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SURVIVENTION – STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL TO CENTURY 22

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The Author:

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Abstract:

The thought of looking a century ahead in this rapidly changing world of work practices and technology is daunting, but each Institute must individually and proactively address its own survival, towards the 22nd century.

Despite the implementation of digitisation, there will still be historic collections of books and artifacts requiring conservation currently housed in aging buildings. Costs for the maintenance of both collections and buildings will become increasingly onerous and will need more than memberships, but support from endowments and fundraising.

Institutes will also need to refocus, catering for increasing numbers of 'baby boomer' membership, who will require a healthier lifestyle and long retirement. Institutes could then promote preventative medicine, good diet, along with more offsite physical activities such as sport, special interest, walking and touring.

This also highlights the need to network our Institutions into a global community to facilitate visits, information and staff exchange.

Finally the future requires youth involvement, luring them from their often sedentary computer-based activities to become connected and involved in their communities and our Institutes. We all have a key role to play in this by extending free or discounted membership and generating activities within and beyond the building. Hopefully each Institute will allocate two places on the Board to mentor teenagers and ensure organisational survival towards the 22nd century.

PAPER

On Reflection

Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) regretted that he had been born too soon. Accordingly he missed 'the happiness of knowing what will be known 100 years hence' for then 'Discoveries [will be] made of which we have at present no conception'.

By way of example, when I was overseas in 1973 an academic on Sabbatical showed me his portable reference library – a box of microfiche. Today personal reference libraries are stored on Kindle with powers of instant acquisition and addition.

1. BENCHMARKING YOUR CURRENT PLACE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Elements of Perception, Performance and Productivity

Traditionally Institutes were the educational and cultural centres and public meeting places of the community. And whilst politics and religion were regarded as 'no go' zones, issues such as: universal education; electoral reform; abolition of slavery; improved working conditions; and woman's suffrage were widely debated and promoted in Institutes and their libraries.

I attribute the rapid spread of the Mechanics Institute Movement in Britain, as being partly due to the fact that an Institute provided a legal meeting place, thus overcoming the fear of arrest under the draconian Combination Laws.

In Australia, Canada and New Zealand, Institutes were in many cases the first public building erected in a new town and they subsequently became venues for schools, churches, friendly societies and community groups, as well as centres for Local Government and Legal administration.

The majority of Institutes survive today as community halls, but in some cases they have become the regional libraries, museums, universities, and in few cases private residences or shops.

However for extant Institutes, to ensure the success of survivement, it is essential that each be and remain an integral and recognisable part of the community by way of its: branding; welcoming site; collections and/ or in-house programs; and its outreach.

Your building, logo, motto, purpose and place should be identifiable and synonymous within your community and beyond.

Besides being well-resourced and accessible places and spaces, Institutes will necessarily be staffed by a diverse range of welcoming staff and/or volunteers.

Institutes must actively strive to inspire and enrich not only their membership but the whole community, by actively connecting people, ideas and cultures, all with candor and respect.

Your branding and standing in the community will not only be important for recruiting members, but also in attracting goodwill, partners, sponsorship and windfalls.

Perception

A good test of public perception is to set up a table on High Street or at a neighbourhood event, with your name and logo, failing that a photo of your building, well displayed as a backdrop with an ample supply of membership flyers and venue hire leaflets. Then ask passersby or inquirers what your Institute and logo and/ or building means to them. Record their responses in hard copy for later review.

Performance

In order to evaluate your Institute's performance it will be necessary to collate a dossier on just what your Institute is presently delivering by way of: membership services; in-house programs; outreach; asset management; marketing; and survival strategies, including youth engagement and endowment.

Productivity

Now you have your headings: collate statistics or actions for the past three years to hopefully score an improved net result over all fields. The one of which you must be ever

mindful, is to be doing good and to be seen to be doing good with a view to gift or endowment. That is the ultimate and enduring benchmark of productivity. One very tangible feature of productivity in Institutes is the growing number of 24/7 accessible Cardiac Arrest Defibrilators that are appearing on Institute walls or in their entrance ways around the world, like at the remote Lonach Hall in Scotland. Exactly what motivated James Smithson, who died in Italy in 1829, to bequeath the whole of his property 'to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the increase & diffusion of knowledge among men.' we will never know, particularly since he had never visited America. Today's unique and vast twenty campus Smithsonian Institution is James Smithson's enduring international legacy to man and womankind. The London Library, perhaps the world's largest private membership library, has more than a million books. One member, Sir Steven Runciman, the late canny and well-known Byzantine scholar, bemoaned the constant need of having to walk up the stairs to the book stacks, as there was no lift or elevator. Just prior to his death, his solicitor phoned the Library, 'Sir Steven wishes to make a conditional donation.' 'A book, that has to be bound?' 'No a lift that has to be installed, before the cheque is paid over.' In the resulting lift is an inscribed plaque, which loosely translated from the Latin reads, 'Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.'

