

## ***CASE 17***

# **Successful Fundraising with Library and Archives Collaboration**

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**ISSUE:** How can an archives contribute to donor relations programs, foster stronger relationships with other campus entities, and leverage the university's alumni?

**KEYWORDS:** Alumni  
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Exhibits  
Fundraising  
Outreach  
Partnerships

## **Introduction**

This case study describes a successful fundraising program for the University of Kansas (KU) Libraries involving the University Archives and the University Libraries' Office of Communications & Advancement. In 2009, the University Libraries at the University of Kansas initiated a number of campus partnerships with the intent of increasing donor support, extending its donor base and enhancing the image of the Libraries. The KU Libraries needed to find a way to contact potential donors within KU Endowment Association guidelines. Eight years later the program has evolved into strong partnerships with the KU Alumni Association and the Endowment Association. The program has been very successful for all and is continuing into the future with very positive financial outcomes. Presented are specific examples of how an archives can contribute to an ongoing donor relations program and foster stronger relationships with other campus entities.

## **Institutional Context**

The Kansas Board of Regents established the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1865. Today the University of Kansas is a major public research and teaching institution of 28,000 students and 2,600 faculty on 5 regional campuses. The KU Libraries are in six locations on the Lawrence campus, have more than 4.4 million print volumes, and is the largest library in Kansas.

The University of Kansas Endowment Association (KUEA) is the official fundraising foundation for the University of Kansas. KUEA assigns a development officer to the KU Libraries who is responsible for raising major gifts of \$25,000 and above. Typically, all schools or units draw upon their own alumni for support. Campus departments cannot contact alumni unless they are a graduate of the school, have attended an event, or asked to be contacted. Since the Libraries does not have alumni, KUEA and the Libraries sought to identify ways to connect with KU alumni to expand giving below the major gift level and to also connect with potential major gift donors.

The KU Libraries Office of Communications & Advancement (OCA) organizes fundraising efforts within the Libraries and works closely with the KU Endowment major gift officer. The Dean of Libraries established OCA in 2007 to grow the Libraries' advancement program and improve communication with users. Current staffing includes the executive director, assistant director, event coordinator, communications coordinator, communications specialist and graphic designer. All units within the Libraries benefit from the services offered by OCA. For example, the event coordinator assists with receptions and exhibition openings held throughout the Libraries and the graphic designer provides assistance with exhibition design.

The University Archives is located in the Kenneth Spencer Research Library on the KU campus. Spencer Library opened in 1968 and built to accommodate the Department of Special Collections, the Kansas Collection and the newly established University Archives. The University Archives has a small staff of two, the Archivist and the

Assistant Archivist/Records Manager. Spencer Research Library and its units are within the KU Libraries system.

## **The KU Libraries and Alumni Association Partnership**

In order to build its donor base, the Libraries needed to find a way to contact potential donors while staying within the KUEA guidelines. Libraries do not have graduates—though it can be argued that no one graduates without libraries. Given this challenge, it was critical for the Libraries to find new ways of engagement. Because of its contacts with KU alumni and the events held with alumni chapters all around the country, the KU Libraries identified the Alumni Association as an ideal partner to assist in the broadening of the Libraries' donor base. The partnership began in 2009 when the Libraries advancement staff approached the Alumni Association to ask for assistance in reaching alumni to inform them of new plans to enhance technology, facilities, and other important offerings on campus.

In a brainstorming session, the Alumni Association and the Libraries developed a plan to involve the Libraries in the Alumni Association members' meetings across the country. Objectives for the partnership included creating programs that appealed to a wide variety of audiences to communicate the exciting progress made by the KU Libraries, to combine academic/educational/historical programming with fun, social opportunities to increase interest and to highlight the Libraries as a giving opportunity. The two entities shared the goal of informing alumni about recent campus developments. The Libraries sought to remind graduates about the benefits provided to them in the past while they were students and to inform them of evolving services needed for the successful educational experience of the 21st-century student. The Alumni Association wanted to increase meeting participation, to thank current members for their continued support, and to promote membership and its benefits to nonmembers.

The Office of Communications & Advancement coordinates the program for the Libraries. The director of the office and her staff sets the overall program goals, and works directly with the Alumni Association in the planning of events, sharing the costs, managing the donations, and assessing progress. Once a past KU student attended one of these events, the Libraries was able to follow up with a letter or email to share more information and invite the attendee to become a member of the Vosper Society, the Friends of the University of Kansas Libraries.

