other side are the departments that deal with people and relationships. These include development, marketing, programs and fellowships, and public affairs (Harry Ransom Center, 2015). All the departments interact at some time with administrative services (Harry Ransom Center, 2015). Within this large organizational structure, the development staff is small,

just two people working on the full time goal of raising funds specifically for the Ransom Center (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014).

In order to help guide the Ransom Center, the director oversees an advisory council of 44 people (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). These are influential supporters of the Ransom Center who advise the director and staff (Harry Ransom Center, 2014). Advisory council members work to raise the profile of the HRC in the community and obtain private funds to support the institution (Harry Ransom Center, 2014). The development office interacts heavily with this group, stewarding relationships with the council members and the relationships those members have with other potential supporters and partners (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014).

In contrast to the small development staff at the HRC, UT has a large staff of over 100 people at its University Development offices, along with development staff and fundraisers in every college and unit on campus (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). All these people must work together, but also act independently. The University Development office, and its gift-processing unit, record all the gifts made to the university in a tracking database called the VIP System (A. Bush, personal communication, December 1, 2014; M. Rine, personal communication, November 6, 2014). In order for the development staff at the Ransom Center to undertake large projects, they must collaborate with UT's University Development staff. In these collaborations, the two entities work hand-in-hand toward the same outcome.

# Org Chart

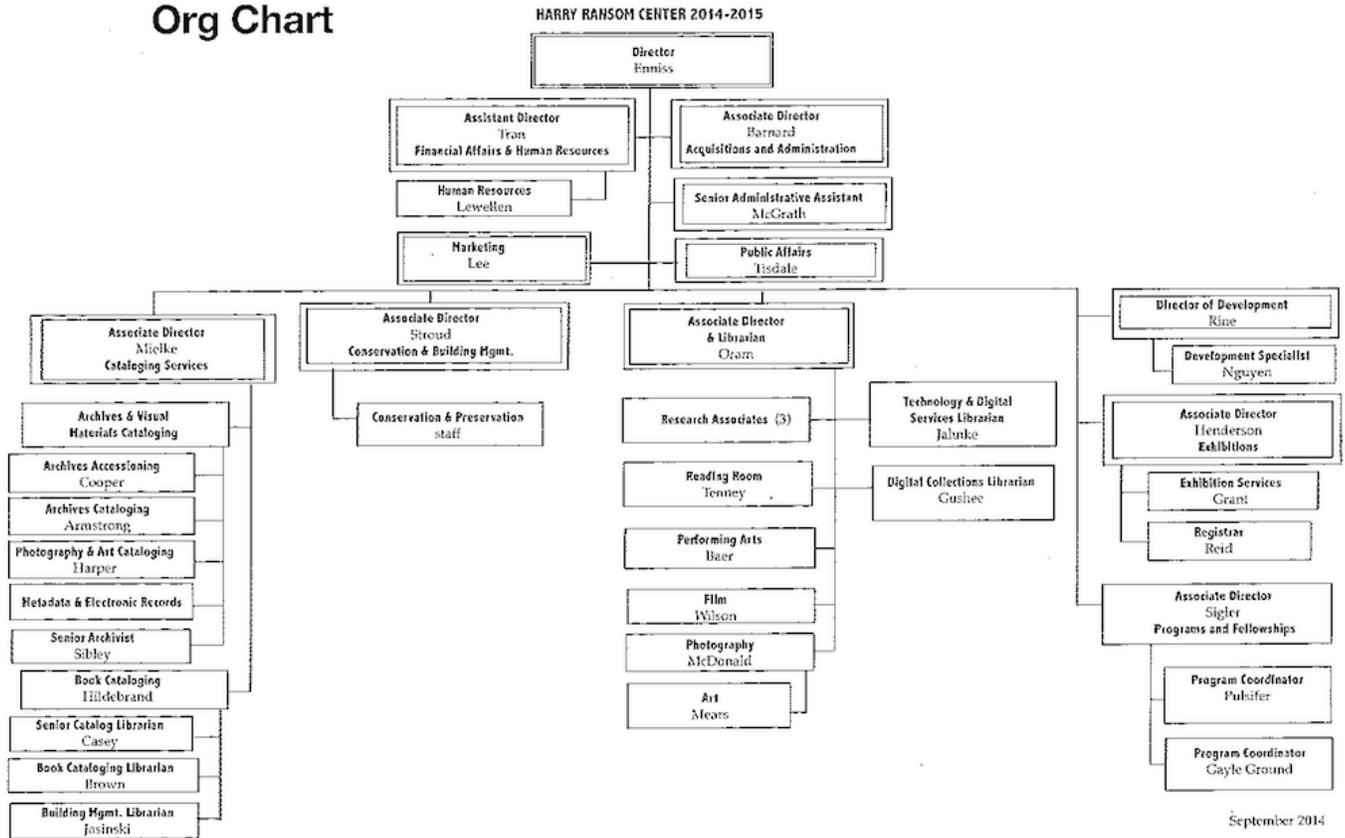


Figure 1. Harry Ransom Center. (2014). Org Chart. Unpublished internal document.

For the 2013-2014 school year, The University of Texas at Austin had an annual budget of \$2.48 billion (The University of Texas at Austin, 2010). Of that amount, only 13% was state funding. This sum is only slightly higher than the 10% raised from private gifts and endowments. Due to budget cuts, the money allocated from the state of Texas has drastically decreased over the past decade (The University of Texas at Austin, 2010). As this happened, the university and all its entities relied more on private donations (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). As a part of UT, the HRC receives funding for most of its salaries from the larger university budget (M. Rine, personal

communication, October 28, 2014). This accounts for a little less than half the annual budget of the HRC (M. Rine, personal communication, November 6, 2014). Operating costs not provided by the university are supplied by endowments at the Ransom Center (M. Rine, personal communication, November 6, 2014).

In 2008, The University of Texas undertook a \$3 billion capital campaign (The University of Texas at Austin, 2010), a multi-year fundraising initiative to raise a substantial amount of money (National Parks Service, 2014). During that time, the HRC set a goal to raise \$15 million in the six-year time span of 2008 to 2014 (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). By the time the campaign ended in fall 2014, the Ransom Center had raised \$19 million (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). Capital campaigns are exhilarating, but are also exhausting for the fundraisers and staff participating in them. A sense of boredom can lead staff to seek a disruption in the conventional methods of cultivating donations. In this time of focus on fundraising, the winds of change can be appealing to fundraising professionals who are tired of the monotony of traditional approaches.

#### **GIVING TO THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER**

Museums, libraries, and cultural centers all use similar methods to raise funds. These are a blend of private contributions, corporate donations, and grant funding (Lloyd, 2006). Each institution will use their own combination of these sources to keep the doors open and bring new content to the public.

The Ransom Center has a total of 56 endowments that bring in about \$1.6 million in interest annually (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). These gifts fund specific staff positions and initiatives. Endowments start with a seed gift, and then are left to appreciate with a yearly pay out (Levy, 2009). This type of fund enables donors

to specify how their money will be used, and to know their gift will continue giving back to the institution of their choice for some time (Levy, 2009). This is a traditional way to approach fundraising that ensures the creation of a legacy that cannot be undone by time or change.

Most private giving at the Ransom Center is done with a specific purpose in mind (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). It is rare that large gifts are received for general operating funds. This can be difficult for an organization to manage because it entails large portions of income that cannot be used to cover the everyday expense incurred to keep the doors open. This also means that when a special or unexpected project arises, the staff must seek out money specifically for that project because operating funds are carefully budgeted (Levy, 2009). Asking for gifts to address a specific purpose requires the fundraising staff to match a need with a donor's specific interests (Levy, 2009). If a donor has a particular interest in films and the Ransom Center is looking to acquire a new film archive, then that is a good donor match. The key to engaging donors is making sure their money is going to something they are interested in, and to which they can feel personally invested (Levy, 2009).

Like most museums and exhibition spaces, the Ransom Center offers memberships as a simple way the average person can support the museum. Because the HRC is free and open to the public, there is no monetary incentive in terms of reduced or free admission for the member. Instead, the HRC offers special events, semi-private viewing hours, and merchandise discounts to members (Harry Ransom Center, 2013a). Being a member means being part of an exclusive club with perks and benefits. Membership funds are not marked for one purpose, and are often used at the discretion of the institution (Lloyd, 2006). Being a member of the HRC comes with an air of prestige and exclusivity appropriate for a high caliber research institution.

Another common type of gift at the Ransom Center is a gift-in-kind, a non-cash contribution of goods, property, or services (National Parks Service, 2014). One of the most common forms of in-kind gift that the HRC receives is the donation of archives (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). A gift such as this allows the archives at the Ransom Center to expand, without spending money on acquisitions. The other common form of gift-in-kind is when a corporation donates staff time or material items in the form of a product donation (Levy, 2009). Product donation is just as it suggests; a company donates items for an event or need (Levy, 2009). However, donation of services can be a bit more complex. One recent example at the HRC involved Turner Classic Movies donating the marketing for *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibition since it fit well with the missions and audiences of both Turner Classic Movies and the HRC (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). The key to in-kind donations is for the receiving organization to be able to offer something in return. This is often in the form of free marketing on exhibition materials, or of particular perks for the corporation and their staff (Levy, 2009). Gifts-in-kind can be one of the most valuable types of gift a museum receives.

Corporate giving can also happen in the form of cash sponsorships (Levy, 2009). This occurs when a company donates money for a specific exhibition or event. These cash donations are often made under the same types of agreements as corporate in-kind donations where the company gets benefits from the agreement (Levy, 2009). Corporations enter into these types of partnerships for many reasons. Often, the companies are re-branding or seeking to gain the type of audience the museum or specific exhibition targets (Levy, 2009). It is not uncommon to see corporate partnerships involving some combination of in-kind and cash donations (Levy, 2009).

Grants are money acquired for a specific program or project, which come from either corporate or private foundations or from government entities (National Parks Service, 2014). However, unlike other gifts, these funds are garnered through a competitive application process (Levy, 2009). Grant writing takes careful planning and time to craft the proper proposal for a funding source. The Ransom Center staff works up to two years in advance in grant cycles since some of the applications are so complex (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). At the HRC, teams of representatives from the project a potential grant would fund work on each application (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). Grant funding is a major part of fundraising at the Ransom Center (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014).

The Ransom Center's approach to fundraising is influenced heavily by its situation as part of a larger research institution. Generally, non-profit organizations need to build a wide base of funding sources (Levy, 2009). Because the Ransom Center can depend on a significant portion of its operating budget coming from UT, its fundraising can safely break some of the standard "rules" of the trade. Funding plans generally include multiple sources of income (Levy, 2009). This can include grants, corporate giving, individual major gifts, endowments, and memberships. Relying less on certain types of support, as the Ransom Center tends to do with corporate funding, is a rare fundraising strategy (Levy, 2009; Rine, 2014).

The commonality of gifts-in-kind of archival materials also is specific to the Ransom Center's dual identity as an archive and exhibition space (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). While there are many publications that aim to teach the "best practices" of fundraising (Levy, 2009; Lloyd, 2006; Varbanova, 2013), the reality is that the best way to fundraise for an institution is to use what has proven to work well (Levy, 2009). In the case of the Ransom Center, the staff has found they can

focus their energies on grants and individual donors, and rely on other forms of funding arising naturally when and where there is a need (M. Rine, personal communication, October 28, 2014). The HRC staff is afforded some comfort by knowing from where they can expect to receive funding. The staff has the freedom to try new ideas and break norms without concern or organizational hesitation because history has shown that funding will always be available when it is needed, thereby clearing the path for the implementation of new methods and ideas.

#### **CONCLUSION: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF FUNDRAISING**

Fundraising can be described as both an art and a science (Lloyd, 2006). Each institution uses the same elements and mixes them in a way that works best for their organizational culture. The Ransom Center's fundraising plan is focused on private individual giving, with the support of grant funding, and reinforced by the knowledge that a portion of the budget will always come from UT. Because the Ransom Center is a research library, conservation center, and exhibition space within a larger university, it is often viewed as not being as innovative as other philanthropic organizations (M. Rine, personal communication, November 6, 2014). Traditions have been established in the form of practices that are often not changed or broken. These methods have proven effective over time, but that does not mean they can stand forever amongst a changing world. The ideals and approaches of the Ransom Center form a conservative strategy for raising money. It sticks to traditional, tried and true methods, and bypasses new forms of online fundraising. However, as examined in chapter five, the Ransom Center became a part of a revolution in fundraising strategy by executing a major crowdfunding campaign to preserve Scarlett's classic costumes from *Gone with the Wind*.

Although conventional methods of fundraising may seem like infallible stalwarts, getting too comfortable is never a good thing because the usual approaches can shift as fast as the winds. When Margie Rine began working with the Ransom Center as Associate Director for Development in 2008, she discerned the pageantry and traditions that constituted fundraising at the HRC were ready for new ideas and new manners, and began to look for the right project to try out a cutting edge idea: crowdfunding (M. Rine, personal communication, November 6, 2014). That change was a major step away from the old ways, and toward the new.

## Chapter Four: Case Study Methodology

“Would you satisfy my curiosity on a point which has bothered me for some time?”

-Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, in *Gone with the Wind*.

### QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research focuses on social phenomena from an insider’s perspective and is made up of two components: an interpretive perspective on the participants’ views, and a critical perspective that builds on the participants’ experiences (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Reimer, 2011). The focus of this type of research is placed on understanding meaning (Merriam, 2009). The biggest component of qualitative research is that the data must be understood from the point of view of the participant, and not that of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). In order to undertake this research, I first had to recognize my own biases. As discussed in Chapter One, I have over three years of experience in the field of fundraising in multiple settings. Because of this, I believe in the power an individual can have through giving. Additionally, my parents modeled the importance of giving from my youth. I believe that fundraising professionals need to be open to adapting to modern times, but I also place great value on personal connections in fundraising because I have seen the power of these connections. Additionally, I chose to study the HRC campaign to conserve Scarlett’s dresses because I believed the effort was an example of a successful endeavor. This choice created an instant bias for me. I am also biased because of my age and situation. I am a millennial and a digital native. This means that I am comfortable using technology in my daily life, and am not inclined to be skeptical of online methods of fundraising. All of these are biases I was aware of as I collected and analyzed the data in my research.