2. THE WAY FORWARD

Best kept secret – Fact or Folly?

However we are getting ahead of ourselves. If your Institute is to survive to Century 22 it can no longer afford to be the 'best kept secret' in your community.

To begin the journey of survival, your Board and all staff must firstly know your Institute intimately from within.

Take a walk through your Institute

A good starting point is for your Board and staff to take a full building 'walk through', with input from those responsible for the various sectors speaking along the way. Each Board member must be fully cognisant of your Institute and its building and have a good working knowledge of its collections and/ or programs, along with weaknesses and strengths, and that must also include your building's structure.

A day of self-examination

A good follow-up is for your Board and staff to sit down with a facilitator, for a day, and take a hard look at your Institute and its branding based on your Productivity documentation. What are your Institute's current strengths: location; historic building; collections; programming activities for adults and youth, etc.; staffing, including that for programming, facilities management and volunteer coordination; membership categories and/ or affiliations; community connectivity; and marketability and how can these be maintained and more importantly enhanced or reinforced for survival?

What is Unique and Enduring about your Institute?

Ideally each Institute should establish its own niche and be unique or near to it. It may be: an event in your city or town's history; a local person or persons; a landmark; an item of

fauna or flora; a fossil; an industry; a local resource; a local dialect or dance; music; sport; or a hobby.

It could be a collection which can continually be augmented, an example being the Westerkirk Library at Bent Path in Scotland which has been buying Thomas Telford related material, since the engineer's death and his endowment to the library in 1834. Or it could be static collections like the private libraries of: Thomas Plume in Maldon, Essex housing his original 8100 volumes from 1704; Robert Leighton at Dunblane in Scotland housing his 1500 volume collection which opened in 1687; or of Bishop Narcissus Marsh in Dublin with its 25,000 item collection, which opened to the public about 1690. These libraries and their homes all require ongoing conservation and book arts examination and interpretation and add ons.

This unique feature or opportunity may not even figure in your present scope of thinking.

Membership Involvement

After you have exhausted the self-examination process, it is time to take the findings to your membership for their comment and input. What are the members' aspirations for their Institute and how can these be achieved? This could take the form of a Member Survey, either by way of hard copy or online.

Branding – Logo, Slogan and Mascot?

If your Institute does not have a logo and/ or slogan, then commission one or both and make sure it is meaningful.

The University of Sheffield logo is colourful, but I would like it better if it had the establishment date of 1905 and the translated Latin slogan to 'Learn' and 'Teach' and 'To discover the causes of things'.

Use your logo and slogan in connection with all your Institute's activities and on printed or on-line materials. You may even consider a mascot which could be used on parades or outdoor events, or in connection with youth activities.

I like the idea of the Innerpeffray Mortification in Scotland. The name has got a certain ring of permanence about it and the logo of its well armed enforcers has no doubt enabled it to remain as Scotland's oldest lending library with its original bookstock.

Innerpeffray's original slogan 'Lord have mercy', directed no doubt towards recalcitrant borrowers, has been recently replaced with the more benign 'For the Benefit of All'.

When it comes to slogans I have had little success in trying to convince Erika at La Jolla that 'Go all the way with the LJA' could have real appeal.

As for a mascot it could be the resident cat, the library ghost, etc. University College, London has its macabre auto-icon of Jeremy Bentham; Cincinnati has its friendly red and black Bearcat; and Texas A&M University has Reveille IX 'Miss Rev', a Shetland Sheepdog. But that does not stop a Sidney Lanier (Tryon), Humphrey Chetham (Manchester), or Narcissus Marsh (Dublin) from again appearing on the scene.

Signwrite or Plaque your Institute Building with Add Ons

Proudly signwrite or plaque your building with your Institute's name, establishment date, logo and slogan. Even if you can't afford to paint the front of the building at present, you have made a start at the front door.