Early in the program, OCA saw the potential in involving the University Archives with its fundraising and donor relations efforts. During 2009, at the request of OCA, Archives staff created a PowerPoint presentation entitled *The History of the Jayhawk* for an alumni gathering in Kansas City. The presentation included more than 40 slides depicting the evolution of KU's colorful mascot whose origins date back to the pre-Civil War years of the 1850s. The Libraries presented *The History of the Jayhawk* several more times the next year including at an Alumni Association event in Los Angeles in January 2011 attended by more than one hundred people. The requests for copies of the program

prompted the submission of the text of the presentation and the PowerPoint slides to [KU ScholarWorks](#), the Libraries' digital repository, so that it is more widely available.

Events outside of the control of the University and Libraries worked to make the growing donor relations program even more important to the Libraries. Due to shrinking financial support in the Kansas Legislature, the University of Kansas realigned its goals and programs. *Bold Aspirations*, released in 2012, outlined a new strategic plan for the University of Kansas. The Libraries also launched a strategic planning effort *KU Libraries Strategic Directions 2012– 2017* that same year. Goal 6 of the University's plan to "Responsibly steward fiscal and physical resources and energize supporters to expand the resource base" encouraged the Libraries to focus in this direction as well. Goal 4 of the Libraries' plan was to "Stabilize and grow existing funding sources, secure new funding opportunities and enhance public accountability." The introduction to the Libraries' strategic goal 4 places this in the context of the time.

Given financial realities at the university, state and national levels, traditional sources of library funding will remain flat at best in the near future. To meet the ever-increasing costs of providing information resources and establishing new programs of service, our ability to increase funds and augment budgets through alternative sources of funding will be crucial.

To this end, we will develop a comprehensive plan to enhance financial resources and diversify the potential revenue streams coming into the libraries. These new resources are not intended to replace state dollars, but to supplement those funds, in order to increase KU Libraries' measure of excellence and advance our new strategic endeavors. Additionally, we seek a needed balance between funding current operations and investing in the future.

Developing and maintaining relationships with current and potential donors will be an important aspect of securing alternative funding. Advocating for the essential role of KU Libraries in research productivity, student learning and overall engagement is also a crucial part of this goal. [Libraries Strategic Plan]

The Libraries identified seven specific strategies to accomplish this goal including increasing donor support and securing a portion of KU endowments and outright gifts to support library resources, services, and operations. The Libraries' outreach program and partnership with the Alumni Association became even more important to its fiscal well-being.

## **The Traveling Programs**

Building on the success of *The History of the Jayhawk*, OCA developed several more traveling programs again working with the Alumni Association. *Preserving Family History* targeted an older audience interested in genealogy and family heirlooms, KU's conservator and the curator of the Kansas history collection shared their expertise in developing and maintaining historic collections and offered ideas for preserving family heirloom photographs, letters, and other manuscript materials. These programs typically

held at or near retirement communities, made transportation easier for the target audiences.

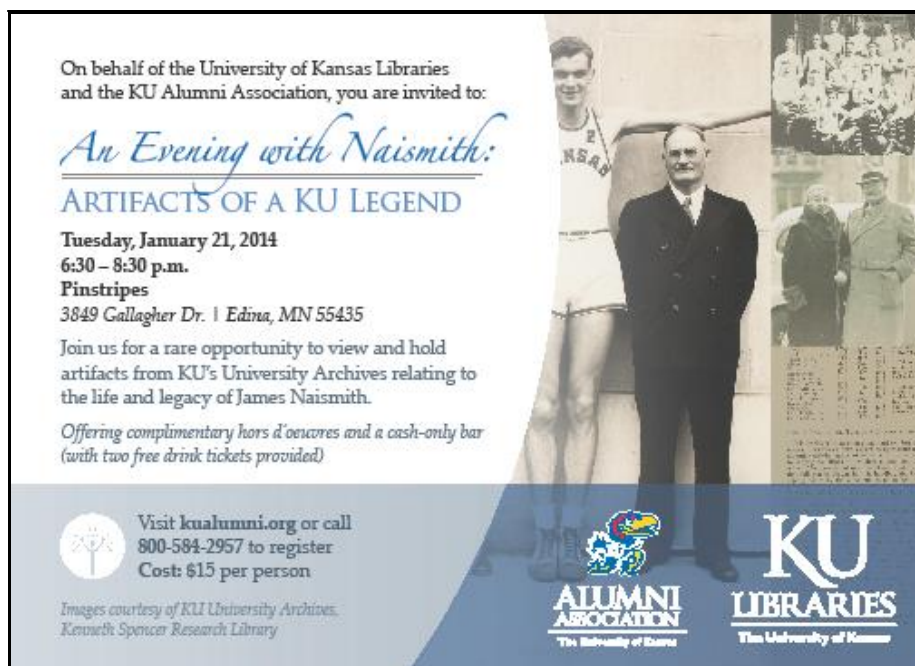
Although the PowerPoint presentation format had proven to be popular, the Libraries and the Alumni Association decided to explore a different type of program: a traveling exhibit. The organizers felt that the presentation (which usually took about 40 minutes) did not provide enough time for interaction with attendees. In addition to the program itself, the Alumni Association “official host” required time to introduce members of the local alumni committee and members of the Libraries staff in attendance, including the Dean, who would say a few words about the state of the Libraries and solicit support for Library programs. Making direct contact with attendees is key to establishing an ongoing relationship with a potential donor.