The use of qualitative research made the most sense for my study because I sought to understand the significance of the crowdfunding campaign at the Ransom Center, and its implications for other institutions considering the same type of endeavor. Qualitative research is complex, forming an umbrella for several forms of research (Merriam, 2009). All these forms are useful in situations where there needs to be a high tolerance for ambiguity, and a questioning of phenomena in work and life (Merriam, 2009). These methods require that the researcher is a careful observer, a good listener, asks good questions, and thinks inductively (Merriam, 2009). Because I chose to center my research on something as complex as a crowdfunding campaign, it was important to choose a research method that would be amenable to ambiguity.

Over the past several decades, qualitative research has become more widely accepted as a valid way to collect data (Merriam, 2009). Because I am studying the past events of an organization, qualitative methodology was the most logical way to approach my study. Qualitative research enabled me to study what happened in a closed system, and to examine outcomes of a set of actions and decisions. Although my findings cannot be generalized, I can still look at what worked and what did not work in order to make recommendations for future crowdfunding campaigns.

## **CASE STUDY**

A case study is a form of qualitative research that is the in-depth analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Case study is not tied to any particular form of data collection, but instead can use many forms of data collection (Merriam, 2009). This malleability made case study the ideal form of qualitative research for my study.

In his book on case study, Yin (2009) refers to Schramm's writing in 1971, which states that the purpose of case study is "to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why

they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (p. 15). Case study also looks at one particular detail in a series of events, not seeking to generalize or draw conclusions from it (Thomas, 2011). This is exactly what I undertook in my research when I set out to discover what happened when the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) decided to try a crowdfunding project, as well as the implications of utilizing this funding initiative for the institution as a whole. However, I did not seek a conclusion for the entire non-profit arts sector about the viability of crowdfunding: I sought to understand how it worked in this unique case.

Case study is a style of inquiry that investigates phenomena within their real world contexts, especially in situations where the boundary between phenomena and context is unclear (Yin, 2009). This was exactly the case with the HRC, where ambiguity arose regarding how much of the success of the campaign was caused by using crowdfunding (the phenomena) and how much by context (raising money for the restoration of iconic movie costumes). Case study also deals with situations where there are a significant number of variables, and multiple sources are used to collect data (Yin, 2009). It was unclear going into the research exactly what the variables were in this case study, so I chose to use as many types of data as were available and logical.

I used case study methodology to collect the data as well as to analyze and present my findings. This approach enabled me to gain a full and rich understanding of one museum’s use of crowdfunding. I chose case study because of its ability to facilitate in depth study of a single, specific instance or occurrence (Gerring, 2007). Case study is an effective method of research in situations where the researcher has limited control over the event being studied (Becker et al., 2012). Because I studied a crowdfunding campaign that took place in 2010, four years before I conducted my research, case study was the best option to gain a robust understanding of the campaign’s efficacy, and to deduce what

lessons could be learned from the Ransom Center's endeavor. The purpose of case study is to see the whole picture of what is going on in the case (Thomas, 2011).

I approached the case study in an illustrative, or demonstrative, manner. Demonstrative case studies allow the researcher to make connections between the data and the everyday world (Thomas, 2011). In his book on case study, Thomas (2011) makes it clear that an illustrative case study should not take the place of real world experience, but rather incorporate all the elements of the mundane into something that can be studied. Because I was seeking to understand the implications of crowdfunding, I needed to connect the story of the campaign with its implications, and the lessons that can be derived from the experiences of the Ransom Center staff.

Case study was the best way to answer my question because it provided an opportunity for me to create an in-depth exploration of how crowdfunding worked in a specific instance. Studying a single site made the most sense to place limits on the study in terms of depth and duration. By using case study I was able to focus on a single crowdfunding campaign, and gain as much as possible from it. Because I studied a past event, being a participant in the research was not an option. A case study approach allowed me to understand the process, without having experienced it firsthand.

#### **SITE SELECTION**

It was a natural decision to select the HRC as my case study site. Shortly after I decided that I would write my thesis on crowdfunding, I found myself in a casual conversation with Lisa Pulsifer, a staff member at the Ransom Center and an alumna of UT's Art Education master's program. She mentioned that the Ransom Center had conducted a crowdfunding campaign, and an idea was planted. The staff at the Ransom Center was very open to working with me. Perhaps this stemmed from being on the

campus of a research institution, but more likely from a desire to share its accomplishments.

The success of the Ransom Center's campaign made it a prime choice for an illustrative case study (Thomas, 2011). The Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign to restore the *Gone with the Wind* dresses raised over \$30,000 (Harry Ransom Center, 2010). While this is not the largest amount raised in a crowdfunding campaign, it can be considered a success because the staff at the Ransom Center achieved their monetary goal. Any crowdfunding campaign I chose to study would have come with special considerations, so in selecting the Ransom Center, I also knowingly accepted the unique elements of their case. These included the fact that *Gone with the Wind* is a beloved film with a huge fan following, and that the campaign was conducted outside the traditional crowdfunding platforms, such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo. I considered both of these factors as I evaluated the data.

## **PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

Before I began interviews, I worked to build a rapport with the HRC staff and the people I would be interviewing. This was especially important with Margie Rine, the Associate Director for Development at the Ransom Center, who was my primary contact. I first met with Margie in May 2014 to discuss using the Ransom Center as my case study site. From that first meeting, I worked to ensure she trusted me as a researcher, so she would in turn assure the other people I needed to interview that I was trustworthy. I looked at Margie and the rest of the team on the project as partners in my research, rather than as my subjects. The crowdfunding campaign was my subject, not the people involved.

It was difficult to narrow down whom I would need to interview. I wanted to keep my interview list manageable so as to get all of the information I needed, but also not be overwhelmed by data as I moved into an analysis of it. I started my interviews with Margie Rine. After conducting a thorough interview with her, I reviewed my notes to determine who the key staff members were in the campaign. I then continued my interviews with those select staff members, allowing one interview to lead me to the next. By using the interview with Margie as my starting point, I was able to focus on those who had the greatest impact on and involvement in the campaign.

The goal of these interviews was to collect firsthand, personal perspectives on the crowdfunding campaign. I wanted to make sure the voices of the people who were most involved were present in the research since these were the people best able to speak about the viability of crowdfunding in museums based on personal experience. These were my experts.

## **INTERVIEWS**

The primary research tool I used was semi-structured interviews (Thomas, 2011) with Ransom Center staff members who were central to the crowdfunding campaign<sup>7</sup>. I chose semi-structured interviews because they employ a list of topics and questions that should be covered, but also allow the interviewer to follow natural trajectories (Thomas, 2011). This matches my own personal style of gaining information. I also believe it makes the interviewee more at ease and feel less like they are being interrogated. I wanted the interviews to be as nonthreatening as possible so the interviewees would be more open to sharing their stories. I chose to focus on semi-structured interviews because

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<sup>7</sup> As part of preparing for my research, I submitted my research protocol to the Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at Austin. The study and questions were reviewed and given an exempt status.

I knew there was information I wanted to be sure to investigate, but at the same time I wanted the ability of follow the natural path of conversation and thought.

The interviews were conducted in person on the UT campus. During the interviews, I took sparse notes to help me remember what I thought was important at the time of the interview. I also audio recorded all the interviews so I could review and transcribe them later. Audio recording equipped me to keep an exact record of the conversations, which helped protect the data against the biases of my own memory.

The goal of interview research is to collect information in a manner that is both logical and unbiased (Yin, 2009). I used short interviews, each no more than 45 minutes, to gather the needed information. I chose short interviews both to respect the time of my participants, and to limit the amount of information I needed to synthesize. Most interviews used in case study research are semi-structured (Merriam, 2009). More structured interviews tend toward oral survey (Merriam, 2009). I wanted to encourage meta-cognition in my interviews, so I was careful to craft open-ended questions. The key to a good interview is being a good listener (Yin, 2009). This includes listening to tone and context during the interview (Yin, 2009). One of the primary observations I noted in my field notebook was mannerism and inflection during answers, as well as repeated key phrases. I believed it was especially important to record things like physical reactions that would not be caught on the audio recording of the interview.

I designed the interview questions (see Appendix B) to elicit information about the inner working of the campaign, from the decisions that led up to the launch, all the way through to the lessons learned in retrospect.

## **ARCHIVAL DATA**

The second form of data I collected were archival records from the crowdfunding campaign. First, I used quantitative data provided by the UT University Development staff about the number of donations. I also used a presentation prepared by the public affairs staff that included quantitative data about the campaign. Additionally, I referenced the campaign website. By including this concrete, quantitative data in my research I was able to corroborate the ideas and conclusions that came from the interviews. This multi-modal approach (Becker et al., 2012) helped create validity by drawing data from multiple sources at the same case study site.

The other type of archival document I used frequently were comments from donors to the campaign. Online forms people used when making donations to the campaign initially gathered the comments that the staff at the HRC provided to me. Additionally, I found a plethora of online comments donors made on HRC released blog postings with updates and as the exhibition neared in the summer of 2014. Although online commentary should be used with caution because there is no way to check the validity of the statements, I chose to include these remarks because of the wealth of insight they provided into the rationale of the donors who communicated in this way.

I chose the archival records to triangulate interviews (Thomas, 2011) based upon what documents were available. At one of my first meetings with Margie Rine, she laid out the types of documents that might be available to me through the Ransom Center's archives. I incorporated the archival data into my analysis to support what was happening during the campaign. Triangulating the interviews with the archival documents added validity to the research.

## **TOOLS AND ANALYSIS**

The information from the interviews, combined with the archival data, provided the basis for my analysis and interpretation. By using these sources in concert, I was able to craft ideas about the viability of crowdfunding as a source of income for museums.

After I conducted the interviews, I transcribed the discussions. I spent significant time reviewing the transcripts as well as my limited notes made during the interviews. I analyzed them for what themes occurred in the data. I discovered themes relating to the outcomes of the campaign, as well as themes associated with to the processes of the campaign, which will be expanded upon in Chapter Five. However, I did not limit myself to just content analysis (Thomas, 2011). Case study can be undertaken in such a way that views the case as a whole (Becker et al., 2012). Because I used a series of interviews and perspectives on the crowdfunding project it was logical to look at the interviews as pieces of a whole, rather than seeing them as independent observations and occurrences.

Content analysis is ideal in a situation where the parts of the data cannot be separated from the whole (Thomas, 2011). This was the case in my research where no single statement or occurrence could be viewed without the context of every other part of the data. Themes are ideas that emerge through constant comparison, and summarize the essence of the data (Thomas, 2011). Themes arose primarily during the interviews, but also through analysis of the archival data. The major themes were apparent through phrases and ideas that appeared often in my conversations.

## **ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AND BIAS**

My role as the researcher was heavily influenced by the fact that I focused on an event that occurred four years ago. I appreciated this situation on several levels. First, the passage of time gave the people I was interviewing a different perspective on the campaign than they might have had during the project. By the time I started my research,

the dresses had been conserved and were on display as part of *The Making of Gone With the Wind* exhibition at the Ransom Center. I also appreciated that I was investigating an event in the recent past as someone who was trained as an historian. As a researcher, I am comfortable with observing and learning from the past.

As much as I enjoyed studying the campaign at the Ransom Center as an observer, it also presented some problems. The first was the issue of memory in a study of the past. The human memory is fallible and I needed to account for the possibility of interviewees misremembering events either through omission or missing details (Yin, 2009). To protect my research against this as much as possible, I interviewed a number of staff members about the campaign, and used the multiple, similar versions of events to construct as clear and complete picture as possible. The documents from the campaign also were useful in checking details and facts.

Because case study focuses on a single occurrence or event, there are concerns that should be addressed in undertaking such research. The validity of findings can be called into question when there is only one case in the research (Yin, 2009). I chose to use a single case study for the ease of research. This kept the scope limited and the project from becoming overwhelming. However, this choice meant I had to be careful in drawing conclusions based on such a limited sample (Yin, 2009).

The validity of findings can be called into question when there is only one case in the research (Yin, 2009). In order to ensure the results of the research were as unbiased as possible, I used multiple types of data (Becker et al., 2012). While my focus was placed on the qualitative data collected in interviews, I also collected and used quantitative data in the form of the files that the Ransom Center staff kept during the campaign. In order to complete this research, I used referential materials in the form of records and interviews. Because I used a single organization for this study, I was able to check interviews against

each other, and notice where discrepancies in the personal accounts of the staff at the Ransom Center emerged.

The other issue that arose for me was maintaining scholarly distance from the research and not letting my personal biases and ideas cloud the interviews. I elaborated on specific biases earlier in the chapter, but it is important for me to acknowledge my awareness of them again when discussing how I accounted for them. From the beginning, I saw this campaign as a successful use of crowdfunding, and hoped I would be able to use my findings to recommend that other institutions adopt similar methods. However, I worked to ensure my own biases were not being projected onto the interviewees or my analysis.

Part of accounting for potential bias was in the interview protocol. I designed the questions so they were not leading, and encouraged the interviewee to be as clear as possible so their own ideas and experiences were the focus. In the same way I used documents to account for lapses in personal memory, I also used them to balance my biases. I employed a multi-modal approach to account for the natural biases that occur in case study (Becker et al., 2012). Using different forms of data allowed the various data sources to support each other, and create a complete picture of the campaign from multiple viewpoints.

Being aware of and addressing my personal biases was an important part of my research process. However, by being mindful of the impact of my beliefs, and using multiple forms of data, I was able to obtain data and come to conclusions that were as unbiased as possible.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I discussed in this chapter, case study was the most relevant research method for my study of a single crowdfunding campaign that occurred four years ago. I used semi-structured interviews and archival documents as data in my research, with the focus being on interviews with key staff members at the HRC. This data is presented in Chapter Five. I analyzed and presented the data in a manner that reflected the decisions which led to the campaign, as well as what happened during the campaign, while still highlighting the big ideas that arose in the data. In the next chapter, I examine the data that emerged from my interviews and archival research. Using a case study methodology allowed me to understand the various dimensions of the crowdfunding campaign at the HRC, and better assess the implications for future campaigns.

## Chapter Five: Data Analysis

“You get your strength from this red earth of Tara, Scarlett. You're a part of it. It's a part of you.”

–Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, in *Gone with the Wind*.