You may even consider a welcoming mat or mosaic as at Ballarat in Australia. The distinctive and protective 'Bloody Red Hand of O'Neill' over the door of Belfast's Linen Hall Library has witnessed 'The Troubles' over many years, and no doubt has ensured its very survival. Add ons could include a mural, occasional night light projection... let your imagination run wild.

3. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Membership for life

Now that you have got the members in through the front door, what does your Institute have to offer that is different and of enduring appeal? I would like to think that joining a Membership Library or Mechanics' Institute was like a life sentence, a membership from cradle to the grave, which would see you through the various stages of your life.

Along the way there is always the need to recruit Board members of ingenuity, passion and commitment, together with a diverse range of talents to take your Institute forward. In some cases families continue succession on the Board which is valuable for the Institute's memory. Both will go a long way to achieving survival.

Memberships for All

Membership may comprise several levels: Benefactor; Patron; Corporate; Life; Family; Single; Junior; Student; and even affiliate organisations. Each can come with various incentives: free or discounted tickets to events; reciprocal membership; extra honorary memberships for friends and colleagues; special member events; member discounts at associates; access to copying, laminating or binding services; or in the case of affiliates, limited secretarial assistance and mailing, with website promotion of activities.

A Supporter or Friends category could be added for those who are unable to attend or utilise membership services, or whose family may have had longstanding connection. It would be good to think that members of fifty years standing could be extended Life Membership, without further payment of a subscription and you would recognise and pamper them with an annual 'Lifers Lunch'.

Establish an online payment program, offer gift subscriptions and on your membership renewal/ and or application form, leave a line or box for donations. And don't forget to include new members on the invitation list for the next New Members' Reception and building walk through.

Succession Planning

The old notion that volunteerism and community engagement passes from parents to children seems to be no longer working. That said your children should be encouraged to be part of the Institute from the time of their attendance at the first annual Institute Party or Picnic.

Several Institutes have children's libraries, whether that be book, toy or DVD, and have programmed regular youth activities.

There is also the need to engage youth by way of: heavily discounted or 'scholarship' memberships to local schools, or even free membership for a period; and use of Institute rooms for meetings, displays and exhibitions for nominal or even free use all need exploration.

Involve youth in: music recitals; poetry readings; theatrical productions; art, craft and photographic exhibitions; and communications, which involve design and e-mail management. Inaugurate an annual student lecture on some aspect of your Institute's existence and seek submissions by way of an incentive prize.

It would be good to think each Institute had a Youth Committee, with a delegate or two on the Board where they would be mentored. Perhaps Institutes could consider coordinating a Travelling Scholarship around its membership to enable youth to visit a similar Institute or Institutes elsewhere and bring back some new ideas.

For a Long and Active life

Clearly lifestyle, health, fitness and creative activities will be issues for the future with people having a greater life expectancy. Besides adding health, food, financial planning, recreation and travel books and DVDs to your library or e-collections, consideration could even be given to the addition of or access to a gymnasium and/ or swimming pool or a commercial teaching kitchen or crafts venue for varied programming and courses.

London's Bishopsgate Institute offers an extensive range of courses.

Regular walks based on your Institute could be weekly to look at natural history sites, through the changing seasons. Other walks could include themed historical, horticultural, architectural, business house or notable locals walks. They could finish at the Institute with a sandwich and soup lunch, pursuing various recipes.

Saturday morning coffee, 10am-1.30pm is a feature [and lucrative fundraiser] with a number of Institutes. These could have add ons of music or even of soap box presentations of current affairs or issues say limited to three minutes.

Several Institutes have travel groups that either tour locally or abroad and that could involve organised visits to sister organisations.

Some Institutes have specialist music, film, art print, jigsaw puzzle, or toy libraries and access can be had by separate or 'add on' subscriptions. A similar fee can apply to subscriptions to magazine or journal 'bundles' which members can access from home.

Most Institutes run libraries, stage lecture and/ or film programs, theatrical or musical performances, and have membership sub-groups or affiliates. Some conduct chess, draught or card rooms. Others stage exhibitions which may be open to the public. These will all require extra staffing, whether that be salaried or volunteer.

Members' Services

It would be good to think that your Institute was looked upon as a home away from home, with caring staff, a cheery cafeteria and a place to read the daily papers.

Food is a consideration and maybe you could let the rights to a local sandwich bar and they can also cater for meetings, etc. staged in your building. Manchester's Portico Library advertise their 'Lunch Beneath the Dome'.

Alternatively make an area available for coffee and tea, with a refrigerator to store lunches.