The next program offered—*Wet or Dry: Our Prohibition Past*—provided the attendees with the opportunity to view historical photographs and publications from the Prohibition era from the Kansas Collection, the regional history rare book and manuscript library. OCA targeted a younger alumni crowd with local wineries and breweries as the venues featuring beer and wine tastings.

The third and most successful series of events struck gold by drawing on the University of Kansas’ love of its basketball teams. Inspired by the 150th anniversary of the birth of James Naismith, inventor of the game, *An Evening with Naismith: Artifacts of a KU Legend* was by far the largest draw for the Alumni Association chapter meetings and went on display in nearly thirty different cities during 2013. Naismith invented the game of basketball in 1891 as a student at the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1898, he began his long, storied career at the University of Kansas becoming its first basketball coach in 1899. The display included photographs of Naismith, early photos of the KU basketball program, and a players’ trophy from the 1952 National Basketball Championship. Included also was a copy of the original rules of basketball that had been purchased by a KU alum at a Sotheby’s auction for \$4.3 million in 2010 and donated to KU. These two pieces of paper were James Naismith’s original typed copy of the rules posted on a gymnasium wall in December 1891.

## **Logistics**

Typically, three people associated with the Libraries travel to the events with the display along with the Endowment Association Library officer. The OCA event coordinator manages the venue arrangements with the Alumni Association and makes the travel and hotel reservations so that our travel arrangements are coordinated. The graphic designer creates special invitations for each event, presenting information in a way that will entice potential attendees (see Figure 1).



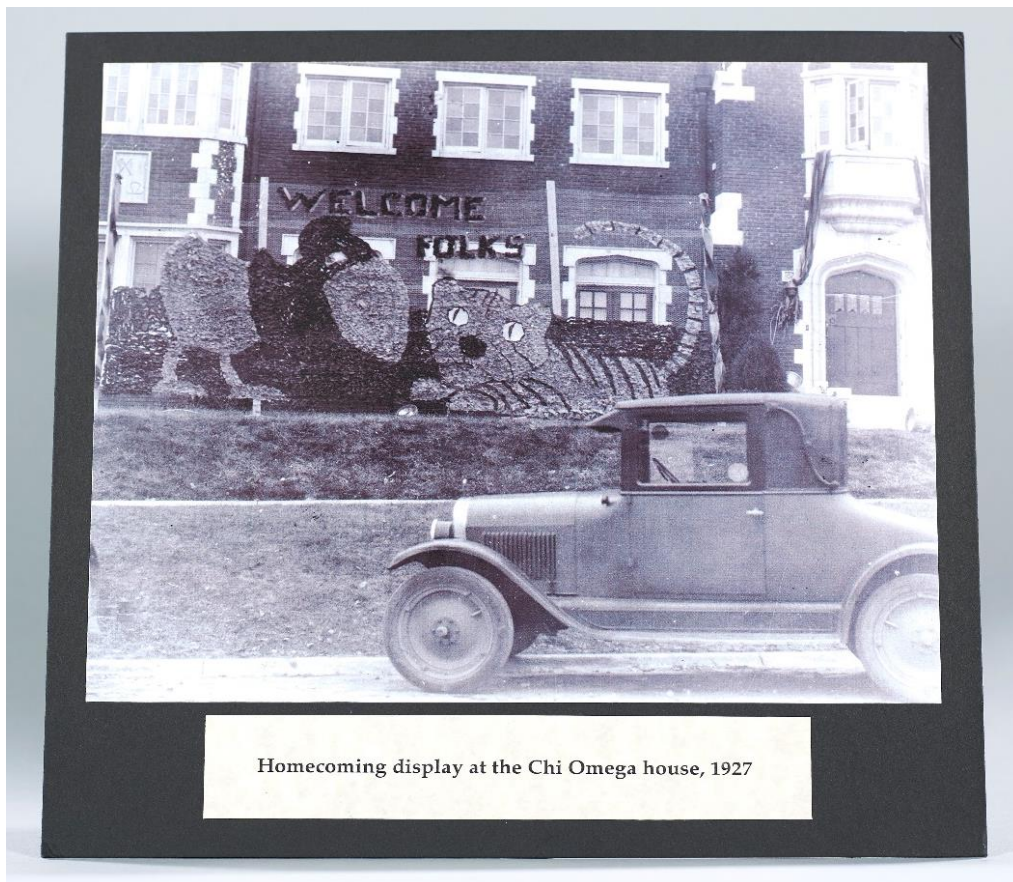
**Figure 1. Invitation to the Alumni Association event *An Evening with Naismith: Artifacts of a KU Legend*.**