As described in chapter 4, I interviewed six staff members from the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) and The University of Texas at Austin (UT) who were directly involved in the crowdfunding campaign to conserve the five *Gone with the Wind* costumes in order to answer my central questions: “What can museum professionals learn from the Harry Ransom Center’s application of crowdfunding? What implications can be derived for organizational culture, fundraising strategies, audience development, education, and uses of technology?” In these interviews the staff members discussed the crowdfunding campaign they conducted in summer 2010 to raise \$30,000 to conserve the five original costumes in the Ransom Center archives (Appendix A) from the film *Gone with the Wind*. The objective for the funds was to stabilize the costumes so they could be shown as part of an exhibition called *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, which was scheduled to open at the HRC the fall 2014. Over 600 individual donors contributed to this effort, each with their own motivations for participating. The story of this project is told through the data in the following pages.

Rigorous analysis through review and comparison of interviews with people who participated in this campaign, as well as examination of documents related to the campaign, gave rise to a set of themes. These themes emerged out of the data when more than one data source discussed and corroborated a topic. I deemed topics strong enough to become themes through careful analysis of the data, which included close reading, wherein I read interviews and documents multiple times in order to understand meaning and find connections between sources and ideas. I categorized my data based on two

types of themes: *outcomes* and *processes leading to outcomes*. The outcomes were overarching themes relating concepts that were integral to the overall success of the campaign. These themes were often not associated with one specific element of the campaign such as the costumes or the website, but arose out of several aspects overlapping, like education and donor engagement. The themes related to the outcomes of the campaign are directly linked to the themes of processes leading to successful outcomes of the campaign. These process themes had to do with a specific tactic or set of decisions made by the HRC staff. In each section of this chapter I define the themes and analyze the associated data. In order to accomplish this, I first elaborate on the types of data I collected and analyzed for this research. Then, I start at the end of the campaign, by analyzing how those who worked on it thought about the campaign's efficacy: did they view the endeavor as positive or negative? Finally, I examine the nine themes that arose from the data, starting with themes concerning the outcomes of the campaign, and then work backwards to the themes that arose regarding the processes leading to the outcomes.

#### **EXPANDING ON DATA SOURCES**

In this study, I used three forms of data. The primary data source was semi-structured interviews with staff members who worked on the campaign. I conducted the six interviews in person on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin (UT) between November 6, 2014 and December 3, 2014<sup>8</sup>. In order to determine who to interview, I took note of the names of staff members who came up repeatedly during my conversations.

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<sup>8</sup> I conducted the interviews in person on the campus of UT on the following dates: Margie Rine—November 6, 2014; Steve Wilson—November 19, 2014; Daniel Zmudd and Chris Janke—November 19, 2014; Austin Bush—December 1, 2014; Jennifer Tisdale—December 3, 2014.

As a starting point for the data collection, I sat down with Margie Rine, the Associate Director for Development at the HRC. I started the interview process with Margie because she was the person I was directed to when I first expressed interest in studying the crowdfunding effort at the Ransom Center. I initially met with Margie in May 2014 to discuss the possibility of using the HRC as the case study site for my research. Margie<sup>9</sup> joined the staff in 2008, and oversees one other staff member in the fundraising efforts at the HRC<sup>10</sup>. Margie's demeanor was upbeat during our conversations, and she was very excited about what the staff at the HRC accomplished through the crowdfunding campaign.

As a result of my interview with Margie, I knew I needed to interview Steve Wilson, the Curator of Film at the HRC. He curated *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibition during which the conserved costumes made their debut. In his role, Steve oversees the film archives at the Ransom Center. Steve provided me with insight about why people connect with *Gone with the Wind*, and with the costumes in particular. Margie also recommended I talk with Chris Janke and Daniel Zmudd, the HRC technology librarian and webmaster, respectively. My interviews with Chris and Daniel took place simultaneously. While they were not heavily involved in the project, they shared valuable information about the technology behind the campaign.

I also interviewed Jennifer (Jen) Tisdale. Jen is the HRC Director of Public Affairs. Like Margie, Jen was very forthcoming during our conversation. She was eager to help me gather accurate information, checking dates and facts on her smart phone during the interview. Jen also shared a PowerPoint presentation she created about the

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout this thesis, all of the interviewees are referred to by the names they identified.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the organizational structure of the Harry Ransom Center, please refer to Figure 1 in Chapter 3.

campaign, and which she used in a presentation to the Advisory Council at the HRC. This document provided insight as to what the HRC staff believed was important about the campaign.

During my early interviews, Austin Bush, Reporting Lead for University Development at UT, was mentioned several times as someone who was not staff at the Ransom Center but who was involved in the campaign. In his position, Austin generates information and reports that fundraising professionals might need from the university database, a database that holds biographical data, contact information, and giving histories on all UT alumni, staff, families, friends, and donors. Austin provided me with some of the documents I used as part of my data.

While the interviews produced data about the personal experiences and beliefs of staff who were involved in the campaign, documents also played a major role in data collection and analysis. Three different people shared this form of data. First, Margie gave me a large document that catalogued the comments of every person who gave to the campaign. In many cases this was simply how they had discovered the project, but some contributors also included personal messages about why their participation mattered to them. This collection of data provided a way for me to analyze how donors viewed the campaign and their relationship to the cause. Margie also supplied me a financial summary of how much money was raised overall, the average gift size, and the size of the largest and smallest gift. During my interview with Austin, I asked for additional information concerning donations, including how much had been donated each day of the campaign as well as information on how many of the donors had previously given to UT and to the HRC. Additionally, the document listed how many people made a second gift in the four years since the campaign concluded. The PowerPoint Jen gave me displayed graphs showing where donations had come from geographically, graphs representing the

information Austin and Margie had provided about the gifts, and information about the advertising value of the earned media<sup>11</sup> resulting from the campaign. Additionally, I gathered online public comments made by donors to the campaign and that they posted on the Ransom Center's blog, *Cultural Compass*, in November 2010. The title of the thread was "Conservation work begins on *Gone with the Wind* dresses with study of stitching and construction."<sup>12</sup> There were 22 comments on the post, many of them written by self-identified donors. The online comments, combined with the catalogue of donor comments made during the campaign and given to me by Margie, provided the voice of the donor to my research. Also, I referenced the campaign website (Appendix C) as a document of the project. This included the page where donors made their contribution, as well as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page that answered common questions about the campaign.

Finally, I recorded observations in a field notebook during the data collection process. This was where I noted phrases and ideas that appeared repeatedly in the data, as well as questions I had as the interviewees were talking. Many of these repeated phrases and ideas later proved to be themes in the data. All these forms of data come together in my search to discover what other museums can learn from the Ransom Center's application of crowdfunding.

#### **STARTING AT THE END: WHAT INTERVIEWEES ASSESSED AS TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN**

In order to understand what happened during the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign to conserve the *Gone with the Wind* dresses, it is helpful to begin by examining

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<sup>11</sup> Earned media is publicity gained through editorial influence, rather than purchased as advertising.

<sup>12</sup> E. Estrin. (2010, November 30). Conservation work begins on *Gone with the Wind* dresses with study of stitching and construction. [Web log]. Retrieved from <http://blog.hrc.utexas.edu/2010/11/30/conservation-work-begins-on-gone-with-the-wind-dresses-with-study-of-stitching-and-construction/>.

data about the staff's perceived outcomes of the project. In order to facilitate gathering this information, I asked three specific questions at the end of each interview:

1. Evaluate the campaign in retrospect. What went well? What did not?
2. What would you recommend to someone else launching a crowdfunding campaign?
3. At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the latter, how so?

Analysis of the answers to these questions revealed the outcomes of the campaign. Using the same three questions in all six interviews allowed me to compare and triangulate the opinions and insights of the staff on specific areas, including lessons learned, their overall attitudes on the fundraising method, and how they perceived donors were able to connect with the campaign.

To protect my research from bias, I was careful to not project my personal belief that the crowdfunding campaign was a success. Because of this, I never asked direct questions about what the interviewees believed made the campaign successful. Instead, for the final question of each interview, I asked the final of three questions listed above; "At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the latter, how so?" I used this series of questions as the primary measure to determine if the interviewees believed the campaign was successful based on their thoughts regarding crowdfunding as a whole.

The response to these questions was overwhelmingly positive. All six of the interviewees said that, under the right circumstances, they would undertake another crowdfunding campaign. Margie said, "I think this will be something we will do in the

future.” Jen echoed this belief saying, “I think its here to stay.” Steve expressed his positive feelings about the campaign by offering, “I just hope we can continue doing this!” Chris believed that the use of crowdfunding in the future of museums is “inevitable.” Austin gave proof for his opinion that “crowdfunding is something of value in the future,” by sharing that “within the last six months [the University Development office] hired somebody [for] who[m] that’s the first bullet point on their job description...in fact, two weeks ago, I think, was the go live date for a centrally supported crowdfunding solution at UT.”

Daniel was also positive about the use of crowdfunding in the future. However, before arriving at this conclusion, he presented some caveats. Daniel said, “I think it could be a fad if people do it wrong.” He went on to explain some specific elements needed in order to make a campaign successful, including funding a specific project with a goal that seems achievable to the public and that can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time. After listing these he concluded, “I think it could be part of the future. I don’t see why not.”

This was not the only way it was clear the staff who worked on the crowdfunding campaign perceived the effort as successful. Both Jen and Margie explicitly used the word “success” to describe the campaign. Steve also thought this was a successful first endeavor into crowdfunding. He indicated his approval for the method when he said; “I’m surprised we haven’t done it more since.” Further, the campaign can be called a success because the goal of raising \$30,000 was achieved, and in one month. Knowing that the campaign was a success, both financially and in the eyes of those who worked on it, the questions becomes: why did the staff members who worked on the campaign have such positive feeling about crowdfunding, and what in the data indicates the sources of

the campaign's success? What museum professionals can learn from the Ransom Center's crowdfunding efforts can be found through this data.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the themes that illuminate the campaign's perceived success. Documents and interviews corroborated themes that emerged through the data. The themes can be split into two categories, which are discussed through the remainder of this chapter. First, there are the themes that had to do with the outcomes of the campaign: being part of something, building diverse audiences, and raising awareness. There are also themes that have to do with how these outcomes were achieved: emotional connection, engagement, accessibility, tangibility, collaboration, and media coverage. Each of the two major sections constituting the remainder of this chapter begin by identifying the themes that fall into the larger category, and why this is so. Within each section, I define the themes for the purposes of this research, and then make a case for the themes through an analysis of the data. My interviews with those who worked on the campaign, as well as the documents I used, gave rise to these themes as being keys to the success of the crowdfunding campaign at the HRC.

#### **OUTCOMES OF THE CAMPAIGN**

Through my interviews with those who worked on the crowdfunding campaign and my review of the documents relating to it, three distinct themes emerged, all of which were integral to the positive outcome of the campaign. The first two of these themes relate to donor engagement, and the last pertains to an institutional outcome for the Ransom Center. They are:

- becoming part of something
- educating the public
- building diverse audiences

These three themes arose repeatedly from both the interviews and documents. Each theme was revealed in a slightly different manner, but they contributed to the positive outcome and opinions the staff held about the campaign. I elaborate and explain these themes through the words of those who worked on and donated to the effort, as well as through quantitative data that was gathered.

### **Becoming Part of Something**

There was one idea that staff kept mentioning when speaking about why donors connected with the campaign: they wanted to be “part of something.” Jen and Margie both used this precise phrase when discussing the success of the campaign to conserve the dresses. Throughout the research, data that revealed the theme of the donors’ desire to be involved in a greater cause, had to do with contributing to something larger than themselves and feeling empowered by their contribution.

Near the end of the interview, I asked Margie what she thought went well during the campaign. She mentioned several contributing factors, but came to the final conclusion that much of the success of the campaign can be attributed to how people felt about their participation. She said, “people really felt a part of something. I think that’s where the meaningfulness of philanthropy really comes through.” Margie said it did not matter how large the contribution was, every donor was valued for the role they played in conserving the costumes.

Jen shared this belief that donors were looking to be active participants through their involvement in the crowdfunding effort, when I asked her if she believed crowdfunding is a fad or part of the future for museums. She described the desire to become part of something through contributing to a crowdfunding campaign as follows:

It seems like people like having the opportunity to donate to something specific, to be part of something. You can always donate overall to a museum, but my

guess is there have been visitors to this exhibition who felt empowered by the fact they contributed to making it possible. Which they should! I think it's an opportunity for inclusion.

Jen's personal suppositions regarding how donors felt about their participation in the campaign were echoed by Margie's view, as well as the words of the donors themselves.

After the campaign was completed, conservation work began on the five costumes. In an effort to keep donors engaged after the campaign, HRC staff member Elana Estrin wrote a post on the HRC blog titled "Conservation work begins on *Gone with the Wind* dresses with study of stitching and construction," which was published on November 30, 2010. Those who wrote comments on the posting often indicated their personal participation in the campaign, and shared their experiences with *Gone with the Wind* movie or book and the effort to conserve the dresses. The comments on this blog post support the donors' desire to contribute, which the staff independently identified. One donor wrote, "What a thrill to be one of the 695 contributors to preserving this beautiful history." Another wrote, "I feel quite pleased to be counted as one of the contributors." She then went on to share that *Gone with the Wind* was the last movie her grandmother saw in a movie theatre. She concluded her comment by writing, "Thanks for giving us the chance to help out." Still another supporter began by posting, "Wow, what a gratification to be one of the 695 contributors to help preserve those beautiful gowns, as well as part of 'Movie' history." She continues to explain that *Gone with the Wind* is her favorite movie, and that she collects related memorabilia. She has even taken trips centered on *Gone with the Wind* conventions and sites. She concluded her story by acknowledging the others who donated to the campaign, "Just want to say thanks to all the others that helped preserve these for future generations." This recognition of other donors involved in a crowdfunding effort like the campaign at the Ransom Center, as

well as gratitude for the opportunity to participate, appeared in over half of the comments.

For those who contributed to the campaign, being a part of something was a compelling element of the experience. The HRC staff recognized this desire in the donors, and corroborated that being a part of preserving the dresses was an important theme of participating in a crowdfunding campaign.

### **Educating the Public**

Part of the mission statement of the Ransom Center is to provide “education and enrichment for scholars, students, and the public at large...” The theme of educating the public arose through statements made by the staff at the HRC during the interviews. Either stated implicitly or explicitly, the Ransom Center staff educated the public on the staff’s professional values and the issues important to the institution. This was primarily accomplished through the development of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on the campaign website. Margie referred to this education as “the intangible things” that arise from a crowdfunding campaign.

