Financing the Academic Media Center: Past Trends and Current Prospects

JOHN W. RAIMO

IN THE MOST RECENT *Library Trends* issues devoted to the role of educational media (October 1967 and April 1971), little attention was given to the question of financial support for media facilities.[1] In a way, this illustrates the optimism that then characterized academic planning. Both issues appeared during higher education's halcyon days (at least budgetarily!) when adequate funding seemed less a problem than the need to accommodate the growing number of students seeking admission to the nation's colleges and universities.

Clearly, much has changed. Funding for higher education in general and for media centers in particular can no longer rely on the lavish federal programs that flourished during the 1960s and early 1970s. In response, institutional advancement now has become a serious business on most of America's campuses, as fund-raisers rush to identify and cultivate prospects that might have been overlooked just a decade ago.

But declining opportunities for media center funding may have been exacerbated over the past decade or so by another trend in higher education. The 1960s represented an especially fertile era of curricular reform, an era in which instructional use of nonprint materials became part of a general reaction against the traditional classroom lecture. Marshall McLuhan appeared remarkably observant during these years when he declared that, "the classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the...'outside' world created by new informational

John W. Raimo is Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont.

media."[2] Internal and external funding for media, consequently, seemed to many institutions to be an indispensable part of any creative approach to a new, more stimulating curriculum.[3] Since the 1960s, however, the worth of some of these educational innovations has often come into question. Might there perhaps be a connection between a growing preference for "practical," career-oriented courses and the tendency of some colleges and universities to cut back on support for their media facilities?

Yet a third factor complicating the media center's quest for funding ironically, has been the preoccupation of many administrators with what is currently higher education's most pervasive technological resource—the computer. While, in the past, nonprint collections and playback equipment often competed directly for funding only with the academic library's need to purchase printed materials, the burgeoning movement to promote library automation now frequently diverts funds that a decade ago might have gone to media facilities.[4]

This essay cannot, of course, offer a comprehensive solution to the problem of funding college and university media centers.[5] It will, however, outline the general categories of available support, and assess the current prospects of attracting funds for instructional technology in higher education. In the process, it will also explore some of the implications that a media center poses for a library's internal budget policy.

Federal and State Support

In a 1972 analysis of instructional technology's previous growth and future possibilities, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education concluded that further development was largely dependent on support from the federal government. Indeed, the commission's report recommended that Washington should "provide a major share of expenditures required for research and development in instructional technology and for introduction of new technologies more extensively into higher education at least until the end of the century."[6] The report even proposed the periodic establishment of regional cooperative learning-technology centers, with federal funds defraying one-third of the operating expense and all of the capital needs of these centers. In all, the commission called on the federal government to allocate $100 million to promote instructional technology in 1973, with support increasing by 1980 to a level equal to 1 percent of America's total expenditures on higher education.[7]

Given federal policy during the years between 1956 and 1972, the Carnegie Commission's ambitious hopes for the future were by no

means utopian. Although federal support for academic libraries had been minimal before 1956, the creation that year of the Council on Library Resources marked a new era in library funding. The council's mandate to "aid in the solution of problems of...academic and research libraries in particular" resulted in major grants for pilot projects dealing with the emerging audiovisual instructional technologies.[8] By the mid-1960s, federal involvement with the newer media was becoming even more extensive. The Higher Education Act of 1965 authorized academic libraries to purchase nonprint materials and equipment, while the Office of Education gave further impetus to instructional media by sponsoring Stanford University's ERIC Clearinghouse, which provided information on audiovisual teaching techniques. The Office of Education also funded the Educational Products Information Exchange (EPIE), a central agency that worked to "evaluate, codify, and disseminate reliable information about instructional media and instrumentation."[9]