The Dean of Libraries accompanies the group when possible and if there is a particular donor of interest. The Alumni Association provides the list of attendees in advance so that the Libraries team and Endowment officer has time to strategize about prospective donors. The team members “work the room” prompting conversations and looking for opportunities for further engagement. The Archives staff member sets up the display and stays close to answer questions, sometimes drawing out the viewer to talk about their own KU experiences. I have learned that making an effort to engage with people as they view the display often results in a worthwhile dialogue. I also make it a point to learn more about the topic than is covered by the caption cards, often providing more information as an anecdote or story that will sometimes result in the alum sharing their own stories and experiences.

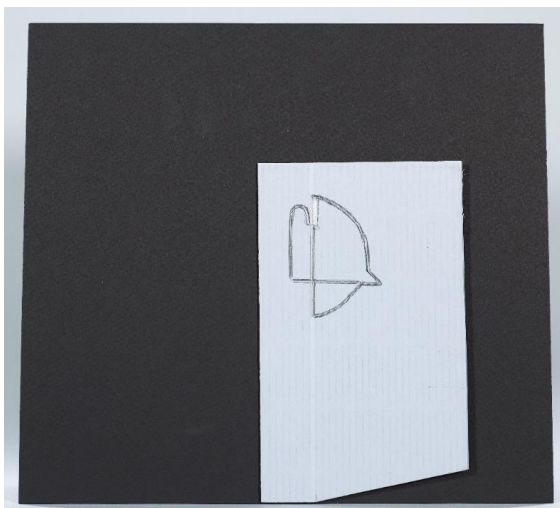
The events have proven to be ideal opportunities for social media interaction. Libraries’ staff members use Twitter and [Flickr](#) to inform followers about the events both while the event is happening and afterwards.

After the first few trips with the display, we made improvements to make the materials lighter and easier to pack. Initially I packed Plexiglas stands to tilt the photographs up to make a more attractive display but after lugging these around on several long distance trips, I engaged the assistance of a member of the Libraries’ Conservation Services to develop an alternative to the bulky, heavy stands. She created a stand made out of corrugated board to adhere to the back of the photo (much like a standing photo frame). Inspired! (See Figures 2, 3, 4.) She also attached the photos (copies, not originals) to corrugated board to improve the durability of the photographs for traveling.