Margie explained that shortly after the crowdfunding campaign was launched, the staff developed a FAQ page on the HRC website to “nimble” address the public’s questions about the preservation project. The public wanted to know if they could be involved in the conservation of the dresses, when the exhibition would open, how the gowns came to the HRC, and what happened to the dresses that needed conservation. Jen gave a specific example of why the FAQ was important:

There was, I think, a misunderstanding of what we were doing and why the costumes needed to be restored. People were using the word restored and we never used that word, we were using conserve, which are two very different things. So, maybe day three into it ...we actually received some negative press

attention; I think it was in the *LA Times* by a fashion blogger. So, we then responded with an FAQ as to why this was important.

Speaking about the dresses, Jen continued:

People were like “Why are they in this condition?” “How can this be?” So, we really had to circle back around to that we had received the costumes in the 80’s— they had been well traveled and exhibited before coming here.

The FAQ served the secondary purpose of educating the public on the professional values of the staff at the Ransom Center. One of the questions answered by the FAQ read, “Will the conservation work restore the costumes to their original glory?” In answering this, the staff also took the opportunity to explain their professional goals and priorities. The answer to the question read:

The goal of conservation is to stabilize and preserve while maintaining the integrity of the artifact. Because we want to minimize our influence, we accept many of the losses that have happened over time as part of the dresses' history.

The careful use of the words “conserve” or “preserve,” rather than “restore” is something Steve, the Curator of Film at the HRC, echoed in his interview. He explained, “the main objective of the project was to stabilize the dresses so they could be put on a mannequin and exhibited.” A close reading of Steve’s interview, as well as Margie’s, reveals that neither use the word “restore” unless they are quoting someone outside the HRC. For the staff, the FAQ was an important element of raising awareness among the diverse contributors to the campaign about the mission and professional practices of the HRC.

Jen also saw the campaign as an opportunity to raise public awareness about the challenges of funding an institution such as the Ransom Center. She explained, “I think it’s an opportunity for communicating that sometimes there are challenges with funding sources, and that we depend on diverse audiences to help us accomplish certain things.” She made the point that supporters are often unaware of how special projects, like the conservation of the *Gone with the Wind* dresses, get funding. Jen made this comment

while discussing a string of positive outcomes of crowdfunding. Although no other interviewees spoke about educating audiences regarding funding needs, the fact that she mentioned this as a successful outcome provided weight to her opinion.

Educating the public about the conservation project, the dresses, and the exhibition proved to be a positive outcome of the crowdfunding campaign through the use of the FAQ. Similarly, the FAQ revealed the organizational values of the Ransom Center staff. The page was a place to answer common questions and educate an interested public who had already shown interest by contributing to the campaign.

### **Building a Diverse Audience**

The Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign drew a diverse group of contributors of different ages, possessing varied comfort levels with technology and with assorted previous interactions with the HRC. Contributors did not just come from the state of Texas, or from within the United States, but from around the globe. Combining the data found in campaign documents with the insights of the staff at the HRC provided insight about the hundreds of donors who contributed to the effort. This same data showed the impact the diversity of donors who participated had on the campaign. In the case of this thesis, the data that supported the crowdfunding campaign built a diverse audience also demonstrated the varying backgrounds of contributors.

The crowdfunding campaign at the Ransom Center lasted for six weeks and raised \$33,979 from 668 individual donors. In that time, donations came in from 44 states and 13 countries. Only one third of the donors came from within the state of Texas, where the campaign was based. Of those donors, 85% had never before made a donation to UT or the HRC. Those people constituted a new donor audience for the HRC.

Jen believed that people who might not have engaged with the HRC without the campaign were drawn in because of the project. She saw these people as a new group of supporters for the institution. She explained, “I would hope that you create a new constituency who feels like they are a part of something; that they contributed.”

The staff at the Ransom Center made changes to the operations of the campaign, such as adjusting the giving form to accept international phone numbers and accepting donations by mail because of the diverse demographic of donor the costumes attracted. Margie shared that the staff did not expect donations to the campaign coming from other countries. She explained:

We did not anticipate the international donors, so when AP picked up the story, we had some people e-mailing from the UK and saying “Hey, we can’t donate!” because we had not put in [to the online giving form] international phone numbers.

However, Margie said the experience with the international phone numbers forced the team to learn some lessons “quickly.” In order not to lose potential donors, the staff needed to accommodate anyone who might be interested as swiftly as possible. The same type of adjustment occurred to include donors who were not comfortable with online donations. Jen explained:

it was ...very quickly that they [the staff] realized that there had to be some shuffling on the website. There had to be a box that said, “If you wish to contribute, you can mail a check to...” Because that hadn’t been there. We just thought everyone was going to go online, and we hadn’t planned for that. It was a quick, “Oh my God, wait, we have to rethink this!”

Because of this, a box was added to the campaign website that gave a physical mailing address for the Ransom Center so that those who wanted to participate, but were not comfortable with online donation, could send a check or cash. This organizational

willingness to make changes during the course of the campaign enabled broader participation in the effort.

The way Margie and Jen reacted to the challenges posed by the diversity of donors to the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign shows how much greater the response was than the staff expected. This was certainly viewed as a positive outcome of the effort. However, for there to be a diverse group of donors who felt they were a part of something and to educate them, there also had to be processes that made these possible. The themes relating to these processes are discussed next.

### **PROCESSES OF THE CAMPAIGN**

In order for there to have been the positive outcomes as identified in the themes above, there also had to be themes relating to mechanisms that were particularly successful. Through analysis of the interviews and documents, six themes appeared having to do with how the positive outcomes came about; these were processes used in the campaign. The first two involve how the donor interacted with the campaign, and the last four pertain to how the organization of the Ransom Center approached the project.

They are:

- emotional connection
- engagement
- accessibility
- tangibility
- collaboration
- media coverage

The data shows that these actions and decisions contributed to the success of the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign. In the following pages, I analyze how the data gave rise to these themes.

### **Emotional Connection**

One of the contributors who commented on the November 30, 2010 post on the Ransom Center blog summarized the connection people feel with *Gone with the Wind* in one statement, "I am sure we all have a 'GWTW' story." These stories make evident the role of donors' emotional connections to the project and to the success of the campaign. Stories that showed an emotional connection were the personal tales donors shared of their experience with the film or book. Emotional connection was conveyed in the data when donors articulated how their experience with the campaign resonated with their personal lives, often having to do with the role the book or film *Gone with the Wind* played in their life.

Margie had great expectations for the project because she "knew that there was great promise to be successful with the campaign." She had this confidence because Steve, the HRC Curator of Film, shared with her that he had been in contact with *Gone with the Wind* fans over the years and knew there was a large fan following who might be drawn to participate. Additionally, Margie said that she and the rest of the team "knew the response was going to be big, but we didn't know how big." Steve supported Margie's certainty saying, "We thought we were doing something really positive and we couldn't see any downside going into it." Three other staff members, including Daniel, the HRC webmaster, and Jen, expected the project would be successful and reach the goal of \$30,000. For Steve, this assurance in the emotional connection fans would have

with the project made the decision to pursue crowdfunding for the first time “worth the try.”

Once the campaign began, the comments of donors proved Margie and Steve’s assumptions correct. When making a contribution, one donor shared a story of reading the book precisely 17 times, and seeing the film “countless times.” The funder even wrote a paper in college arguing that *Gone with the Wind* is a handbook for “Southern Ladyhood [*sic*].” Because of these connections, the giver was “both anxious and honored to help preserve any part of such an American classic.” Another contributor shared how *Gone with the Wind* had influenced their future career path. The donor wrote:

As a former costume design major, this film was a massive influence on me as a child to follow my dreams and design and sew...even though I can’t afford much, donating the smallest amount to help preserve these costumes is a requirement.

This participant saw their contribution to the campaign as a way of giving back to the film that had been pivotal in his or her life.

Other donors shared how their mothers had introduced *Gone with the Wind* into their lives. One shared that it was her mother who got her hooked on the film, and that she watches it around the holidays every year. Another contributor shared how *Gone with the Wind* had become part of her life before she was even born. While pregnant with her, the donor’s mother read *Gone with the Wind*. A telegram the participant still possesses wished “baby Scarlett” well, indicating that she was nearly named after the iconic heroine. Although the potential baby name “did not last long,” the donor’s comments show that the *Gone with the Wind* story and the name are part of her personal story. Another contributor said she had watched the film “84 times and counting!” She explained this is because *Gone with the Wind* has a great deal of meaning for her. She remembers her mom and sisters going to see the movie, but she decided to stay home.

When she did see it a few years later she “fell in love with it” and regrets not having gone with her mother and sisters.

The role of the donor having an emotional connection with the object of the campaign was not lost on the HRC staff. Margie shared her excitement over the response to the campaign, and attributed it to seeing “how these costumes were resonating with people and how much they were willing to get behind the effort to save the dresses.” She continued that she cannot imagine another project “that would so deeply touch and motivate such a fan following.” Jen echoed the role of emotion in giving, saying, “I think you can appeal to people’s sentimentalities or their emotions.” Steve called *Gone with the Wind* an “heirloom film” and attributed the lure of this particular crowdfunding campaign to its cultural status, saying the film “means something beyond what it is...it means something to people.”

Those who gave to the campaign were not the only ones who felt an emotional connection with the project. Margie expressed her personal connection with the campaign, saying, “I remember right before the exhibition opening, going down to see that costume [the green curtain dress], it was really pretty emotional. Still is.” When she shared this story, Margie was visibly moved by the memory.

The presence of an emotional connection was evident in the stories of donors and staff alike. This emotional connection could be found in the contributor’s words about why they were compelled to participate, and in the experiences of staff members interacting with the campaign. However, this association was made even deeper by engaging the donor beyond the gift. How the Ransom Center approached establishing and building relationships is discussed in the next section.

## Engagement

The staff at the HRC worked hard to engage donors in the project beyond their gift. In the data, engagement was regarded as anything that specifically had to do with building a continued relationship with contributors. This included both initial follow-up to the donation, as well as e-mails to keep participants informed about the conservation process or the opening of *The Making of Gone with the Wind*. The data showed that engagement was primarily a one-way street from the Ransom Center staff to the donors.

Margie explained that every single donor received a handwritten thank-you note from either herself or her associate, Caroline. She was proud of the fact that they would “turn around thank you notes in a day.” Steve wished he personally could have made more contact with individual donors. He said:

I wanted to have more interaction with individual people, but there was a lot, that was difficult. But the fact that so many people gave small gifts and writing a \$5 check when they're on social security, and that really meant a lot to us and I really want to be able to interact with those people, but there were some 600 or so individual gifts. That's a lot of people to write a letter to.

Despite the volume of gifts, every contributor received some form of personal engagement as follow-up to their contribution. Brief messages of thanks were sent on custom designed postcards, which also served as promotional materials for the exhibition.

The staff at the Ransom Center was able to collect e-mail addresses when donations were made online to the campaign. Margie used this as a way to reconnect with donors, both when the financial goal was reached in September 2010 and right before the exhibition opened in September 2014. She said, “this summer [we] sent them information on the exhibition opening.” Jen explained this second outreach as a way to “make them feel invested” in the exhibition. She also saw this as an opportunity to “integrate” these

donors as supporters in the future by giving them opportunities to further engage with the organization.

Internet technology provided the staff at the Ransom Center the opportunity to continue engaging with donors after the campaign was over. Jen explained that, “we went back to the donors and shared online information with them to make them feel invested in that.” Steve echoed this, saying, “we kept up with people and posted updates, and let people know how the project was going.”

For the staff at the Ransom Center, engagement occurred through the initial follow-up after a contribution, and continued through electronic communication as conservation work began. This engagement continued all the way through the exhibition opening. Efforts were made to engage every single one of the over 600 donors to the campaign.

### **Accessibility**

When the staff involved with the campaign discussed why donors found the effort accessible, the focus was primarily on the technological tools behind a crowdfunding campaign. Within the data, information relating to accessibility had to do with the ease of interacting with the campaign through the Internet. Technology played a major role in the campaign; it was the vehicle for giving and spreading the word about the crowdfunding campaign undertaken to conserve the dresses.

The HRC crowdfunding campaign was conducted through the Ransom Center’s own website, rather than a commercial crowdfunding platform such as Kickstarter. Austin, the reporting lead for University Development, indicated one of reasons for this was because “There was a presidential decree that within UT there be a centralized database for all donations and alumni.” He continued to explain that UT has a legal

responsibility to ensure gifts are a “legitimate philanthropic contribution, and people are getting IRS tax receipts.” By running the campaign through the HRC website, the team was able to connect the giving page directly to the UT database. This meant that University Development recorded each gift immediately upon receipt through an automated process. This enabled the staff to ensure all donors received the appropriate tax acknowledgements. If the HRC had used a third party crowdfunding site for the campaign, there would have been no way to guarantee these procedures were followed. Operating the campaign through the Ransom Center website also gave the staff control over content and design, and as a result they made specific choices ensuring the campaign was as accessible as possible.

Daniel and Chris, the HRC webmaster and technology librarian respectively, already had the basics of an online giving page in place before Margie approached them about running a crowdfunding campaign. Because of this, building the specific page for the crowdfunding campaign was a matter of making project specific changes to an existing webpage. In regards to the actual webpage where contributions were made, Daniel explained, “we already knew the basics of building something to collect money online.” Chris added, “it was a pretty straightforward project.” He continued that making the giving page more accessible was easy because of the technology UT already had in place. He said the system gave them the opportunity to “put a different face on the same form.”

One of Margie’s concerns at the start of the campaign was making the act of giving as accessible as possible. She clarified, “we were concerned about being able to record gifts and not create an extra layer of complexity.” She did not want to alienate potential donors because the process was too long or complex. Additionally, she anticipated that people would be drawn to the campaign because it was to conserve *Gone*

*with the Wind* memorabilia, and not because the HRC is part of UT. Because of this, Margie asked the staff in University Development to design an online giving page that “looked a little less like UT and a bit more like our own [HRC] branding.” The giving page was devoid of the signature UT burnt orange, and instead consisted of dark reds and grays. This encouraged the donor to focus on the HRC, and not UT.

The simplicity of the online giving page was one of the ideas Margie highlighted when I asked what advice she would give to an institution considering their own crowdfunding campaign. She made the point two different times in the story of the campaign. As I mentioned above, early in the interview, Margie spoke about the accessibility of online giving in terms of working with bureaucratic institutions like UT. Near the end of the interview, she reinforced this argument when sharing her advice for other institutions undertaking a crowdfunding campaign; she said, “make sure your online giving page is simple.” This repeated mention of the simplicity and accessibility of online giving highlights the significance she attributed to this part of the fundraising strategy of crowdfunding.

