

Museum Results

Your Monthly Resource for Philanthropic News
from Alexander Haas

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things First



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www.fundraisingcounsel.com



from the desk of
Carl G. Hamm | Managing Partner

A Modern Day Fundraising Dilemma

Reviewing the ethical statements now required to be accepted when renewing my Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) status last month, I was particularly struck by the following points in the International Statement of the Ethical Principles of Fundraising:

- *Fundraisers will always respect the free choice of all individuals to give donations or not.*
- *Fundraisers will not accept donations where the acceptance of those gifts would not be in the best interests of the organization or create a conflict of interest that would be detrimental to the organization's reputation, mission, and relationship with existing supporters and beneficiaries.*

Until recently, I wouldn't have thought about these statements representing donors' and organizations' rights necessarily being in conflict. However, considering recent high-profile cases of gifts being rejected, or being refused before they've even been offered, following these principles in certain circumstances can create quite a dilemma for the modern fundraiser.

On rare occasion, a donor's conflict of interest, such as their own personal gain, the burden of administering a particularly complicated gift, or a donor's desire to direct their gift for a use outside the organization's best interest requires invoking a review of gift acceptance policies or the consideration of a formal gift acceptance committee - the channels through which fundraisers are shielded from personally deciding whether an unusual gift should be accepted.

Yet, these days, institutions are increasingly facing external pressure to reject otherwise legitimate donations from individuals and families, not on these grounds, but based on perceived immorality on the proposed donor's part. As an example, numerous museums in the United States and England have recently been forced to

respond to public pressure by rejecting current and future gifts from the Sackler family, with protesters asserting the family's personal complicity and contribution to the opioid addiction crisis.

It is usually a straightforward decision not to accept a gift when a proposed donor has been convicted of criminal activity. But in recent cases, a donor's political views, their position on a provocative or hotly-debated topic such as climate change, or their legal ownership of a company with controversial business interests have encouraged bystanders to take a vocal, public position on the validity of the donor's giving and to criticize an organization's appropriateness in receiving it.

The essence of charitable giving in America relies on an individual's freedom to make a voluntary contribution to any organization or worthy cause they wish to support. These transactions of the soul can bring indescribable joy and fulfillment to the donor, while providing the resources necessary for an organization to maximize the delivery of its mission. Our job as fundraisers is not to question a donor's character or motive for choosing to be philanthropic; it is to facilitate their ability to give unless some real conflict exists that would substantially impede or damage the organizations we represent.

The values-based questions in play today supersede the function of a traditional gift acceptance committee. An organization's board of directors, with public input as it sees fit, should be the arbiter of whether a gift from a specific donor would be detrimental to its organization's reputation or mission or would harm its relationship with its constituents to the extent that the gift should be refused. But as boards diversify and represent more divergent points of view, debate about the receipt of controversial gifts is only likely to increase, further complicating fundraisers' ethical role in representing both donors' and institutions' interests.

In the end, I believe that the spirit of philanthropy and goodwill that has fueled America's nonprofit sector and provided immeasurable benefit to society will continue to thrive, reconciling the generosity of well-intentioned individuals and families with the organizations that are meaningful to them. And as far as I am concerned, it is a privilege to assist them both in this worthy endeavor.

Look Who's Talking

Alexander Haas Sponsors Events at SEMC

Alexander Haas Partners **Carl Hamm** and **Sandra Kidd**, who lead our Museum Team, will attend the **Southeastern Museums Conference** annual meeting in Charleston, SC, October 20-23.

Proud of our continued support of the SEMC conference, this year, **Alexander Haas** will once again sponsor the **Directors and Trustees Luncheon and Leadership Forum**, *Advancing Board Diversity and Inclusion in Southeast Museums*, where directors and trustees from around the region will network and share concerns, successes and challenges with peers.

Sandra Kidd will be a panelist in a roundtable discussion, *Transforming a Historic Landmark Building into a Museum*, moderated by **Faye Jensen**, Executive Director of the Carolina Historical Society*. Along with Sandra, the panel includes, **John Tucker**, South Carolina Historical Society*; **Terence Healy**, HealyKohler Design; **Jim Cortina**, Cortina Productions; and **Valerie King**, 1220 Exhibits, Inc. The panel will talk about the capital campaign, partnerships and planning and renovation of the **South Carolina Historical Society's Fireproof**



Building, a National Historic Landmark, as it exposes the complexity of incorporating modern technology, accessibility, and exhibitions into a brick and stone structure.

For more information about the conference, and to register, go [here](#).

Alexander Haas is proud to have served as counsel for the campaign study and planning for the South Carolina Historical Society.

Carl Hamm, delivered the keynote address, *Reflections and Insights on a Life in Development*, at the **Texas Association of Museums Development Conference** on August 19-20 in Dallas. At the event, Carl also chaired a panel on **Ethics in Fundraising** with **Margaret Koch**, Director of the Bullock Texas State History Museum; **Marise McDermott**, President & CEO of The Witte Museum*; and Andrew Walker, Director of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art.

Are you interested in having a member of our Museum Team speak at an event? Please email j.howard@alexanderhaas.com for more information.

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"We don't need to demonize wealthy people"

In discussing the need for diversification among museum boards and donors, the Ford Foundation's director, Darren Wilson, suggests the need for reforming systems of governance that requires modifying, not destroying. Speaking about the state of the museum today from his perspective, this article [is a must read](#).

Movers & Shakers

The **High Museum of Art*** received 24 works of art from Doris and Shouky Shaheen. The gift represents the entirety of the Shaheens' Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Modernist collection and includes works by Matisse, Monet, Modigliani, Pissarro, and Renoir. In recognition of the gift, the museum will display the paintings in the newly renamed Doris and Shouky Shaheen Gallery in its Stent Family Wing. *PND, 8-31*

David Wu has left Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo to become president of the foundation for **San Diego Zoo Global**. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy, 8-23*

Edward P. Henry, the CEO and president of the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**, whose roughly \$1.81 billion endowment is dedicated to an array of arts, was named chair of United States Artists, the most substantial providers of direct funding to artists in the country. *Artnews.com, 8-22*

The **Museum of Contemporary Art** (Denver) named Nora Burnett Abrams, its curator and director of planning, its new director. She replaces Adam Lerner, who announced late last year that he would step down after a decade leading the MCA. Abrams started at the MCA as an adjunct curator in 2009. *Artnews.com, 8-20*

Lilly Endowment awarded \$15 million to the **National Fund for Sacred Places**, a partnership between the Partners for Sacred Places and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to renovate and preserve places of worship throughout the United States. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy, 8-14*

The **Pérez Art Museum Miami** received 46 pieces of art from the American South, from Los Angeles-based collector Gordon W. Bailey, and predominantly features essential and long-overlooked African-American artists. This is Bailey's second major gift to the museum-he gave 14 works to PAMM in 2016. *Artnews.com, 8-5*

Jean McDonough gave \$10 million through her C. Jean & Myles McDonough Charitable Foundation to the **Worcester Art Museum** to endow the museum and support its operations. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy, 8-5*

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For more than 30 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with some of the largest, and some of the smallest, cultural organizations that help make our country a better place to live.

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