Most Institutes issue newsletters of some kind and a lot are now on-line. In one, Yorkshire's Longwood Institute launched their '£1 a Month for Your Hall' campaign and with 2000 households and the catchy slogan 'Don't delay sign up today!', it is starting to bear real fruit.

Your membership card could also be used to give free or discounted entry to all your Institute's events or gain discounts at local stores, ranging from food to flowers. It would be good to negotiate reciprocal rights with like Institutes around the world, as part of the global village strategy.

You may even do membership sharing, giving members of the local health club a discounted membership and your members in return receive a discounted membership. I note the Folio – Seattle Athenaeum is doing this.

Even in your later years, books could be delivered or mailed to your home address. I was touched with Ipswich's ongoing recognition of their senior members, when Christmas carols were sung outside their homes each year.

A membership of the Providence Athenaeum clearly extends to the whole family as a notice in the building shows: 'Attention Canines! Biscuits are always available at the Circ Desk when you visit with your human!'

Plan a major annual Members' event to include all the family in a Party or Picnic which could be on or off site. (Some Institutes are on substantial sites, the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City is on 14 acres.) Vary the entertainment to cater for all age groups.

Build a file of nearby café, accommodation, parking, booksellers, hire car, etc. providers and these may agree to give a discount to members and even visitors who are researching in your Institute. These can even be put on your website to provide a service or even advertising revenue.

Finally set up a suggestion box asking your members for their frank comments on the Institute's performance and ideas to improve or vary current services or programs on offer. This could be reinforced with a periodic survey of 'How are we doing?'

Volunteerism

Many members of your Institute will be retired and they should be encouraged to devote some of their time to their Institute by way of: organising events or exhibitions; compiling newsletters; staffing events; planning walking tours; running training courses; senior welfare; mentoring youth, etc. You may even consider specialised training for your volunteers, which could range from bookbinding, paper conservation, event management, exhibition planning, youth program planning, etc.

4. PREPARING FOR OPEN DAY AND BEYOND

Preparations

Now we know what we are selling by way of life-long membership and add ons, it is time to prepare the way for an Open Day, with months of lead time. Many cities and towns have an annual 'Open House' program, however your day could be the anniversary of your Institute's founding or near to it and it should become an annual event.

The lead time will give you an opportunity to: cleanup throughout your building; theme the day; feature logos; print information leaflets, venue hire brochures, sale items flyer, and membership form, with perhaps a discounted three months trial membership. The intervening time will also give you an opportunity to prepare an exhibition of 'Organisation', with memorabilia. If you have an outline drawing of your building, prepare and copy it as a colouring sheet for youth use.

Programming

Plan a day of family-related activities, including several scheduled ‘Introduction to the Institute’ talks and building tours. Involve groups which use your building as they are also stakeholders.

Innovatively showcase a major project or recent acquisition relating to your collection, throughout the day. St Johnsbury Athenaeum recently featured ‘live’ restoration work on their huge artwork ‘The Domes of the Yosemite’ in launching their painting restoration appeal of \$100,000 at their Open Day. But it could be bookbinding, document conservation, or even an artist or craftsman in residence for the day, or a slideshow of images from a notable book.

An Endowments Table could solicit donations towards the latest acquisition, sponsoring a lecture, endowing a staff position, Travelling Scholarship, or artist, writer or performer in residence. A few key items for rebinding or restoration may enthrall Adopt a Book donors.

Organise a pop up café to ‘feed and water’ visitors and your team, with a music duo, trio or quartet performing. Prominently locate ‘Donation’ boxes around the building. Wheel out your mascot. Arrange for buskers or walk up performers from local colleges.

A Memberships Table naturally would sell memberships and other sale items, books, prints, greeting cards, etc.

Roster and name tag your Board, membership and community as performers, speakers, guides or security on the day. Involve the media and your local Council even Members of Parliament or State House. Give them an opportunity to be heard, but briefly, about what they think of your/ their Institute.

In advance, sign your building with ‘Open Day – 30 May’ or whenever. Put the date on your website and issue press releases with your key project and add ons.

On the Day

Take your Open Day out into the Street to meet and greet visitors into the great Membership Library or Mechanics’ Institute family.

Have your mascot hand them a goodies bag, including flyers, colouring in sheets, a couple of greeting cards, along with a program.

Keep a record of numbers going through the door, adults and children. Monitor what worked and what didn’t for your next Open Day. Conduct an exit poll of visitor’s comments and record them. Get feed back from all participants as to what worked.