Soon after the publication of the Carnegie Commission's blueprint for media's future, federal funding policy began to change dramatically. Title II of the Higher Education Act (PL 89-329) is the category of federal support traditionally most significant for academic libraries and media centers and, as table 1 illustrates, there was a precipitous drop in funding for all categories of library activity, except for research libraries, between fiscal 1979 and fiscal 1984. Grants under Title II-A (College Library Resources), which specifies that funds may be used to acquire "magnetic tapes, phonograph records, [and] audiovisual materials,"[10] declined steadily during this period. By fiscal 1984, Title II-A was receiving no appropriation at all. Title II-B (Library Research and Demonstration), a category meant to foster "the improvement of information technology," similarly suffered a sharp decrease of 75.8 percent between fiscal 1979 and fiscal 1984.[11] The federal government's projections of support for fiscal 1985 and 1986 are even more distressing to those concerned with the need to promote media center growth, leading to the conclusion that, at least for now, grants under Title II will be in short supply.

While the Reagan administration's position on federal domestic support has reduced or imperiled other possible sources of public funding, both the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) do offer a few opportunities to obtain grants that have at least some positive implications for media in academic libraries. For example, NEA currently funds a program that gives assistance to "educational and similar institutions for film and

TABLE 1
HEA Title II Funding FY79-FY84

	II-A (College Library Resources)	II-B (Training)	II-B (Research and Demonstration)	II-C (Research Libraries)
FY79	$9,903,000	$1,054,550	$991,000	$6,000,000
FY80	$4,988,000	$667,000	$333,000	$5,992,268
FY81	$2,977,400	$667,000	$235,826	$6,000,000
FY82	$1,915,200	$639,050	$240,000	$5,760,000
FY83	$1,905,490	$640,000	$240,000	$6,000,000
FY84	$ 0	$638,800	$240,000	$6,000,000
Percent change FY79-FY84	-100%	-39.4%	-75.8%	0%

Sources: *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.* Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1980-84; *Library Career Training Program: FY84 Fellowships.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1984; *Library Career Training Program: Fellowships/Traineeships for Training in Library and Information Science* (fact sheet). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1985; and *Strengthening Research Library Resources Program: FY84 Abstracts.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1984.

video exhibition programs, short-term residencies, workshops and seminars."[12] Still, the long-term benefits for an institution's media center are likely to be incidental to NEA's main purpose here, which is to "assist individuals and groups to produce films, radio and video of high aesthetic quality."[13] NEH funding can also provide some ancillary support. All libraries serving adults are eligible for special project funds that encourage "understanding of the humanities resources in libraries by thematic programs, exhibits, media, publications, and other library activities."[14] Finally, NEH's challenge grant program can assist academic media centers, assuming the institution's development program can raise three times the amount of the award in nonfederal funds from new or increased contributions.[15]

State agencies are scarcely capable of compensating for this discouraging trend in federal funding of academic media centers, but they do represent a resource that should not be overlooked. The media program of the Ohio Arts Council, for instance, has provided support for university media centers engaged in projects that have community-wide relevance. A few states, such as West Virginia and Massachusetts, have approved legislation that authorizes funding for the establishment of media centers, although such legislation is often subject to the same political pressures which have resulted in the erosion of grants programs at the federal level.[16]

Corporate and Foundation Support

Federal and state agencies are usually reluctant to finance the acquisition of media equipment, and in some cases corporate philanthropy can become an effective alternative. A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*[17] pointed out that gifts of company products have within the past three years emerged as an important aspect of corporate policy. In fact, such gifts now constitute 10 percent of total corporate giving to higher education in the United States, amounting to over $100 million annually. Computer equipment composes a significant share of these gifts, as companies seek to entice students with their products before they enter the work force.