Making the giving page accessible was a priority for the staff at the HRC. They made specific decisions in order to make it easy for donors to participate in the campaign. While running the campaign through the HRC website was not necessarily a matter of choice because of UT requirements, it allowed the team to design a page that was simple to interact with, and looked uniquely like the HRC.

### **Tangibility**

A major theme in my interview with the curator of film, Steve Wilson, was the tangibility of the costumes preserved through this crowdfunding campaign. When Steve discussed about tangibility, he talked about the physicality of the costumes being

conserved and the fact that contributors could see the actual impact of their gift. He also spoke extensively about the meaning the costumes hold in the film, and how this translates into meaning for fans. Steve made it clear that having the costumes at the center of the campaign gave him confidence to try crowdfunding.

When I asked Steve how the decision to undertake this campaign was made, he recalled, “they [his HRC colleagues] were interested in doing some kind of crowdfunding and it just kind of happened that the dresses would be a good fit.” He continued to speak on the importance of what would be conserved with the funds raised, saying, “it kind of matters...whether or not its kind of a high profile project...will people respond to it when they see it and want to help?” Within *Gone with the Wind*, the costumes aid the story and create the atmosphere. Especially in the case of Scarlett O’Hara, you can see the character evolve through her costumes. When Atlanta is under siege, and immediately after the Civil War, she wears a plain, dirty, and tattered dress symbolizing hard times. After the married Scarlett has been caught kissing the also married Ashley Wilkes, she wears an ostentatious and revealing crimson dress. Steve explained that, in these ways, the costumes symbolize the character, something that he felt was important to fans and donors.

Steve again elaborated on the importance of choosing the items to conserve through the campaign. He said, “the costume gives you a sense of the person, and a person really means something to these people.” He made special note of the connection people make with the green curtain dress (Appendix A). He explained:

I think that everybody has a different reason for responding to this film, and there’s something about the costume that humanizes the film and they respond to more of a person. And the dresses, especially the curtain dress, have a presence there that you can’t get from a photograph or a book. Its there in real life and in three dimensions and people really respond to it.

Steve believed the reason *Gone with the Wind* resonates with people is because of its themes of surviving hard times and persevering. He identified the character of Scarlett O'Hara as "a magnetic and fascinating person...something people can relate to as well."

Jen also mentioned the importance of the physicality of the costumes as a draw to donate. She said, "I think it's also neat when something is distinct and you see an outcome. It's not nebulous." She perceived it important that contributors be able to see the objects their money helped preserve so they could visually understand the impact and outcome of their gift. Four years after the campaign was over, contributors had the opportunity to visit *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibit and see the costumes they had played a role in helping to conserve.

While Steve saw the costumes as personifying the ways people connect with *Gone with the Wind*, Jen regarded their physical presence as a draw to potential donors. For both Jen and Steve, having a crowdfunding campaign centered on a project with a tangible result helped contribute to the overall positive outcome of the campaign.

### **Collaboration**

In order to make the campaign successful, HRC staff members from various departments collaborated with each other, as well as with UT staff members from around campus. Data that gave rise to the theme of collaboration had to do with how various staff members came together in order to make the campaign a success.

Margie described a core team of eight people who launched the crowdfunding project. However, Jen, Steve, Austin, and Daniel all attributed the initial idea to run a crowdfunding campaign to conserve the *Gone with the Wind* dresses to Margie. Margie explained, "I shared [the idea] with my predecessor here, and Steve Wilson, and our public affairs staff, our webmaster, and our director of marketing." Margie expounded

that having a group of people from different departments gave the team the means to “look at it from every angle” and “identify all those issues that might come up.” Jen saw this collaboration as important because “like any work environment, you just get entrenched and you forget, or you assume that people [outside the organization] know things when they don’t.” Collaboration allowed the team to see the campaign from the perspective of someone outside his or her department.

In the case of the Ransom Center’s crowdfunding campaign, collaboration also meant gaining the support of staff members who were not familiar or comfortable with crowdfunding. At the time of the campaign, the director of the Ransom Center was Dr. Tom Staley, who had been a part of the HRC since 1988 (Harry Ransom Center, 2013b). Margie said that:

Although he was a superlative fundraiser, he might not have been as familiar with online fundraising. So I think maybe initially he might have, you know, thought “Well, how’s this going to work?” or “Is this going to work?” But he gave us his full support...

Margie believed the project was supported by Dr. Staley, even though he was unfamiliar with fundraising conducted online. He allowed the use of crowdfunding because he trusted the ideas of the staff members. He also permitted the team to change the cultural norms of the HRC through their collaboration. Margie suggested there is a stereotype characterizing research libraries like the Ransom Center as being “mysterious” and “not as up to date on things.” She perceived that running a successful crowdfunding campaign “kind of contradicts that image...we’re one of the first kind of institutions like ours to try this.” Collaboration with both internal and external partners was a way to break the stereotype of the traditional ways of the Ransom Center.

Daniel, the HRC webmaster, pointed out that the Ransom Center functions within the constructs of UT in every undertaking, so working with the staff at University

Development was nothing out of the ordinary. Austin, the reporting lead for University Development, worked on projects with the HRC staff previous to the campaign in his role of providing data about donations and donors to various UT departments. Although Austin is not a member of the HRC staff, but rather of UT's University Development office, Margie saw him as a crucial member of the campaign team. Austin's job during the campaign was to produce and send daily reports to Margie on the contributions made the day before. This included how much money was raised, and how many donors there were in the preceding day. Margie said these daily reports helped build excitement among the staff over the campaign, and keep momentum going. Margie had a positive experience working in collaboration with an outside partner and indicated that knowing she could call Austin and the rest of the staff at University Development to help with any needs that arose gave her confidence in the project. To her, having a strong relationship with collaborators was crucial.

External relationships and collaborations with media also played a role in spreading the word about the crowdfunding campaign. The role of media coverage is discussed in the next, and final, section of this chapter.

### **Media Coverage**

Jen attributed the success of the campaign solely to media coverage. Media coverage was considered to be anything from web and print stories, to radio and television news segments, to postings on social media websites. The theme of media coverage arose from Margie's and Jen's extensive discussions about the necessity of having a way to share the story of the campaign with the world.

Jen had a previous working relationship with Jim Vertuno, a reporter for the Associated Press (AP), who is based in Austin. She gave Jim the story a few days before

the campaign went live, and on August 10th the story of the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign to conserve the dresses was released on the AP wire. Jen explained the trajectory of the story in detail:

With the AP, it was put out on the state wire, and then moved to the national wire, and then it moved to an international wire. The great thing about something like that is then other media start to take notice and it trickles down.

The story being carried by the AP enabled news to spread rapidly around the world, drawing in potential contributors as it traveled.

Jen said, "the AP story is what really jump-started everything. I attribute [the success of the campaign] all back to the AP story." Margie also identified the AP story as playing a major role in the campaign. She said, "we had the good fortune of having the AP reporter...who broke the story, and then it just went viral." Later in the interview she described the AP story as having "mushroomed." Steve identified spreading the word about the project as one of the greatest potential challenges of crowdfunding. He remarked, "the challenge is to get the word out and to show people where to go to donate their money." The statements of both Jen and Margie make it clear the AP story helped the Ransom Center staff overcome the hurdle of informing the public about the campaign.

Jen credited the success of the campaign to the "hook" and media component of the story as a whole. She believed potential contributors were drawn in by the fact that the campaign was for a recognizable and iconic cause, *Gone with the Wind*. While Jen said the whole team at the HRC should be proud of their success, "the word got out because the media took interest in it."

Data on how much money was donated on each day of the campaign corroborates the value of media to this campaign. On August 12th, two days after the AP story was first released, 351 individual donors donated \$16,245 in a single day. Only \$12 had been

raised in the preceding two days. In the following four days, almost 200 additional donations were made to the campaign, totaling an additional \$6,155.55 raised.

Jen said the AP wire story was what allowed the news of the campaign to move quickly and across geographic boundaries. However, the story spread through more than print news outlets. When donors were asked how they learned about the campaign, 92 identified online news sources. Another 92 identified a website or search engine as how they discovered the Ransom Center's campaign. Additionally, 40 donors found the campaign through social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Finally, seven people said they learned of the campaign through e-mail from the Ransom Center.

Once the story of the campaign to conserve the dresses began to spread, news outlets throughout the world shared the story of the campaign. Jen enumerated press coverage in countries as far as Russia, New Zealand, and Australia, and domestically on NPR and Reuters. When contributors made donations, they were asked how they found out about the effort. Of the 563 who shared a source, 385 identified a media outlet somewhere around the world. Of those, the most common source was *Yahoo News*.

According to Jen, over 39 television and radio news stories appeared about the crowdfunding campaign to conserve the dresses. The company Teleclip, which analyzes earned media value, reported these stories were worth \$29,251 in advertising equivalency, and \$87,747 in publicity value. Margie said this type of publicity was actually "priceless," and would be hard to quantify. Because of this, Jen stated, "I think we can all pat ourselves on the back for the idea, but word got out because the media took interest in it." Margie agreed with this when making her recommendations for other institutions, saying, "try to find a media angle if possible."

Jen made the decision to limit how much the team interacted with social media, although it did play a role in spreading the story. The HRC staff posted information about

the campaign on their social media pages throughout the campaign and the conservation effort. Additionally, nearly every news story was accompanied by a posting on that outlet's social media pages. Jen said, "on social media we really just stepped back because there were...a lot of responses." On one post alone about the campaign on the NPR Facebook page there were "hundreds of comments." Often these comments were questions about the project or the story of the dresses, and were addressed on the FAQ page that was discussed earlier in this chapter. Because of the volume of comments, Jen and the team decided only to defend media content if there were factual inaccuracies. The only instance of this that Jen mentioned was the *Los Angeles Times* blog post that was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Margie, Jen, and Steve, to varying degrees, all attributed the positive outcome of the campaign to the media coverage it received. Working with Jim Vertuno and the AP enabled potential donors around the world to learn about the campaign and become a part of the effort.

## CONCLUSION

As this chapter outlines, the Ransom Center's application of crowdfunding reveals many themes relating to lessons other institutions could apply to their own endeavors. These themes had to do with both the positive outcomes of the campaign and the methods leading to those outcomes. Qualitative accounts from staff and donors, as well as quantitative information about donors, revealed similar themes and stories. While the Ransom Center is only one institution among many that has employed crowdfunding, their experience sheds light on the impact and practice of this modern fundraising method. In the quote from *Gone with the Wind* at the beginning of this chapter, Rhett Butler tells Scarlett that her strength comes from her family home of Terra; that it is a

part of her as much as she is a part of it. In the same way, those who participated in the crowdfunding campaign to conserve the dresses became a part of the continuing story of *Gone with the Wind*, just as the story was a part of them. The campaign gave them an opportunity to be part of something more than an average fundraising campaign. They had the opportunity to become a part of the history and the legacy of *Gone with the Wind*, a film with deep connections for many.

In the final chapter, I interpret the implications of crowdfunding in the case of the Ransom Center. Using the data discussed in this chapter, I endeavor to define these lessons so others can benefit from their experiences. What does it take to run a successful crowdfunding campaign? And most importantly, is crowdfunding a fad or part of the future of museums?

## Chapter Six: Fad or Future?

“We’ve traveled a long road since the old days, haven’t we, Scarlett?”

-Leslie Howard as Ashley Wilkes, in *Gone with the Wind*.

Listening to the stories of those who participated in the Ransom Center’s crowdfunding campaign, and reading the documents created by the endeavor, offered a myriad of insights into the applications of crowdfunding in a museum setting. Together, the data sources provide answers and insights to my central questions, “What can museum professionals learn from the Harry Ransom Center’s application of crowdfunding? What implications can be derived for organizational culture, fundraising strategies, audience development, education, and uses of technology?”

In many ways, the *Gone with the Wind* quote above mirrors my feelings on this research as it has evolved. When I began data collection, I expected to find that emotional connection played a role in attracting donors to a crowdfunding campaign. However, the stories I encountered of how *Gone with the Wind* was part of contributors’ personal stories, showed a deeper level of connection than I expected. I had anticipated that the role of technology would be a major draw to the campaign, and donors would be excited by the novelty of an online crowdfunding campaign. What I realized is that technology is no longer a novelty to the contemporary giver, but a convenient vehicle to employ in the act of giving. The idea of donating to the campaign just because it was online, or because it was crowdfunding, was never mentioned by staff or donors in the data. Before collecting the data I believed the power of a crowdfunding campaign was in its online presence because of my personal preference to online financial transactions. However, I found the most enthralling part of the data to be the emotion conveyed in the words of both donors and staff, which had nothing to do with technology. I am not sure why I did

not expect this since I know from experience that the most compelling causes are those where donors have an emotional connection.

The power of connection was the most prominent theme in the data. As discussed in Chapter Five, uncovering the themes in the data relating to the processes of the campaign, the choices the Ransom Center staff made consciously or unconsciously ensured the campaign's success, was an eye-opening experience for me as a researcher. As the data revealed, four years after the campaign every person I interviewed believed crowdfunding was something of value, and three of the six interviewees expressed that they were already seeking another project to crowdfund.

This final chapter will connect and interpret the themes in the previous chapter. While Chapter Five sought what museum professionals can learn from the Ransom Center's endeavor, this chapter takes that information a step further, by combining the data with the scholarly and professional publications I presented in Chapter 2. The remainder of this chapter discusses the most compelling outcomes of the study, including the role of organizational culture as a framework for change at the Ransom Center, the necessity of fostering donor connections, the importance of media coverage, and the incorporation of education into crowdfunding. The final sections of this chapter discuss the benefits of this research to the field, as well as suggestions for further study.

### **CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE**

Organizational culture provides the framework for everything that occurred leading up to and during the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign. Organizational culture is comprised of every element in a work environment from the layout of the office to how co-workers interact (Schein, 1990). It is established as a way for organizations to cope with new ideas (Schein, 1990). Long held values of the HRC staff had to be

disrupted and displaced for the campaign to even happen, let alone be successful. By setting aside the traditional ways of operating, the Ransom Center staff was able to accomplish an effective campaign and come out of the experience with positive outlooks about doing another. In order to succeed in their efforts, the staff needed to be willing to go a long way from where they started.