**Figure 2.** Photo of the Homecoming display in front of the Chi Omega sorority house propped up on its stand.



**Figure 3.** Back side of the Homecoming photo with the corrugated board stand in a flat position.



**Figure 4.** Back side of the Homecoming photo with the corrugated board stand in an open position.

The event venue provides two long, narrow tables with tablecloths. The Libraries has a large tablecloth with the KU Libraries logo printed on it to ensure a connection to the Libraries as the sponsor (Figure 5). The displays consist of about 20 photographic prints enlarged to increase visibility if needed. OCA requests that original artifacts be included whenever possible to engage more interest as we advertise the event. Four or five original artifacts including duplicate yearbooks, programs, game tickets, and other objects supplement the photographs in the display. We also use other display devices including pull-up banners with images from the Archives (Figure 5) and a near life-size cutout of Forrest “Phog” Allen, one of our most famous basketball coaches. The cutout of Coach Allen provides an excellent photo opportunity that alums really enjoy! We prepare labels (printed on heavy paper) with a few key facts about the subjects of the photos and objects, making sure that the type is large enough and dark enough to be able to be read in all kinds of lighting. Visibility sometimes proves to be a challenge because the events are often held in popular but dimly lit bars or restaurants. Other exhibit devices include tablets with video of KU events such as parade and basketball footage.



**Figure 5.** Photo of a display at an event with the KU Libraries logo tablecloth, pull-up banners, and tablets displaying video of early KU basketball games.



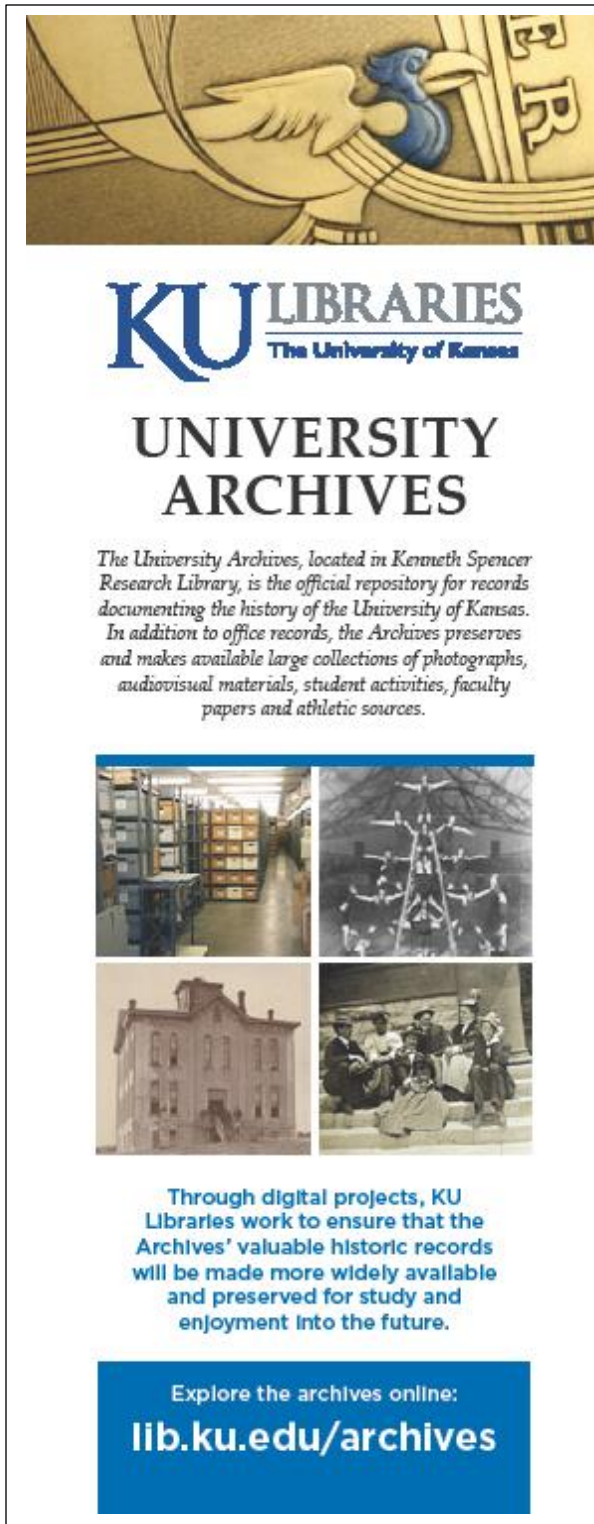


Figure 6. Flyer for the University Archives.

We have library celebration buttons and brochures for Library Friends donations. I make sure that plenty of my cards are available especially when I do not go on the trip. OCA created a flyer inviting people to visit the University Archives website to pursue other KU history resources (see Figure 6).

Drink coasters displaying photos of Jayhawks, basketball players, and coaches have proven to be very popular takeaways for those in attendance at the events (see Figure 7).