Boston Athenaeum got several hundred new members from their Open Day last year, which contributed to their staggering over 1000 membership increase for the year.

5. MARKETING

New Technologies

Modern social media by way of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, You-Tube, Vimeo, and even SoundCloud all have the potential to get you out there. Start an email list of members and potential supporters for regular advisories – events, acquisitions, and even personals.

Make the most of your website with your Home page clearly showing logo, slogan, date of establishment, your Institute’s purpose, address and charity status.

What are You Selling?

From the outset you must exactly determine what you are selling beyond memberships and lifestyles. All Institutes have fascinating histories, compile a brief one, as a handout as well as for sale. They have meeting spaces, some even have conference or exhibition spaces, others terraces or rooftops. All are potential revenue earners not only for meeting use, but also as film or advertising 'sets'.

In recent years Gladstone's Library, located in rural Wales, has reinvented and redeveloped itself into becoming a dynamic residential retreat, and conference space along with a public café Food for Thought. To boot it holds one of the best collections of pre-1900 Irish political material.

The Neilson Hays Library in Bangkok has its Rotunda exhibition space which is solidly booked with fortnightly showings and its recently opened lineal Garden Cafe now provides additional 'corridor' hanging space. Both these spaces bring in a constant stream of regular and new faces for openings and viewings, or even regular food patrons and new members.

Equipped with appropriate technology and 'add on' services, your Institute's spaces could be also used for marriage, funeral services or even wakes. The JJ Hill Center in St Paul hosted seventy weddings last year. These areas could be made available to members at a discounted rate for their exhibitions, business functions or life events.

For small specialist groups of like mind, Institute's could sell affiliation and a home, with accessible and varied lecture and meeting spaces and supportive services.

Making Collections Earn their Keep

All Institutes have collections in the form of: books, memorabilia or artifacts. These can be turned into a revenue earner by way of short print run facsimile books, gift cards, gift wrapping paper or as quality prints of lithographs, plans or maps. Reprints of rare items or even 3D printing of artefacts as souvenirs are real possibilities.

Similarly many Institutes stage periodic exhibitions. A number produce catalogues for their exhibitions which have ongoing sales. These can be supplemented with DVD or even converted to 'virtual exhibitions' on your Institute's website.

In the Linen Hall Library's case their large collection of postcard images is available for electronic access worldwide and cards with your personalised message can be mailed to anywhere in the world, by way of credit card use, without the need to leave your computer.

Spreading Good Cheer and your Institute's Existence

A few Institutes issue an annual Christmas card, which can be used as a fundraiser, but more importantly these promote the presence of your Institute and branding to the wider community. Similarly some Institutes issue annual calendars. Both need lead times to ensure the project's success. Artwork can either be commissioned or be drawn from items held in existing collections. The London Library has been issuing Christmas cards for decades and Christmas Hills in Australia for the past decade.

There is even potential for the: Membership Libraries of America; Independent Libraries Association; Welsh, Scottish or Australian Institutes to get together and produce cooperative calendars, teatowels or other memorabilia featuring several Institutes.

Recognising Permanence with a History Lesson

In many cases thousands of people walk past Institute buildings daily, although some are in less populated areas. Presently what is there to tell them in a few words, the story of your Institute, its building, overarching ethos, history or coming events?

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria has a plaques program which has already plaqued fifty Institute buildings or where they stood and this is now on the World Plaques website. It's quite a thrill for an Institute to type in their name to Google and see their plaque come up.

Modern short run print and duplicating technologies make small print runs of books, pamphlets and even DVDs possible. Lectures and vocal or musical renderings might even be available in hard copy or for viewing 'live' on the Institute's website free to members, but at a small cost to non-members.

A glass fronted noticeboard on the front of your building or near the front door, could showcase flyers for forthcoming events and perhaps even periodic updates of 'a blast from the past' with quirky items from your Institute's history, events and people with various anniversaries flagged. A plastic container could hold trifold membership flyers.

Register for Not-for-Profit or Charity Status

A final point. Many grant agencies and foundations require Not-for-Profit or Charity Status and all your good work can come to nought if this is not available by way of your Institute.

The supply of an Annual Report is sometimes mandatory for grant agencies and these are also useful for general promotional distribution. There is potential for an annual report to include articles featuring aspects of your organisation, its history, its people, events and recent acquisitions. Again short print run technology makes this economically possible. Necessarily the Report would recognise support from businesses, organisations or individuals and list its short and long term goals.