The organizational culture at the Ransom Center, before the crowdfunding campaign, could best be described as traditional. However, the employment of innovative fundraising methods helped change the organizational culture and the perception of the organization as a whole. Margie identified the stereotype of special collections libraries and archives, like the Ransom Center, as “mysterious” and “not as up to date on things.” She felt undertaking a crowdfunding campaign helped combat that image and show innovation, saying, “I think it [doing a crowdfunding campaign] kind of contradicts that image...we’re one of the first kind of institutions like ours to try this.” Although change was not an original goal of the campaign, the staff at the HRC staff was willing to modify their traditional methods, which in turn began to alter this stereotype. The first part of changing the stereotype occurred in shifting the culture of the organization. There were several indicators of changes in the culture of the Ransom Center. Some of the shifts were simple and could be easily overlooked, while others marked major alterations.

Gaining the trust and support of high level staff members who have worked at the museum for some time can be a significant stumbling block to change. In the case of the HRC, Dr. Thomas Staley had been the director for 22 years and was not necessarily accustomed to Internet fundraising approaches. Margie stated that he was a “superlative fundraiser, but not as familiar with online fundraising.” It was clear that Dr. Staley was someone Margie admired and saw as a leader in the field, but he also represented the traditions of the HRC. His willingness to embrace the crowdfunding campaign even

though he was unfamiliar with the method is one of the first indicators of changing organizational culture. Hedgepeth (1994) identifies “empowering participants in the organizational enterprise” (p. 109) as one of the initial steps to creating a strong organizational culture. By supporting Margie and the rest of the team at the HRC, Dr. Staley empowered them to try something new and make a change.

Once the project had Dr. Staley’s approval, the team at the Ransom Center embarked on Hedgepeth’s second step to creating a positive organizational culture, “creating an environment that values differing organizational contributions to the common good” (p. 109). Across the interviews, it was clear that running a crowdfunding campaign was a collaborative effort between staff members in different departments within the Ransom Center; other UT staff members; and Jim Vertuno, the Associated Press reporter. For Jen, HRC Director of Public Affairs, collaboration was a way to combat some of the potential problems of a traditional organizational culture like the Ransom Center. She said that working across departments allowed the team to recognize potential problems that others might not see. She said:

I think if we could have removed ourselves somewhat and stepped back we could have seen some of these things. Like any work environment, you just get entrenched and you forget—or you assume people know things when they don’t.

Van Mannen and Barley (1985) identify this development of departmental subcultures as “ideological differentiation” (p. 44). Ideological differentiation is the notion that, “Schisms in...research institutes frequently begin when members start to distinguish themselves on the basis of differing paradigms” (Van Mannen & Barley, 1985, p. 44). Collaboration at the HRC allowed the staff to overcome ideological differentiation.

When an organization’s staff assumes their project will be profitable, it is easier for them to attempt a new approach to a problem. In the case of the Ransom Center, there

was an assumption, and even confidence, that the campaign would be a success. Steve Wilson, the HRC Curator of Film, and Margie both expressed this belief early in their interviews. Confidence can come from external sources, and in this case it came through Steve's knowledge that there were legions of *Gone with the Wind* fans with whom he had interacted over the years who would be interested in contributing to the campaign. Margie expressed that the HRC staff "knew the campaign was going to be big," but they never anticipated the level of response that occurred. Steve's assumption of benefit was also strong, saying, "We thought we were doing something really positive and we couldn't see any downside going into it." When there is a culture of confidence, it is easier for the staff to try new approaches to fundraising.

Having an organizational culture that is open to change is important to altering the methods of operation within a museum. Because organizational culture is partially constructed to conserve the culture itself, variation can be an unwelcome occurrence. The staff involved in the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign was open to alterations during the process when unexpected issues arose. The willingness to change enabled the inclusion of international donors when the original online giving form could not accept international phone numbers, and the inclusion of a physical address on the website so donors who were not comfortable with making their donations online could send cash and checks. Deviating from the initial plan for the campaign also led to the creation of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on the website (Appendix C), which Margie and Jen identified as one of the most important elements of the campaign. The role and importance of the FAQ, however, is addressed more fully later in this chapter. Having flexibility in the organizational culture was important to the prosperity of the effort.

The lasting effect of the shifts in organizational culture created by the crowdfunding campaign could be seen in choices relating to *The Making of Gone with the*

*Wind* exhibition. Before opening the exhibition Steve felt that “it would be good to relax our photography policy and let people [take pictures].” Normally, there is no photography allowed within the Ransom Center exhibition space. Permitting the use of photography gave visitors the opportunity to commemorate their experience by taking photos of and with the costumes and other memorabilia in *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibition. Visitors were even provided a suggested hashtag<sup>13</sup> to encourage the sharing of images on social media sites. Since the exhibition opened four years after the crowdfunding campaign, this decision shows the long-term impact of changes in the organizational culture. During the campaign, Jen decided to not place emphasis on social media. However, the use of a suggested hashtag during the exhibition shows a change in cultural perception of social media at the HRC. Additionally, Steve’s willingness to make a seemingly small change in policy shows how the triumph of the campaign led to changes in the organizational culture beyond the initial crowdfunding effort.

Teegarden, Hinden, and Strum (2011) suggested that organizational change could be made by constantly reminding the staff of a specific instances of success when they wrote that, “these stories will be told as ‘the way things used to be,’ and they often represent a norm about the way the organization operates (or operated)” (p. 73). The story of the yield of the Ransom Center’s crowdfunding campaign could certainly be one of those stories used in the halls of the HRC for some time.

Organizational culture shapes the way an institution such as the Ransom Center conducts its everyday operations. The ideas presented above are just some of my conclusions relating to how organizational culture was infused in the crowdfunding

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<sup>13</sup> A hashtag is an online tool to allow users to categorize their social media activity (Jeon, Jun & Hwang, 2014). In the case of a suggested hashtag, the institution creates a unique hashtag to be used in association with a specific event so they can track social media around the occurrence (Jeon, Jun & Hwang, 2014). The suggested hashtag for *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibition was #makinggwtw.

campaign at the HRC. Additionally, there were long-term shifts in the organizational culture of the Ransom Center after the campaign concluded. When thinking about organizational culture, it is important to remember that it serves as the framework for the entire study. None of the outcomes are possible without the support of the organizational culture of the Ransom Center.

### **CONNECTING WITH THE DONOR**

The driving force of the campaign was the connection donors felt with the project. As I presented in the previous chapter, the phrase that kept reappearing in the data was that everyone wanted to be “part of something.” Donors and staff alike felt personal and emotional connections to the project. The number of people who felt compelled to share their individual *Gone with the Wind* story shows just how important being part of this project was to supporters. Gore and DiGiammarino (2014) state that one of the motivating factors for potential participants is a “want to be part of something bigger than themselves” (para. 12). Participating in this campaign gave *Gone with the Wind* fans a chance to become part of their favorite story. They had the opportunity to play a role in the legacy of a book and film that is part of their life.

The fact that donors felt the need to share their *Gone with the Wind* stories shows the importance attached to their personal connection with the project. While contributors were never specifically prompted to share why they chose to support this project, they told stories of their mothers who introduced them to the film, or they wrote about their travels to see various sites associated with the story. For a participant who shared her story of how the film, and the costumes in particular, influenced her career path, it was clear the film had a special place in her personal story. She wrote:

As a former costume design major, this film was a massive influence on me as a child to follow my dreams and design and sew...even though I can't afford much, donating the smallest amount to help preserve these costumes is a requirement.

The film had played a role in the lives of these people, and the campaign gave them a chance to play a role in the lives of the costumes. By contributing, donors were ensuring that the costumes could be a part of someone else's history.

The stories above and in Chapter Five reveal just some of the reasons why donors were drawn to engage with this campaign. They show how a book, a film, and the dresses could mean so much to people that they would donate to an institution with which they had no previous connection. *Gone with the Wind* was a part of their lives and personal stories, and the crowdfunding campaign gave them an opportunity to become part of a story within the story. Spierer (2014) argued, "Stories grab attention, can evoke interest and desire, and motivate action" (p. 117). This was certainly what happened in the case of the Ransom Center.

In this research, I tried to capture and convey how important connection, and a sense of being part of something, was to this campaign. The donors' stories provide a window, but seeing the big picture of how donors connected to the campaign can be daunting. As I conversed with the various staff members at the Ransom Center, I became aware of the importance of connection. The various stories the staff shared made the value of personal connections clear. When Steve showed me a picture of a group of women posing for a photograph in front of the green curtain dress, something that was possible because of the shift in the organizational culture to relax photography rules, he was demonstrating how visitors wanted to connect with the exhibition. When Margie shared the card a donor had sent that included a snapshot of her in a replica of the green curtain dress she had made herself, she provided an example of how personally donors related to the project. And perhaps the moment that sticks with me the most from my

research: when Margie became emotional while telling me about the first time she saw the green curtain dress in the exhibition space, showing that contributors were not the only people who made deep emotional connections with the project. It was not until I was talking with Jen, the HRC Director of Public Affairs, that there were words to express how a campaign like the Ransom Center's relates to the donor in a unique way. As we discussed why crowdfunding can be so lucrative, she said:

It seems like people like having the opportunity to donate to something specific, to be a part of something. You can always donate overall to a museum, but my guess is there have been visitors to the exhibition who felt empowered by the fact that they contributed to making it possible...I think its an opportunity for inclusion.

All the ideas Jen articulated here are why donors chose to connect with the campaign. Of course it was about conserving the costumes and the story that held a special place in their lives, but on a deeper level, it was about being empowered to make a difference.

The modern donor is seeking a way to make a difference in a world where they often feel powerless to make positive change (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). Donors today are most likely to give to causes where they have an emotional or personal connection. In a survey conducted between 2010 and 2012 by Achieve and Johnson Grossnickle and Associates to understand the giving habits of Millennials<sup>14</sup>, 85% of respondents identified a "compelling mission or cause" as a reason to make a philanthropic donation (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013, p.130). In the same study, 82% of Millenials said they would be more likely to give if the organization described a specific project for the funds raised (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). Attracting the modern donor can be difficult since there are so many museums, often competing for the attention

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<sup>14</sup> Millenials are classified by The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement as those born between the years of 1984 and 2004 (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013).

of the same audience. A major step to a strong crowdfunding campaign is selecting a project that donors can connect to and feel like they are truly making a difference.

Thanks to technology, potential contributors sift through huge amounts of information every day (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). In order to stand out in the crowd, museums must find a way to connect with the donor on a personal level, make an impact, and empower the donor to do the same. The significance of technology in this crowdfunding campaign is explored in the next section.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND FUNDRAISING IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Here in the year 2015, flashy giving pages or the use of the Internet as a medium for giving no longer impresses donors. Upon starting this research, I mistakenly believed that technology and novelty of crowdfunding provided the draw for donors to participate in these campaigns. It quickly became clear that in the case of the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign, the technology was simply a convenient means to an end. However, because the campaign was based online, it is important to discuss the role of technology.

Today, making philanthropic donations online is commonplace. Many potential contributors would not think twice about making their donation through the web, rather than by mailing a check. In 2007, 71% of Internet users reported making financial transactions online (McPherson, 2007). Using technology and the Internet to make donations is not a novelty. Even contributing to a crowdfunding campaign is not a new concept.

The majority of the HRC's crowdfunding donations (about 73%) came from outside the state of Texas, where the Ransom Center is located. Donors in the 43 other states and 13 other countries would not have been able to participate if the campaign was

not online, and it is doubtful that it would have been popular without the use of present day digital technology. Internet media played a major role in how potential donors learned about the campaign. The AP wire story about the campaign informed potential donors around the world about the project so they could participate. Technology and the Internet brought donors together from all across the globe to contribute to the Ransom Center's campaign to conserve the *Gone with the Wind* costumes. Coming together through the Internet for a common goal is one of the tenets of the democratization of philanthropy (McPherson, 2007). The democratization of philanthropy, facilitated by the Internet, is creating a new culture of giving in the twenty-first century.

When Friedman (2007) said the world in the twenty-first century had been “flattened,” I believe he was writing about technologies such as this. Crowdfunding enables museums to reach interested parties all over the world so that they contribute to projects of interest to them. When the power of technology is properly harnessed, contributors can come together, regardless of their geographic location, to make a meaningful difference.

#### **THE ROLE OF MEDIA COVERAGE**

Contemporary media spreads information at a rapid rate thanks to Internet technology. In order for a crowdfunding campaign to be prosperous, museums must take advantage of media attention to spread the story of their project well beyond the normal audiences. While organizations can fixate on social media, the value of traditional print and broadcast media (although often accessed through the Internet) should not be discounted. Because of Internet media, potential donors were able to learn about the HRC campaign and contribute, regardless of geographic location. Media is one of the building

blocks of the democratization of philanthropy, which says philanthropy has become available to all because of the accessibility provided by the Internet.

For the Ransom Center, Jen and Margie both attributed the appeal to the crowdfunding campaign to the story spreading through media. Jen explained:

So, with the AP, it was put out on the state wire, and then moved to the national wire, and then it moved to an international wire. The great thing about something like that is then other media take notice and it trickles down. So the AP story is what really jump-started everything. I attribute it all back to the AP story.

Jen's statements make it clear how important having a strong media presence is to the success of a crowdfunding campaign.

The existing professional relationship Jen had with Associated Press (AP) reporter Jim Vertuno allowed the staff to alert the media to the crowdfunding campaign. A public relations department can always draft press releases, but having a direct relationship ensures the media will carry the story; and a wire story provides ease of movement. Once the story was released, Margie described it as going "viral." Her choice of words speaks to the technology behind the spread of media. Viral is a specific term that references a story or information spreading rapidly and broadly through the Internet (McPherson, 2007). In a matter of two days, potential donors all over the world knew about the Ransom Center's campaign.

The power of the press is evident in how donors found out about the campaign. An overwhelming 68% of donors identified a media outlet as how they discovered the story. In the present era, this does not necessarily mean they are reading a physical paper, watching a television screen, or listening to the radio. Of all the people who discovered the campaign through the press, the largest number (22%) of them saw the story on *Yahoo News*. *Yahoo News* was likely something donors saw in passing daily while cruising the Internet, and this story caught their attention. In 2007, Jason Wingard argued

that spreading news through the Internet is particularly important with younger donors in the age of social media. Additionally, he asserted that these innovations have rapidly increased the democratization of philanthropy (Wingard, 2007).