While other contributions with media applications, such as audio and video equipment, are not nearly as plentiful, even this category includes some possibilities for support. A relatively new trend that may affect college and university development programs in a major way is the "clearinghouse" concept, in which companies donate equipment to an organization that represents a group of educational institutions. In Illinois, the National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources serves as a clearinghouse for 3000 educational institutions interested in the acquisition of equipment, while Davidson College in North Carolina is the base of operations for the Company/College Gifts-in-Kind Clearinghouse, which specializes in new equipment.[18]

As with federal funding, the 1960s and early 1970s represented a time in which private foundations took a special interest in libraries and media centers. An analysis of foundation support from 1960 to 1972, based on grants in the *Foundation Grants Index*, shows that libraries and related activities received over $202 million, mostly in funds for institutions of higher education. Although federal grants for these purposes amounted to considerably more—approximately $1.3 billion between 1957 and 1972—it is clear that foundation philanthropy played an important part in the nonprint revolution which affected academic libraries during these years.[19]

This pattern of support has now changed significantly, as many major foundations turn their attention to other areas. Cutbacks in federal aid to community service agencies have forced some foundations to look at more basic societal problems, and support for libraries and media centers is understandably less compelling than the need to alleviate human suffering. Educational programs with computer implications, admittedly, have been rather well funded by the foundation world to date, but computers are the only form of instructional technology to resist the trend toward funding cutbacks. Even the computer's curricu-

lar role has come under closer scrutiny by private foundations, which sometimes have seen little tangible gain result from their involvement with such projects.

A small group of foundations and organizations are mentioned in the *Annual Register of Grant Support* as having media as a primary focus. The Florida Association for Media in Education offers modest scholarships "to assist deserving students enrolled in media programs," as does the Ohio Educational Library Media Association.[20] The National Home Library Foundation in Washington, D.C. provides small grants, usually ranging from $5,000 to $25,000, "to encourage new techniques in the operation of libraries of printed and audio-visual materials and to aid in the wider dissemination of information."[21] The Film Fund, based in New York, also makes modest grants for media activities to individuals and tax-exempt organizations, especially to "promote the production and distribution of quality films, videotapes, and slide shows on social issues."[22]

Nevertheless, most private foundations that support academic media do so not because of any special commitment to the instructional use of nonprint materials, but because of a broader interest in a particular college or university and its library operation. In view of this, proposals seeking funding for media are more likely to be successful if the media center forms an integral part of an institution's library facilities. Major foundations will usually be more inclined to provide media support if the request is presented as part of a larger library initiative, and not as funding for a distinct entity with a separate curricular perspective.

Fee-Based Services as a Source of Support

The issue of fee-based services, or the practice of charging customers for the use of media equipment, has both advocates and detractors among library and media center administrators. Earlier commentators on the subject generally opposed the imposition of such charges, believing that it would likely result in a pattern of less frequent use.[23] More recently, the impact of the computer revolution on America's academic libraries has caused analysts to take a closer look at the subject.

Although rental of microcomputer time certainly can produce revenue for a media facility if done correctly, media centers choosing this alternative should also recognize the risks involved. For example, as Ronald Leach has suggested, there is always the potential for conflict between an institution's customary fund-raising activities and the decision to charge an outside constituency for services.[24] From an institu-

tional standpoint, there is little sense in raising money for a media center through a fee-based policy directed at local businesses, when those businesses might reduce their annual giving accordingly.

The same principle, of course, applies to charging individuals for services. Most development officers would be chagrined to learn that a prospect for a major gift to the academic library or media center was being asked to pay for services that he or she had previously received as a courtesy. Ultimately, the decision whether or not to impose such fees should be made only after close consultation with the college or university's institutional advancement program.

Internal Funding: Media and the Academic Library Budget

Being perceived as part of a college or university's overall library program clearly has major advantages for a media center in its search for external funding and, for that matter, in asserting its curricular legitimacy. Nevertheless, the incorporation of a media center within the library does create special problems from a management point of view, since nonprint items and equipment simply do not fit easily into a budget process appropriate for printed materials. The approach to budgeting is often so different that some institutions have taken the easier, though academically unfortunate, option of removing the media center from the library entirely.