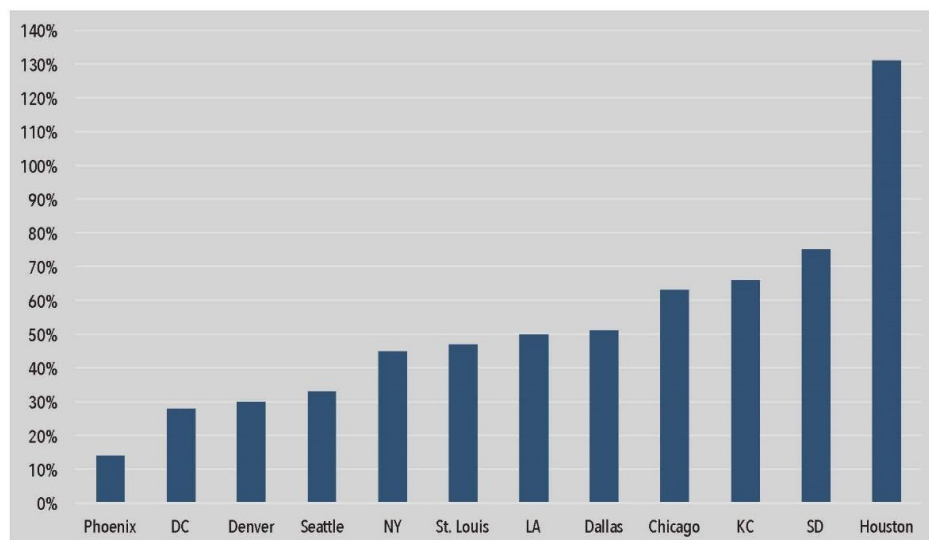


**Figure 7.** Collectible cardboard drink coasters provided to participants at Alumni Association events. The images on coasters are from the 1920 *Jayhawker* yearbook.

## Returns

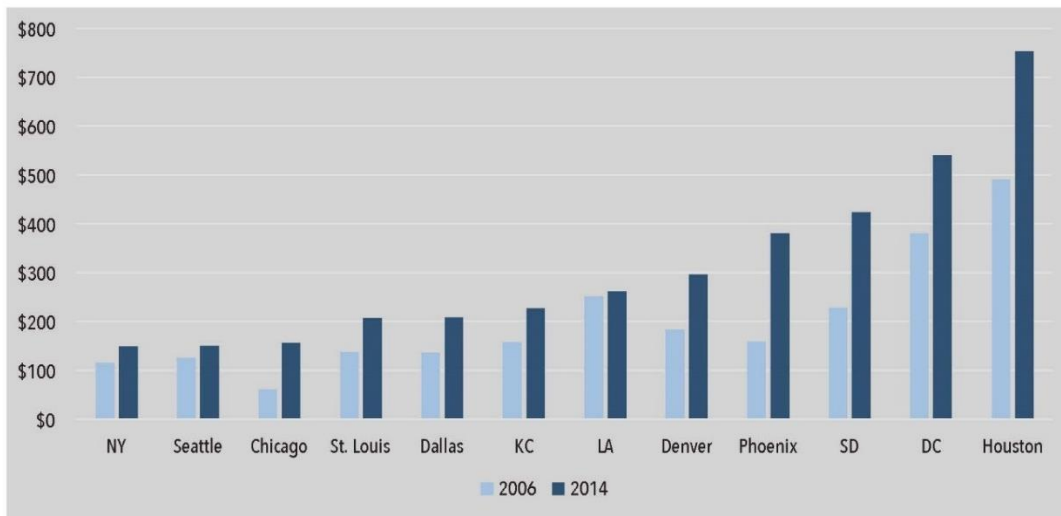
In February 2015, the Libraries reported on progress of the program. The graphs following show that between 2006 and 2014 the number of alumni making a gift to the Libraries increased by 50% and the average gift size increased by 62%. Although the traveling exhibits with the Archives is just a part of the Libraries' program, the growth cities shown in the graph all hosted the Archives' displays at their alumni events. Figure 8 shows the percentage of growth in the number of University alumni donating to the Libraries. Most notable is the 130 percent increase in the number of alumni giving in the city of Houston.

**PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN NUMBER OF ALUMNI GIVING FROM 2006 TO 2014**



**Figure 8.** Graph showing percentage increase of alumni giving by city from 2006 to 2014.

### AVERAGE GIFT BY CITY 2006 TO 2014



**Figure 9. The first bar in each city shows average gifts in 2006 before the Libraries and the University Archives participated in the program with the Alumni Association. The second bar indicates gift growth by city between 2006 and 2014. The Libraries with the University Archives exhibit visited all cities shown in the graph.**

Based on Alumni Association statistics, average attendance at comparable events before the traveling exhibits began in 2009 was 57 members per event. After the partnership and with our intentional strategy to bring the Archives exhibits all across the country, average attendance has increased to 104 per event. The Alumni Association also received favorable feedback from attendees commenting on their approval of events that combined the social aspects with educational programming. This partnership with the KU Libraries won the Alumni Association a 2016 CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) District VI Institutional Award in the New Program Initiatives category. In a recent quote, the President of the Alumni Association identifies the benefits that they have seen: “The partnership has been outstanding! High quality content, educational, fun. Attracted a number of alumni who were otherwise unengaged with KU and certainly one of the most unique partnerships we have on The Hill. I also think the KU Libraries have motivated other units on campus to partner with us where it makes sense.”

## Lessons Learned

After the 2015 season with trips to 30 cities, we determined that the pace of that year was not sustainable. The Archives has a full time staff of only two people and my being gone so often had a detrimental effect on my workload as well as the assistant archivist’s workload. Now I only attend the events that OCA recommends if they are not able to cover the event with their staff or if the event is exceptional in some way. We have determined that archivist nonattendance at these events has not affected overall fundraising events but people do still ask questions that library staff cannot always answer. Their response is to provide them with my card and invite the questioner to contact me by email. In some cases, where warranted, a particularly interested attendee

has been invited to visit the Archives to learn more about a particular topic or to see items that feature their own family involvement with the University. Visits like this increase our likeliness to build strong relationships with alumni and allow us the opportunity to further evaluate their inclination to give.

Working in partnership with the KU Alumni Association proved to be a key component of success. Their willingness to share their membership list and to include the Libraries as part of their program of outreach to their members provided the Libraries with opportunities to engage directly with potential donors. If the Archives staff is not traveling with the exhibit, make sure that the captions provide enough information and that the people traveling with the exhibit are able to answer most questions.

Things to remember:

- People in the Digital Age still like to see the “stuff” and they will appreciate you bringing it to them.
- People like to talk about their college experiences—give them an opportunity to tell their stories.
- Materials chosen should be appropriate to the display topic.
- Reproductions of photographs need to be clear and easy to see.
- Photographs should be visually appealing.
- Objects should not be delicate or breakable.
- Captions should identify who or what is depicted in the photo with dates if possible.
- Captions should be printed in a clear, easy-to-read type (I prefer Calibri).

I feel that we have been able to foster a deeper sense of community as alums view the photos, yearbooks and objects that remind them of their time at KU. Family members learn more about the college experiences of their fathers or grandmothers and are thrilled when they are able to pick out someone in an old yearbook or photograph.

Enjoyment of athletics at the University of Kansas also serves to rekindle memories and allow shared experiences to connect older and younger alums as well. Whether the alum is a graduate of the law school or the school of engineering they can often relate to one another through sports at KU.

Another unforeseen benefit to the Archives has been “ready-made” displays that we can put up with little notice. The topics that we have chosen—the Jayhawk, basketball and KU’s celebration of its sesquicentennial—are general enough and of continuing interest and are available for class tours, donors, and other visitors interested in KU history.

## Conclusion

This program has been successful for eight years, is still popular with the Alumni Association and alums, and has weathered multiple staff changes including a new Dean for the Libraries and a new President of the Alumni Association. The relationship is entering its ninth year and we are now planning for the next round of alumni events. Hopefully groundwork has been laid for further giving on an ongoing basis. Donor engagement is often a long process that can take years to come to fruition.

Although the University Archives has not directly benefited financially through this program, increased dollars for the Libraries equals increased dollars for all library programs and departments. In addition, we have provided thousands of people with information about KU and the Libraries' and the Archives' purpose and collections. Not only has the Archives benefited from its stronger partnership with the Libraries, it has also benefited from a stronger partnership with the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association has invited the Archives to provide displays for home football games as well as Alumni Association board meetings. In addition, the Alumni Association is in the process of transferring its records and photographs to the Archives.

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—*Rebecca Schulte*