In the present age of social media, it seems important to discuss the role social media did or did not play in this campaign. Jen said she made the conscious decision to not attempt to control comments related to social media on the campaign to fund the conservation, simply because it is so expansive. She pointed out that there were hundreds of comments on nearly every story, and it was not a productive use of staff time to correct every public misconception. Nearly every media outlet that carried the story also posted it on their social media sites. When I began this study, I expected to find that many contributors discovered the campaign through social media. However, only 40 donors identified social media as the outlet through which they learned about the effort to preserve the dresses. I am unsure of what to attribute this pattern since I had limited access to the thoughts of contributors. Social media is no longer just for the young, so a demographically based explanation does not make sense. These conclusions should not be taken to suggest that social media could be disregarded in a crowdfunding campaign. The focus for spreading the story should remain in traditional media outlets because these may well have the greatest reach. This decision can be made with the knowledge and expectation that the story will organically spread to social media.

Internet media, including social media and news media, break down the physical barriers to participation by connecting people across the globe, contributing to the democratization of philanthropy. Thomas Friedman (2007) described the modern world as having been flattened by technology. What he means is “we are now connecting all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network” (Friedman, 2007, p. 8). This is especially the case when it comes to news stories. Thanks to the

Internet, a news story can spread around the globe with the click of a mouse. McPherson (2007) wrote that this new trend in media “means that people, not editors, are deciding what constitutes the news. And that people, not media, are deciding what issues and organizations will receive attention” (p. 4). Museums running crowdfunding campaigns can build on this trend to raise awareness about their campaigns through Internet media.

Spirer (2014) wrote that organizations should capitalize on the media attention provided by crowdfunding campaigns. Jen pointed out the monetary value of this in her presentation to the HRC Advisory Council after the campaign concluded, which highlighted the importance of media coverage to a campaign<sup>15</sup>. Margie also attributed the ease gathering supporters for the main exhibition to the media coverage the crowdfunding campaign received. She said:

But in terms of heightening awareness, on an international level...its priceless. In terms of the campaign and reaching that kind of—if we had paid for that kind of advertising it would have been millions of dollars. And I think it all led to such things as the TCM partnership<sup>16</sup>, so I think it just put a lot of things in motion that really worked for us.

It is clear from Margie’s statement that media value goes beyond initial outreach into later financial partnerships. When I asked Margie if she would attribute the success funding the rest of the exhibition to the initial excitement of the crowdfunding campaign, her response was a quick and confident, “Oh yeah. Definitely.”

Having a media element is crucial to a lucrative crowdfunding campaign. It provides the opportunity for a broad audience to learn about the effort so they can contribute to the cause. Media in the contemporary age begins to break down the barriers to participation and facilitate the democratization of philanthropy. Utilizing media

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<sup>15</sup> As noted in chapter 5, Teleclip valued the media coverage for the *Gone with the Wind* crowdfunding campaign at \$29,251 in advertising equivalency, and \$87,747 in publicity value.

<sup>16</sup> Turner Classic Movies (TCM) was a corporate underwriter for *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibition at the Harry Ransom Center.

coverage effectively facilitates the growth and spread of the campaign in a natural, and yet vast manner.

### **BRINGING EDUCATION INTO THE STORY**

Crowdfunding campaigns could benefit greatly from including education departments in the planning of the effort. Crowdfunding campaigns attract new constituents who have a proven interest in a specific area of the museum's collection. The emotional connections donors showed through their comments could be translated into intellectual connections through integrating education into museum fundraising efforts.

In the case of the Ransom Center's campaign to conserve the *Gone with the Wind* costumes, the HRC staff developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page to answer the most common inquiries about the project. While this was not part of the initial plan for the campaign, the addition met multiple needs. Creating a FAQ page was one of the first suggestions Margie had for other institutions that undertake crowdfunding campaigns. She was adamant about its importance, saying, "I would definitely have that FAQ developed."

Within museums, departments tend to differentiate themselves and create subcultures. Van Mannen and Barley (1985) refer to this as ideological differentiation. Because of ideological differentiation, departments can become isolated, often shying away from collaboration. As addressed earlier in this chapter, collaboration was a major part of the crowdfunding campaign at the Ransom Center. However, the necessity of the FAQ section to the success of the campaign shows the importance of including education in the process. Museums should take advantage of the interest contributors to crowdfunding campaigns have already shown, and take the opportunity to educate these constituents. Museum educators and fundraisers working together can integrate the new

constituents created by the crowdfunding campaign into the permanent museum audience. These donors potentially could always have a connection to the museum because they felt a part of the organization through their participation in the campaign. Spierer (2014) identifies crowdfunding as an exchange where one of the elements exchanged is, “an education regarding a specific crowdfunding topic or cause”(p. 183). Through collaboration, this exchange can go beyond the donation to the initial campaign, and last as long as the contributor is engaged with the museum.

Taking the opportunity to educate the public from the start of the campaign can help avoid what Jen referred to as a “misunderstanding of what we were doing.” As I explained in Chapter Five, talking about the campaign in terms of “preserving” or “conserving,” rather than “restoring,” was important to the staff at the Ransom Center. Jen and Steve wanted to make it clear to a concerned public that the dresses had been well cared for during their time at the HRC. Two questions on the FAQ page addressed public concerns about the dresses reading, “Why do the dresses need repairs?” and “What conditions are the dresses kept in at the Ransom Center?” Those who contributed to the campaign valued the costumes and were concerned they would be cared for properly once conservation was complete. It is impossible to know if establishing a FAQ page from the beginning would have prevented the *LA Times* article, which described the costumes as being in “shambles,” from being printed, but it would have given an interested public answers to their questions and concerns.

Museums can also use education as a method to sustain new donors gained through the crowdfunding campaign. Institutions can build a deeper relationship with constituents through educational engagement. Since these donors have already shown an interest in the topic of the campaign through their donation, they are likely to be interested in learning more about the subject of the campaign.

Museums should capitalize on the attention they receive through crowdfunding campaigns as a way to educate the interested public. Despite this opportunity, it does not seem that museums, including the HRC, approach crowdfunding campaigns as an educational opportunity. Through education, potential donors build a deeper connection with the institution and a cause for which they have already shown a passion. One of the primary purposes of museums is to educate the public, and there is no reason why a fundraising campaign should be an exception to this mission.

### **SUGGESTIONS FROM THE HRC STAFF**

When I conducted interviews with those involved in the Ransom Center's crowdfunding campaign, I made sure to ask every participant what suggestions they would have for other institutions undertaking a similar project. After listening to the stories of those who participated on the crowdfunding campaign and reading the recommendations of the scholars and professionals discussed in Chapter Two, I identified five suggestions for executing a successful crowdfunding campaign.

1. Make sure the technology works.
2. Chose your project carefully.
3. Anticipate questions and develop a Frequently Asked Questions page on the website before the campaign begins.
4. Cultivate and capitalize on a media angle for the project.
5. Take advantage of the new audience fostered by the campaign and keep them engaged.

In the following paragraphs, I discuss these suggestions in detail so they can provide insight and assistance to other museums considering undertaking a crowdfunding campaign.

To start, Margie made the point that before the campaign begins an institution needs to make sure the technology behind it is working correctly. She shared her significant insights on working with the technology of crowdfunding, saying:

Make sure your online giving page is simple. And then test it, test it, test it ahead of time so you can iron out any potential glitches. If you're working within a bureaucratic organization, really do some of that technical stuff way ahead of the campaign.

Having a functioning webpage through which to collect donations is the first step to an effective crowdfunding campaign. All further suggestions for a successful crowdfunding campaign hinge upon having a functional method to collect contributions.

The choice of the project to crowdfund is incredibly important to the process. In the case of the Ransom Center, the costumes from *Gone with the Wind* were a major draw to donors. Steve said, "it turned out to be important the choice of the item that we wanted to conserve, and that so many people latched onto it so quickly." He continued, "that seemed to have some kind of an impact, that we were really trying to preserve and protect this iconic costume." Gary Spierer (2014) identified one of the key aspects of selecting a project for a crowdfunding campaign as emotional engagement. Daniel suggested, "ask yourself if you would have the urge personally to give money for that [specific crowdfunding campaign]" before selecting a project. Saratovsky and Feldmann (2013) encourage nonprofits to think about engaging the modern donor through solution inspired ideas where donors have the opportunity to develop and be a part of creative solutions to problems. They also advise tangible projects where contributors can clearly see the impact and outcome of their donation (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013). Additionally, they suggest that organizations, and their specific projects, have a clear call to action when they write, "Although today's unprecedented technology allows organizations to reach out to new audiences, the call to action must be clear, it must be

actionable, and it must show impact” (Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013, p. 89). Selecting a specific project where contributors can see the impact of their gift is an important initial step of the crowdfunding process.

Before the crowdfunding campaign launches, the museum should anticipate questions that might arise about their project. This was the first suggestion Margie had for other institutions using crowdfunding. She said, “I would definitely have an FAQ developed. Anticipate any possible questions that donors might have.” While the FAQ page of the website for the campaign serves to take some of the pressure of answering questions off the staff, it also educates the visitor about the cause. McPherson (2007) makes the point that nonprofits should commit to educating their online visitors as it “adds depth and richness to the discussion of your issue” (p. 40). It can be difficult for staff members to anticipate what questions might arise during the project because they are so close to it. Jen said, “like any work environment, you just get entrenched and you forget, or you assume people know things they don’t.” Taking a step back from the project and looking at it critically gives the staff a casual opportunity to educate the public. Just because crowdfunding is about raising money, does not mean educational opportunities should be overlooked. To achieve this, development departments can partner with education and outreach departments to create meaningful learning experiences.

Partnering with a media outlet or finding a media angle is crucial to spreading the word about crowdfunding campaigns. While there is a temptation in the modern era to assume that social media will be sufficient, the statistics of how contributors discovered the Ransom Center’s campaign strongly support the view that news media are a much stronger force than social media. Margie seemed to share her hesitancy about how the campaign would have gone if the AP had not gotten involved. She said, “Try to find a

media angle if possible because, I don't know," she paused and continued, "I think the campaign would have been successful, but [find] an interested reporter." Her conclusion was that having a newsworthy angle was "really important" to the achievement of a campaign. Museums often try to minimize advertising costs, instead relying on press releases or events to draw attention (McPherson, 2007). Getting media attention through a major outlet like the AP means, in the case of the HRC, tens of thousands of dollars in earned advertising. Spierer (2014) underlines the importance of creating a campaign that can garner visibility in order to reach the greatest audience possible.

The final recommendation drawn from the literature and those interviewed was capitalizing on the new audience garnered by a crowdfunding campaign. Since many of these people are new constituents, it could be easy to neglect them after the campaign concludes. Margie suggested keeping donors engaged by following up to show them how their donation helped the project come to fruition. She also suggested providing further opportunities for engagement through continued contact with donors. These are the simple gestures of sending a personalized acknowledgement, sending e-mails with project updates, and, in the case of the Ransom Center, inviting donors to come see the final outcome of their gifts during *The Making of Gone with the Wind* exhibition. Spierer (2014) describes these as the simple encounters that ultimately build into a relationship between the organization and the funder.

Every crowdfunding project functions differently. The suggestions detailed above arose from studying the specific campaign at the Ransom Center. I believe these suggestions are smart ideas when starting a crowdfunding campaign. Choosing a project that will generate emotional response, taking the opportunity to casually educate the public about the project, finding a media angle to help share the story, and keeping

donors informed and engaged are just some suggestions for a fruitful crowdfunding campaign in a museum.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Through the process of this research, several areas for potential study arose from topics that simply could not be covered in the scope of this thesis. Since crowdfunding is a relatively new field, any research adds to the knowledge of the field and should be pursued.

Additionally, there would be value in examining this research from different perspectives. First, a comparative study of two campaigns would provide researchers a deeper understanding of crowdfunding in museums. Second, a longitudinal study that follows a campaign as it happens and examines the long term effects of a crowdfunding campaign could provide more accurate information about the role of organizational culture shifts in museums using crowdfunding campaigns. Both of these different approaches to the same type of research would be worthwhile undertakings.

Further, research must be done on crowdfunding from the point of view of the donor so museum professionals can better understand how to engage crowdfunding audiences as a unique constituency. Although this would be difficult because of confidentiality, it would provide tremendous insights about how museums can attract audiences through crowdfunding. Why do donors choose to participate in these campaigns? What attracts them? How does the donor view their relationship with the museum?

Through studying the interviews of this study and reading pertinent literature on crowdfunding, several questions lingered in my mind. What role does the age of the donor play in the draw of this type of campaign? I had hoped to explore this issue in my

own research, but the information was not available to me. Additionally, is there such a thing as too much crowdfunding? Does the novelty of crowdfunding wear off if a museum undertakes too many campaigns in a short period of time? What are the limits? The importance of studying the implications of crowdfunding and how to maximize its use only become more important as new crowdfunding platforms arise, and the public becomes more comfortable with the method of fundraising.

It would also be beneficial to study how education departments can fit into crowdfunding campaigns. In the case of the Ransom Center, education came in the form of the addition of a FAQ page on the website and was an afterthought to address donor questions. I believe that further research needs to be conducted about how education departments can partner with development departments to engage audiences. By making a contribution, donors have already expressed that they are interested in the museum, so it is logical that they would be open to an educational experience with the museum.

#### **BENEFITS TO THE FIELDS OF ART EDUCATION AND FUNDRAISING**

This research is beneficial to both fundraising professionals and museum educators because of its implications for audience development and outreach. The way museums operate is constantly evolving as new technologies arise. Self-guided tours are no longer on cassette players, but are now available through cell phones and iPads. Donations are made through online forms rather than personal checks. News articles are no longer clipped from the newspaper and sent to interested friends, but are instead shared through social media. Because of the increasing presence of technology, museum professionals in both education and fundraising have new avenues to reach potential constituents.

As crowdfunding becomes a more common way to raise funds in museums, understanding both the benefits and pitfalls of this method of fundraising is important. While this case study is only one example, it does provide insights about the process. Collecting the stories of museums that have conducted crowdfunding campaigns adds to the body of knowledge on the topic. It would be beneficial for museum staffs considering crowdfunding to speak with their peers about their experiences with crowdfunding. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the staff at the Ransom Center was open and excited to share their practices. Reviewing documents related to the campaign, including the website where donations were collected, would also provide professionals with ideas for their own institutions.