Film-based materials, for instance, typically have a shorter life span than books, and this greater perishability has important implications that must be recognized when a budget is put together. At the same time, while technological advances have had an enormous impact on the instructional value of media equipment over the past few decades, those same advances have had a cost—the accelerating rate at which the equipment becomes obsolete. Long-range planning for media equipment and maintenance, therefore, needs to be especially sensitive to the pace of technological change. Even space considerations are much different for media items and equipment than for book and journal holdings, a factor that affects internal funding decisions when a library facility expands.[25]

All of these issues can seem overwhelming to academic library budget planners, most of whom received their early training when media played only an incidental role in the instructional process. Fortunately, some librarians are now becoming conversant with the distinctive internal funding requirements posed by a media center, a tribute to the traditionally trained librarian's capacity for professional growth and development. This awareness of media's special budgetary needs

must be nurtured through closer communication between media specialists and print librarians if libraries are to remain effective centers of the education enterprise on America's campuses.

Conclusion

In tracing recent patterns of support, it is apparent that most academic media centers will find the quest for adequate funding to be a major challenge, at least throughout the 1980s. A survey of 196 academic media centers conducted in 1982-83 concluded that "the overall funding picture is rather distressing."[26] In terms of external support, only 29 of the 196 respondents obtained grants that year, with only two awards exceeding $50,000.[27] Consistent with this is a forecast made by the Book Industry Study Group which several years ago predicted that the acquisition of audiovisual materials by academic libraries would decline from $15.3 million to $13.1 million—a decrease of 14.4 percent—between 1976 and 1984.[28] Though the final figures for that period have not yet been compiled, the Book Industry Study Group's estimate does accurately reflect the sluggish market for media materials in the United States. With the exception of the strong impetus for automation, instructional technology in our college and university libraries is now in a phase that can be accurately described as one of arrested growth.

Still, it would be premature to assume that recent reductions in federal funding and the inability of the private sector to compensate for this decline signals the demise of media centers as vital contributors to college teaching and learning. After all, extramural funding was never the primary source of income for academic media centers even when such funding was more plentiful. What is needed, perhaps, is a willingness on the part of college and university library administrators to appreciate media, not merely as an occasionally useful supplement to the educational process, but as an important means of promoting education in a better and more complete way. If that happens, media programs will be perceived as something greater than an expensive frill that comes to mind when budgets have to be reduced.

In turn, media specialists and nonprint librarians may need to adopt a more sophisticated attitude toward their profession. As early as 1968, Paul Saettler was critical of the assumption that the "adoption of...new instructional media" would, in and of itself, be a means of bringing about instructional improvement.[29] Saettler's warning points to a difficulty that plagued many of the ambitious media centers in the 1960s, when some media specialists seemed to conclude that the investment of more money in support of new technology would almost

automatically pay educational dividends. That assumption, of course, was naïve. The academic media centers that have prospered since then have done so because of the sensitivity of their personnel to the instructional process, and not a blind faith that technological wizardry will inevitably persuade faculty to incorporate media into their teaching. Media specialists, then, would do well to cultivate a close working relationship with their faculty and develop an appreciation for the many disciplines where media has an application. Such a relationship will strengthen the academic media center's chances for budget support far more than will external funds obtained to promote something that faculty perceive as irrelevant to their educational goals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

References

1. C. Walter Stone does devote several pages to this theme in a broad overview of media's impact on libraries. His brief analysis points to a series of "handicaps," some fiscal, which militate against media becoming an integral part of the library's function. Still, Stone concludes on a more positive note, by suggesting that "present trends toward increasing Federal subsidies and the general spread of computer technology" could promote basic change. See Stone, C. Walter. "The Library Function Redefined." *Library Trends* 16(Oct. 1967):191-92.

2. McLuhan, Marshall, and Fiore, Quentin. *The Medium is the Massage.* New York: Bantam Books, 1967, n.p.

3. Smith, Dana E. "Media Resources in College Libraries as Facilitators of Higher Learning." In *College Librarianship,* edited by William Miller and D. Stephen Rockwood, p. 208. Metuchen, N.J. and London: Scarecrow, 1981.