6. SURVIVAL IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Monitor Maintenance

Most organisations operate from town centre sites in buildings that are generally more than a century old.

Each Institute must have a dedicated Building Committee to monitor routine maintenance and future major works.

Maintenance is critical and it is very much a stitch in time saves nine. It is imperative to keep the water out from not only at the roof, but also from around the building, as well as in the basement. Simple things like sieves in downpipes, gutter guards on spouting and open drains and an automatic sump pump in the basement can avert major damage.

Create a Building Management Manual

Each building must have a documented manual and management plan. This may initially require the professional services of an architect or building surveyor. If you have not already got a set, secure a set of architectural and engineering drawings and duplicate them. Local practitioners may even agree to do this work pro bono given that it can be done in their own time.

Electrical wiring and plumbing may also be coming up for upgrades, prioritise and cost a works program. A six monthly walk through and around the building will keep the Board apprised of any deficiencies, which should be listed down for allocated priority.

Be Prepared for Grants

Take the community into confidence for your works aspirations and be prepared and look out for potential grants. In the UK, New Zealand and Western Australia Heritage Lottery Funds operate and Foundations in the US give capital works funding.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is presently funding the £2 restoration of the Bridport Literary and Scientific Institute building which has lain derelict for almost two decades.

But it is always good to have a project in the 'can' as were and ready to go. In Australia the pork barrel rolls around at election time and on more than one occasion have we heard of small Institutes having their large projects funded beyond their wildest dreams.

7. ORGANISATION SURVIVENTION

The Options

In quite recent times we have seen some Institutes thrive and become greatly pressed for space, in a few cases they have chosen to excavate under the building. One acquired the 'sky' rights to enable the construction of an extension on to a neighbouring building, another 'punched through' into the third floor of an adjoining building. Yet another built on to the rear and leased out the ground floor to a coffee shop and convenience store to enable financing.

In Australia, the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, took an offer that was too good to refuse for its central home and now is in a redeveloped building with its ground floor leased, along with levels four to eight to other users. Nottingham Mechanics' sold its town centre site and built a completely new facility elsewhere.

Institutes occasionally let out whole floors, and in one case this has enabled the installation of a lift. Another, with largely night use has shared the construction of a toilet facility with a neighbour which has day use.

A few Institutes have gone off site to purchase properties for youth or general use. Other Institutes stage recitals, lectures and exhibitions in venues other than their own building, which may be because of space, security or synergy with host organisations.

From time to time old industrial buildings come up for sale and perhaps with a partner these could be converted into gymnasium or club spaces, with commercial letting on the street front. Clever financing or even someone on a white charger could be sitting in the wings.

It maybe that the worst case scenario is that you either sell the sky rights above your existing building or negotiate perpetual space of several floors of a new development.

The Mercantile Library in Cincinnati chose redevelopment many years ago with perpetual rights to two floors of the redeveloped building for 10,000 years.

8. INNOVATIVE FUNDRAISING, SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND ENDOWMENTS

Why does your Institute need the money?

Boards must address a long term strategy for: governance; building maintenance; collection development; building use; staffing; programming; and an endowment program.

Be bold launch and advertise an endowment fund and works program seeking members to remember your Institute in their estate planning. Cost and advertise specific projects which your Institute is presently working through or would like to achieve: endowing a staff position \$1 million, like Irwin and Joan Jacobs did at La Jolla; solar roof panels \$80,000; install lift or elevator \$400,000; excavate cellar for fireproof store \$900,000; stairlift \$20,000; ‘technologise’ your theatre or auditorium, with electrical ‘capacity’, screening, sound and lighting utilities \$150,000; renew stage lines \$200,000; install security system and book gates \$75,000; wi-fing your building \$15,000; or a gap in your reference collection \$10,000. Naming rights could be available.

Selling to the big end of town

Be bold and stage a dinner in your Library, Hall or Museum and invite some of the big end of town including bankers, lawyers and accountants who represent clients of means. After pre-dinner canapés give your guests the Grand Tour with key collection items and specialist staff on hand. After the main course, lay down your aspirations for your Institute and its ongoing or planned engagement with the community, and there is no such thing as a free lunch or dinner!

The public appeal and launch

Your wish list could also be advertised at your Open Day. Most organisations have Charity Status and donations would be tax deductible. Do a mail out three months before tax time outlining your needs and aspirations. Enclose a prepaid envelope, you could well be surprised. Have your Board Chair promptly acknowledge each individual donation with a cheery note. You could be even more surprised.