As I explained in my motivations section in Chapter One, I approached this research as someone with a background in both education and fundraising. Because of these viewpoints, I identified potential benefits to the field of museum education, as well as to the field of fundraising. The development of the FAQ page during the Ransom Center's campaign shows how education departments can become involved in fundraising projects. Constituents are more likely to give to an organization if they feel involved. Education is one way to foster this involvement. Creating an FAQ page does not require collaborating with the education staff at a museum. However, this could be a stepping-stone to further collaboration between educators and fundraisers. Learning and giving are both deeper levels of engagement than visiting the museum or browsing a website, so it makes sense for education and fundraising departments to work together to engage audiences.

Having museum fundraising professionals with a background in education is important because of the unique understanding museum educators have about engaging visitors. Through my graduate work in art education, I gained strategies for involving the

visitor in meaningful engagement with the museum. Giving and learning are both forms of meaningful interaction with the museum, and the same strategies can be applied to both. One of the areas where fundraisers and educators can collaborate most effectively is during events. Often, museums have fundraising events, and by including educational components in these, an audience that has already shown an interest in the mission of the organization by attending, has the opportunity to learn more about the museum and its exhibitions.

In 2008, David Ebitz wrote “marketing and development staff have often been more effective in capitalizing on the opportunity offered by the attention paid visitors in the face of demographic changes and the need to increase income” (p. 20). This highlights the benefits of intersecting art education and development. Both educators and fundraisers seek to engage audiences, one through learning experiences and the other through financial contributions. By taking advantage of simple opportunities to collaborate, museum educators and fundraisers can both benefit.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Crowdfunding is sure to be part of fundraising in the twenty-first century. Well-executed campaigns like the project at the Ransom Center reveal that crowdfunding is a worthwhile tool for museum fundraisers. While it is a long way from traditional, face-to-face fundraising methods where the fundraiser sits down with the potential donor and asks for a contribution, it has the potential to foster deep relationships between the donor and the museum. As much as it is a departure, it is built on the same foundation of connection between the supporter and the museum.

Crowdfunding campaigns not only raise money, but also attract new audiences to the museum. These campaigns build on deep, emotional connections between the donors

and the museum so the contributors feel a part of something larger than themselves through their participation in the campaign. It does not matter what the technology looks like or what it took to make the campaign happen; it matters that the donor feels connected to the cause and has a desire to contribute. In the twenty-first century, museums should consider crowdfunding as part of a well-rounded fundraising plan. Crowdfunding is not a passing fad. It should be integrated as part of any fully developed fundraising plan in a museum.

**Appendix A: *Gone with the Wind* costumes in the Harry Ransom Center archives**



Left:

The conserved burgundy ball gown worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*. [photograph]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gonewiththewind/costumes/scarlett/ball/#top>.



Left:

The conserved green curtain dress and hat worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*. [photograph]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gonewiththewind/costumes/scarlett/#top>.



Left:

The blue velvet peignoir worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*. [photograph]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gonewiththewind/costumes/scarlett/ball/#top>.



Left:

The wedding dress worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*. [photograph]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gonewiththewind/costumes/scarlett/wedding/#top>.



Left:

The green velvet dressing gown worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*. [photograph]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gonewiththewind/costumes/scarlett/wrapper/#top>.

## **Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Questions**

While I strived to keep the interviews conversational, I composed starting questions as guidelines to ensure I gathered all the information needed for this research.

### **MARGIE RINE-ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT, THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER**

- What percentage of the HRC budget comes from the University?
- Who would you consider to be your peer institutions?
- What inspired the HRC to try crowdfunding? How long had you been considering using a crowdfunding campaign?
- When did the HRC decide to try crowdfunding? Was it independent of the GWTW campaign?
- How far in advance did you start planning?
- What made you decide this was the right campaign to try crowdfunding? Was the idea initiated and/or championed by any specific person? Why did they push it?
- What concerns did you have going in to the campaign? What type of risk assessments did you make on the project?
- Tell me about how you have to work in relation to the larger university. How did that enable or impinge what you wanted to do? Particularly in relation to IT, development, or anything else.
- How did the staff receive the idea of using crowdfunding? (mine it for more information)
- How were roles broken down during the campaign?
- Did your day-to-day functioning look any different during the campaign than it would on any other day?

- What were the greatest challenges during the campaign? What about pestering challenges?
- How did you follow-up with donors to the campaign?
- Do you see people relating differently to the exhibit if they gave to the campaign?
- Evaluate the campaign in retrospect. What went well? What didn't?
- What would you recommend to someone else launching a crowdfunding campaign?
- At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the later, how so?

**STEVE WILSON-CURATOR OF FILM, THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER**

- What is your name and job?
- Who would you consider to be your peer institutions?
- When did you first learn about the HRC's interest in trying a crowdfunding campaign?
- What was your initial reaction to using a crowdfunding campaign?
- What were some of the reactions of your peers in the field when the HRC announced they would be using crowdfunding for this project?
- Why did you think this would be a good project to try? (Affinity groups)
- How does a curatorial department figure into a campaign like this? What type of role did you play?
- Why do you think *Gone with the Wind* is so enduring for people? What about the costumes in particular?
- What concerns did you have going in to the campaign?
- Do you see people relating differently to the exhibit than other types of exhibits? Would you attribute this to the campaign?
- Evaluate the campaign in retrospect. What went well? What didn't?
- What would you recommend to someone else launching a crowdfunding campaign?
- At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the later, how so?

**DANIEL ZMUD, WEBMASTER, AND CHRIS JANKE, TECHNOLOGY LIBRARIAN- THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER**

- What are your names and jobs?
- When did you first learn about the HRC's interest in trying a crowdfunding campaign?
- What were your initial reactions to using a crowdfunding campaign?
- What concerns did you have going in to the campaign?
- How did the initial planning for the campaign work from a technical aspect?
- What did it look like to work with central development and the VIP system to create a campaign like this?
- Are there ways in which you think the campaign was different because you were working within the larger university?
- What considerations did you make when designing the giving page?
- What was the greatest challenge of the campaign? What were the pestering challenges?
- Evaluate the campaign in retrospect. What went well? What didn't?
- What would you recommend to someone else launching a crowdfunding campaign?
- At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the later, how so?

**AUSTIN BUSH, REPORTING LEAD- UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

- What is your name and your job?
- In general, how does the larger Central Development interact with internal entities like the Harry Ransom Center?
- When did you first hear about the Ransom Center wanting to try crowdfunding? When were you first approached about the project? (what stage?)
- How did the relationship between Central Development and the HRC work during the campaign?
- What role did you play during the lead up to the campaign? What about the day to day?
- What concerns did you have about the campaign going in?
- Were any elements of the campaign dictated by the fact that it was happening within the larger university structure?
- What were the greatest challenges during the campaign? What about pestering challenges?
- Evaluate the campaign in retrospect. What went well? What didn't?
- What would you recommend to someone else launching a crowdfunding campaign?
- At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the later, how so?

**JENNIFER TISDALE, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS- THE HARRY RANSOM CENTER**

- What is your name and your job?
- What specifically was your and your department's role in the campaign?
- Traditionally, how do you approach marketing a fundraising campaign?
- How did you approach this campaign differently?
- In preparation for the campaign, did you do any research into how other locations had done such campaigns? Where did you look? What did you find out?
- What specific considerations did you make in marketing a crowdfunding campaign?
- How did the process look from the inside?
- Was there an outreach strategy around the exhibition that focused on people who gave to the crowdfunding campaign?
- What steps did you take to engage the public in the campaign? How did these differ from your "standard approach?"
- What did you learn from the crowdfunding experience? How would you apply these ideas in the future or in giving advice to other museums?
- Do you feel people relate differently to this exhibition if they donated to it? How so?
- At the end of the day, what is your opinion regarding the value of crowdfunding for museum fundraising? Is it a fad or does it have value for the future? If the later, how so?

## Appendix C: Campaign Website Screenshots

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying a campaign website. The browser's title bar reads "Help preserve the Green Curtain Dress and other iconic costumes from Gone With The Wind - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar shows the URL "http://research.hrc.utexas.edu/forms/gwtwform.dfm?amt=10". The website's navigation menu includes "MEMBERSHIP", "DIRECTOR'S CIRCLE", "SPONSORSHIP", "ENDOWMENTS AND GIFT PLANNING", and "CAPITAL CAMPAIGN". A "CONTRIBUTE" banner is at the top. The main content area features a donation form with the following elements:

- A "Thank you for your support. Please complete all required fields, then press Next." message.
- A "Choose a donation level:" section with radio buttons for \$10, \$25, \$100, and Other.
- A "Donor Contact Information:" section with a "Prefix" dropdown menu (set to "Select"), and input fields for "First Name", "Last Name", "Preferred mailing address", "Line 2 of address (if necessary)", and "City".
- A photograph of a long, dark green, floor-length dress with a gold belt and tassel, labeled "The Curtain Dress".
- A caption below the dress: "Green curtain dress (the Portiere Dress) worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in Gone With The Wind."

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button, several open applications (iTunes, Microsoft Word, Outlook, etc.), and the system clock displaying 4:11 PM on 4/11/08.

Help preserve the Green Curtain Dress and other iconic costumes from *Gone With The Wind* - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/contribute/endowments/opportunities/costumes/

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# CONTRIBUTE

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR'S CIRCLE ADVISORY COUNCIL SPONSORSHIP **ENDOWMENTS AND GIFT PLANNING** CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

THANK YOU

Thanks to the tremendous support for this initiative, we have reached our goal of raising funds to restore five original costumes from *Gone With The Wind*. If you wish to make a donation to help support the Ransom Center's *Gone With The Wind* 2014 exhibition, which coincides with the film's 75th anniversary, we are currently raising funds for this purpose.

We are grateful to all of those who donated. If you are interested in updates on the costumes please sign up for the Ransom Center's eNews at [hrc.utexas.edu/eNews](http://hrc.utexas.edu/eNews).

Help preserve the Green Curtain Dress and other iconic costumes from *Gone With The Wind*.

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Green curtain dress (the Portieres Dress) worn by Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*.

No movie costume has captured the imagination of film goers more than Scarlett O'Hara's Green Velvet Curtain Dress from *Gone With The Wind*. The Harry Ransom Center is home to five dresses worn by the actress Vivien Leigh in this Hollywood masterpiece. The costumes are from the collection of David O. Selznick, the legendary filmmaker who produced *Gone With The Wind* and other classics including *A Star Is Born*, *Rebecca*, and *Duel in the Sun*.

The costumes are in fragile condition and cannot currently be exhibited. The Center would like to display the costumes in 2014 as part of a major exhibition celebrating the 75th anniversary of *Gone With The Wind*. The Center also wants to be able to loan the dresses to other museums around the world.

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Stay up to date with the Ransom Center's latest news and events with eNews, the Center's free monthly electronic newsletter.

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Learn more about the Ransom Center's costume holdings

Gone With The Wind fans donate \$30,000 to preserve costumes

Done Internet 100%

start iTunes Facebook Docu... Facebook... Inbox... Micros... Micros... GWT... Help p... Welco...

## Frequently Asked Questions about the *Gone With The Wind* Dresses

### How did the dresses end up at the Ransom Center?

The dresses came to the Ransom Center in the early 1980s as part of the [David O. Selznick](#) archive.

### Why do the dresses need repairs?

Before the dresses came to the Ransom Center, they were exhibited frequently, and as a consequence, there are signs of wear on them. Most costumes are not constructed to last beyond the production of the film. They may not be finished in the same way that a ready-to-wear garment bought off-the-rack from a retail store would be. The dresses are voluminous and made of heavy fabrics, and the mere force of gravity can cause strain on the stitching of a dress when it is displayed on a mannequin. In some cases, for example, the cotton threads holding the seams together have deteriorated or loosened.

### What conditions are the dresses kept in at the Ransom Center?

The dresses have been kept in humidity- and temperature-controlled conditions in acid-free tissue paper in archival boxes. The Ransom Center's [conservation department](#) is known for its excellence in the field, and preserving and conserving collection materials is a top priority for the institution. Furthermore, the Center's conservation department has consulted with other experts of costume conservation to ensure the proper care of the dresses.

### Why haven't the dresses been on display?

Most of them have not been displayed in recent years to prevent further damage to the garments, but they have been accessible to scholars through our reading room. The red ball gown (which is in the best condition) was on display in our galleries as recently as this spring and summer as part of the [Making Movies](#) exhibition. The Ransom Center was able to monitor the condition of the dress during the exhibition, and it did show signs of stress. So this gown, too, will need conservation work if it is to continue to be exhibited in the future.

### Why is this campaign being conducted now?

The Ransom Center is conducting this campaign now so that conservation work can be done on the dresses to ensure their safe display in 2014 as part of a 75th-anniversary exhibition related to *Gone With The Wind* and so they can safely travel beyond that exhibition to other institutions. Custom mannequins will be created for each dress to make sure that the dresses have proper support to prevent further stress on the garments.

### How will the money from the campaign be spent?

The funds will be used to conserve the dresses, to purchase protective housing suitable for shipping them to other institutions, and to purchase custom-fitted mannequins that will allow them to be properly displayed.

### I have years of sewing experience. Can I help restore the dresses?

The Ransom Center has been overwhelmed by the response to the *Gone With The Wind* costume campaign. We have received offers from dozens of seamstresses and tailors from all over the world. The Ransom Center has been consulting with several top textile conservators and experts in the field and will engage a qualified conservator to work on the dresses. The conservator would likely be a member of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works with many years in conservation treatment experience.

### I didn't know you had *Gone With The Wind* materials. Would you like to borrow my collection for your 75th anniversary exhibition in 2014?

Materials for the exhibition will be drawn from the Ransom Center's David O. Selznick collection, which includes more than 5,000 document boxes, half a million photographs, more than 100 paintings, and five dresses.

### I didn't know you had *Gone With The Wind* materials. Can you appraise my costume/film still/poster/prop/etc.?

The Ransom Center does not provide appraisals.

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## **Vita**

Elise Erb was born in San Diego, California. She grew up in San Diego before attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where she graduated with a B.A. in History and a minor in Art History in 2013. She was first introduced to fundraising while interning in Washington, D.C. at The Trust for the National Mall in the fall of 2011. She continued building experience with non-profits in California and Texas throughout her undergraduate and graduate careers. Elise moved to Austin in the summer of 2013 to pursue her Master of Art in Art Education, with a Museum Education Focus, at The University of Texas at Austin. During graduate school, she also completed the portfolio program in Arts and Cultural Management and Entrepreneurship. After completing this thesis report, Elise returned to California to begin a career in fundraising.

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