



Navigating Donor Engagement Through Mission Changes



Kera Newby, Director of Special Collections

Jennifer Lane, Director of Grants and Assessment

University of Texas at Arlington Libraries



Change

Understanding and Explaining Change

Nature of Institutional Change

Change in academic libraries is ongoing, driven by shifting campus goals, research needs, and user expectations.

Donor Emotional Response

Donors may feel loss or abandonment when missions shift, as changes can impact what they once valued.

Communication Challenges

Early communication errors often arise from underestimating donors' emotional connections and expectations.

Reframing Change Strategically

Presenting change as evolution honors core values and uses storytelling to maintain trust and engagement.



Change Through a Development Lens



Impact on Donor Confidence

Mission changes affect donor trust and funding, requiring clear communication about lasting impact.

Evolving Funding Models

Traditional funding models can erode during transitions, creating long-term financial risks if ignored.

New Donor Opportunities

Innovation-focused missions attract new donor profiles, grants, and partnerships when value is clearly articulated.

Internal Alignment and Assessment

Addressing staff turnover and using data-driven assessment is essential for credible donor messaging.



Trust

Building and Repairing Trust



Foundation of Trust

Trust is essential in donor relationships, built through stewardship, expertise, and a sense of permanence.

Transparency and Communication

Transparency through tours, talks, updates, and stories helps donors accept mission changes with respect and information.

Repairing Broken Trust

Rebuilding trust requires active listening, acknowledging mistakes, balancing honesty with optimism, and managing pushback thoughtfully.

Consistent Effort Over Time

Trust must be earned repeatedly through humility, consistency, and follow-through, especially during uncertainty.

Stewardship and Accountability



Building Donor Trust

Trust is built through one-on-one communication and clarity about donor intent combined with consistent impact demonstrations.

Transparent Stewardship Reporting

Regular stewardship reports and assessments reassure donors that their contributions remain impactful despite changing priorities.

Role of Donor Groups

Donor groups act as bridges between institutions and communities, serving as ambassadors to foster ongoing trust.

Proactive Engagement Strategies

Sustained trust requires proactive engagement through events and data-informed decisions rather than reactive reassurance.



Strategy

Strategic Alignment During Mission Shifts



Strategy as Anchor

Strategy guides institutions through mission shifts, ensuring coherent messaging and organizational integrity.

Donor Integration

Incorporating donor voices strengthens planning without compromising mission control or institutional values.

Endowments as Stability

Endowments provide financial stability and flexibility during organizational change and adaptation.

Ethical Decision-Making

Balancing innovation with core responsibilities involves ethical challenges in accepting or rejecting donations.

Strategic Donor Portfolio Management



Intentional Donor Strategy

Realigning donor portfolios to match new priorities while honoring existing relationships drives sustainable growth.

Diversifying Funding Sources

Reducing reliance on legacy donors by diversifying funding is essential for long-term mission alignment.

Data-Guided Decision Making

Assessment data helps leadership make informed decisions on where to invest time and resources effectively.

Leadership Alignment & Risk

Internal alignment in leadership and embracing risk tolerance supports consistent messaging and innovation.

Have questions or insights?

Kera Newby, Director of Special Collections – kera.newby@uta.edu

Jennifer Lane, Director of Grants and Assessment – jennifer.lane@uta.edu

Thank you for joining us!