On this point, I am reminded of Lee Iacocca’s time as chair of the Statue of Liberty Restoration Committee. The story goes like this, Lee insisted that he personally sign a letter of thanks to each donor, no matter if they even donated a dollar. One person who donated slightly more than this figure, was so impressed with Lee’s personal touch that she wrote and thanked him with an even larger cheque. Lee responded with a further letter and an autographed copy of his book *Iacocca: An Autobiography*. Another cheque was forthcoming. And when the final invitations were sent out to the larger donors to attend the Statue’s reopening, by way of reserved seats, the generous benefactor responded with ‘Regret unable to attend, engaged in Spring cleaning’ but enclosing another cheque, which by this time took her total donations into the six figures.

Regular or one off donors

Publicise your latest major acquisition or donation and this may interest others to come on board with offers of either cash or items to enhance your existing collection or collections. I am reminded of the iconic Liverpool-based Walker Art Gallery’s appeal ‘Leave us your favourite painting in your will!’, but it could be a book or a sculpture. Crowd Funding could be also a source, but watch out for the residual fees and commissions.

The London Library found a novel way of augmenting its collection. It had a very aristocratic and long-standing member and borrower who used to send her chauffeur around to pick up and return her books. Each year Ma’am would make an inquiry of an

item which the library desired and it would be subsequently delivered in a neatly wrapped parcel, with a handwritten note.

In later years Ma'am, the Queen Mother was made the London Library's Patron, and an annual Patronal Lunch was provided in the Board Room. After lunch Ma'am would be presented with a list of three books and these would eventually arrive, neatly wrapped and again with a handwritten note. Library staff often wondered about her supplier as many of the titles were long out of print and quite rare, but 'Ma'am', always delivered. Lesson: Never forget the big end of town and treat them well.

The big ticket items

I like the Maryland Institute College of Art's seven year capital raising plans which can augment the endowment fund or provide revenue for a major building purchase, construction or restoration works. The Boston Athenaeum's staged fundraising saw the financing of their restoration in the early 2000s.

A fundraising barometer is a good way to keep the public involved as it nudges upwards towards the target amount. This can go on your website, in your newsletter and on your building.

9. BUILDING, EXPLOITING AND PROTECTING COLLECTION STRENGTHS

Identifying existing strengths

Your Institute will already have specific collections and strengths. What is working for you?

In USA: the Folger has Shakespeare; San Francisco has its chess; La Jolla has its music, art and artists' books; the Library Company of Philadelphia has its broadsides and pamphlets collection; Boston Athenaeum has specialisation in Civil War, alchemy and witchcraft; the New York General Society has its lock and books arts collections; the Athenaeum of Philadelphia has its architecture specialty; and the Wagner has its museum.

In the UK: Whitby Lit & Phil showcases its maritime and mineral industries; Chawton House, at Alton, has the Jane Austen and women's studies collection; Bishopsgate, in London has its Labor archive; The London Library has its extensive Russian and Indian sanskrit sections; Leeds its French section; and Morrab has its Napoleonic collection. The South Wales Miners' Library at Swansea has concentrated on assembling the library remnants of defunct Miners' Institutes and their history. The Armit in England's Lakes District noted for its collection of books on mountaineering and trekking has recently had that augmented by its hosting of the library of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club's collection. This is now a reference collection of world significance.

In Australia: Prahran specialises in local history, and also publishes in that area; Stanley has a unique regional collection assembled by a late resident; Footscray claims arguably the largest collection of Mills and Boon romances in Australia; Sydney has the Thomas Keneally Collection; and in Launceston the Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute is assembling together the former collection of the Institute, the building of which was demolished in 1971.

In Canada the Atwater Library in Montreal is best known for its pioneering and ongoing courses in the operation of computers and information technology.

Publicise your strengths and this will ensure that material that may become available can either be gifted to you or offered to you on a first right of refusal.

Exploiting those strengths

Every Institute can be linked into a connection with a specific site, person or event. Along with your collection strengths, exploit them. Recognise the anniversaries of birth, marriage and deaths of people, along with buildings, events, discoveries or collections. Issue press releases utilising your Institute's name, logo and slogan. Annual anniversaries could be held.

Further all have the potential as add ons to be part of exhibitions or lectures, and catalogues, in printed or on-line versions. These have the potential to attract users to your library and build your presence and standing in the community.