4. Farber, Evan I. "Media Centers: Whatever Happened to the Nonprint Revolution?" *Library Issues* 4(Sept. 1983):n.p.

5. There is a wealth of reference material dealing with the various funding opportunities available to grantseekers. For federal grants, the best and most complete resource is the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance,* a volume that is updated annually. The Foundation Center in New York has for some years published the *Foundation Directory,* currently in its tenth edition, which gives brief profiles of private foundations either holding assets of at least $1 million or disbursing $100,000 or more in the year of record. More detailed information on the 1000 largest foundations in the United States appears in the Foundation Center's *Source Book Profiles.* Helpful as well is the *Foundation Grants Index,* a cumulative listing of foundation grants also compiled by the Foundation Center.

Important sources for researching corporate giving patterns include the *Taft Corporate Directory* (published by the Taft Corporation), the Foundation Center's *Corporate Foundation Profiles,* and the *Corporate Fund Raising Directory,* published by the Public Service Materials Center.

The *Annual Register of Grant Support,* published by Marquis Who's Who, is a valuable reference for grant possibilities in general. Finally, though it looks at media primarily from a grantmaker's perspective, David S. Shepard's *How to Fund Media* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foundations, 1984) is a good introduction to the kind of information foundation officers will need in order to evaluate requests from individuals or organizations seeking support for specific media projects.

6. Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. *The Fourth Revolution: Instructional Technology in Higher Education.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972, pp. 58, 62.

7. Ibid., p. 62.

8. Boss, Richard W. *Grant Money and How to Get It: A Handbook for Librarians.* New York and London: R.R. Bowker, 1980, p. 43.

9. Quirk, Dantia, and Whitestone, Patricia. *The Shrinking Library Dollar.* White Plains, N.Y.: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1982, p. 26; Carnegie Commission, *Fourth Revolution,* p. 60; and Saettler, Paul. *A History of Instructional Technology.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968, p. 351.

10. *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.* Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1984, p. 831. As of early 1985, Title II legislation was scheduled to undergo a thorough reevaluation.

11. Ibid., p. 861.

12. Ibid., p. 619.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 651.

15. Ibid., pp. 645-46.

16. Marquis Professional Publications. *Annual Register of Grant Support, 1984-85.* Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, 1984, p. 121; and Prentice, Ann E. "Government Funding." In *Funding Alternatives for Libraries,* edited by Patricia Senn Breivik and E. Burr Gibson, p. 88. Chicago: ALA, 1979.

17. Desruisseaux, Paul. "Growth is Explosive in Corporations' Gifts of Equipment." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 29(21 Nov. 1984):1, 11.

18. Ibid.

19. Buckman, Thomas R., and Goldstein, Sherry E. "Foundation Funding." In *Funding Alternatives,* pp. 101-02.

20. Marquis Professional Publications. *Annual Register of Grant Support, 1984-85,* pp. 202, 210.

21. Ibid., p. 208.

22. Ibid., p. 520.

23. See, for example, Brong, Gerald R. "Budgeting for Learning Resources Programs." In *College Learning Resources Programs: A Book of Readings.* Washington, D.C.: Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1977.

24. Leach, Ronald G. "Fee-Based Services: Courting Business and Industry." *Library Issues* 4(Sept. 1983):n.p.

25. Hicks, Warren B., and Tillin, Alma M. *Managing Multi-Media Libraries.* New York and London: Bowker, 1977, p. 116; and Smith, "Media Resources in College Libraries, p. 207.

26. Albright, Michael J., chair. "The Status of Media Centers in Higher Education: DEMM Task Force Report." *Media Management Journal* 3(Spring 1984):8, 10-11.

27. Ibid.

28. Quirk, and Whitestone. *Shrinking Library Dollar,* pp. 111, 113.

29. Saettler, *History of Instructional Technology,* p. 358.