Protecting Your Collection

As the custodians of valuable community collections there is also the potential for theft or mutilation of documents and artifacts. Security is a real issue in today's world and theft is ever present from within valuable collections. Digitisation of rare items is one way to protect valuable originals. In the early 2000s there were the map and plate cutters operating in British libraries. The requirement of ID or Passport sighting is now realistic. Open public use reading areas with security cameras are also a consideration.

Identifying New Opportunities

Your region may be noted for a specific longstanding or even new connection, exploit it as has been done by the Lurgan Mechanics' Institute in Northern Ireland which is now the regional headquarters for Manchester United Football Club.

Lurgan have even repainted their building in MU's two-tone blue livery.

10. ACADEMIC AND COMMUNITY INTERFACE

The Mechanics' Universities and Other Interface

Your organisation will necessarily have synergy with like bodies, particularly the Mechanics' Universities around the world.

These institutions will have mutual interests, as do libraries, museums, galleries, theatres; or recreation facilities. These employ a whole range of specialists; do utilise them, along with the local newspaper editor, legal, medical, accounting and travel specialists to add wider community relevance to your outreach programs of activities, performances, lectures or exhibitions.

Plan Board lunch/ dinner meetings and invite representatives along for a discussion about ways in which you can gain by way of mutual benefit from: exhibitions; programs; and promotion; maybe even by reciprocal membership or a 'town ticket' giving access to various exhibitions or places.

Existing collections and activities all have the potential to involve neighbouring and even across country programs for internees to either utilise collections for research or by way of conservation. Several Institutes have inhouse services for conservation and binding, or have affiliations with specialist organisations. Others have staff dedicated to marketing, staging or collection management.

Speakers can be shared as can visiting practitioners in collection conservation and restoration. Academics representing the educational community; and groups, with which your Institute may have potential synergy.

Internees and Fellows

The opportunity of making available internee or fellow positions is presently only being taken up by a few Institutes. An artist, writer or performer in residence program could further showcase your collection and your Institute.

Development of Specialist Facilities

One organisation may agree to become the base for a specific expertise which could be utilised within the region for services or even training.

Specialist facilities have been developed at the: Philadelphia Athenaeum's digitising and copying center; Boston Athenaeum's paper conservation laboratory; Charleston Library Society's bindery and education centre; Manchester's fabric conservation centre; and London Library's specialist book bindery.

11. GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Communication between Libraries and Institutes Worldwide

The global village is here, but currently there appears to be little communication and information sharing around the world. Perhaps the adoption of sister Institutes, like city twinning around the world, is the way to go with even periodic reciprocal visits.

Clearly there is a need for national websites and an international directory to firstly enable communication and establish community strengths and capabilities. This would also facilitate visits by individuals and even groups. Hopefully down the line it could see exchange of staff and possible short term internees.

Useful Knowledge, of which you have a copy in your satchels, has been covering limited international news for some time and this may well be one vehicle for wider communication into the future.

I advocate that this Conference consider the formation of a worldwide network International Union of Mechanics' Institutes and Their ilk (IUMITI), with say two representatives from each nation to correspond periodically in the future.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management now very much starts at your front door and with who or what enters your building. The thought of fire, flood or storm damage is ever present, but recent world events puts an added element to the list, a terrorist attack.

Each individual organisation must undertake a risk assessment and develop and implement an action plan for each scenario with a view to firstly protecting your building and its occupants and secondly planning for such an emergency through to disaster recovery. The resulting Emergency Response Plan needs to be documented and reviewed periodically. There are specialist practitioners and manuals to address these vital issues. The Practice Integrated Risk Management pie chart from the Canadian Treasury looks useful as a starting point.

However a vital part in each Risk Management plan will be the preservation of the Institute's records. Digitising enables a copy to be stored elsewhere. In Victoria there has

been an ongoing project which has been funded firstly by private philanthropy, then a Delmas Foundation grant and more recently by a State Government grant and this has resulted in the records of almost one hundred Institutes being copied. This is presently the largest single aggregation of Institute records in the world.

However digitisation tells us but part of a document's story, the tactile nature of the original paper and its look and substance, along with its ink or painted surface, and its watermark tells much more of its history and can even enable the dating of documents.

THIS IS NOT THE END, BUT AN EXCITING NEW BEGINNING

Finally when you return to your various Institutions keep the Survivention flame burning, for it is only with constant adaptation, review and renewal that each Institute will survive into Century 22.

Alere Flammam – Feed the Flame.