

# The Fundraising Reader

Edited by  
Beth Breeze, Donna Day Lafferty and Pamala Wiepking



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**“A monumental work  
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## About the book

The Fundraising Reader is a one-stop resource containing 88 essential extracts from key writing on fundraising. The selected texts include contemporary and historic authors from many countries, with a comprehensive contextualising introduction, and section overviews, by the editors. Uniquely, this Reader shares conflicting positions relating to age-old and current debates on fundraising: Is fundraising marketing? Should donors or the community be front and centre in fundraising? How can fundraisers deal with ethical dilemmas such as ‘tainted’ donors and money? Best practice and future trends are also covered, including the impact of new technologies and responding to demands for greater diversity, inclusion, and equity in fundraising teams.

## Who is it for?

The Reader is for fundraisers who seek to develop understanding of their profession, it is an invaluable resource for those teaching academic courses on fundraising and delivering professional training to fundraisers, and for anyone who wishes to better understand this essential yet often overlooked work.

## What does it cover?

### Section 1: What is fundraising?

Fundraising is both commonplace and contested, essential and yet often overlooked, historically typical yet continues to be misunderstood. This first section explores all these dimensions of our subject.

### Section 2: The foundations of fundraising success

This second section introduces the “laws”, “cardinal principles” and “first steps” of fundraising. Foundational ideas and concepts used in fundraising practice are explained and discussed including the donor pyramid, developing a constituency of supporters, involving the board, and the fundraising cycle. This section ends with some “vital ingredients” for success including the case for support and cultivating diversity.

### Section 3: Understanding fundraising practice

In this section we consider the tasks involved in seeking funds and resources from prospects and donors. Fundraising practice draws together two essential ingredients, donor markets (the people and organisations interested in supporting nonprofits) and fundraising methods (the ways in which donor markets are engaged). The result is a wide variety of bespoke and choreographed human interactions, which if done well are informed by the theory and findings shared throughout this Reader.

### Section 4: Fundraising theory and ethics

The theories presented by the authors in this section help to shed light on what works (and does not work) in fundraising. We also provide an overview of ethical dilemmas that fundraisers may encounter, and offer tools to help ethically respond to these dilemmas. The section ends with three “Bills of Rights”, indicating the rights which donors, fundraisers, and beneficiaries have.

### Section 5: Being a fundraiser

People become fundraisers both intentionally and accidentally, to earn a living and to pursue a passion. This section explores the job of fundraising and the kinds of people who tend to succeed in it. It also includes extracts that explore the challenges of being a fundraiser, including lack of internal support and external validation that can combine to make a difficult job even more difficult.

### Section 6: Trends and debates about making fundraising better

In the final section we make room to explore some of the most important debates about making fundraising better, including diversity and decolonising fundraising, the relative power of donors and beneficiaries, and the ethical use of new technology. While the future is never fully knowable, there is value in looking at current trends and trying to anticipate what might happen next. The featured authors are both playful and serious in seeking to predict challenges and highlight opportunities that might underpin better fundraising practice in the short and longer term.

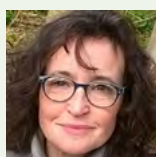
## About the Authors



### Beth Breeze

Beth is the Director of the Centre for Philanthropy at the University of Kent, UK. Beth worked for a decade as a fundraiser and charity manager before her current role in which she leads a programme of research and teaching on all aspects of fundraising, philanthropy and charitable giving.

Email: [B.Breeze@kent.ac.uk](mailto:B.Breeze@kent.ac.uk)  
[@UKCPhilanthropy](#)



### Donna Day Lafferty

Donna is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Chichester, UK. She has worked as a professional fundraiser and project manager since 1997, and now combines this with her academic role. She is the founder of the world's first undergraduate degree dedicated to non-profit fundraising, Charity Development BA (Hons.), launched in 2014.

Email: [D.DayLafferty@Chi.ac.uk](mailto:D.DayLafferty@Chi.ac.uk)  
[@DayLafferty](#)



### Pamala Wiepking

Pamala is the Stead Family Chair in International Philanthropy at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, where she teaches Principles and Practices of Fundraising in the online Masters program. She is also Professor of Societal Significance of Charity Lotteries at the Center for Philanthropic Studies at VU Amsterdam.

Email: [pwiepki@iu.edu](mailto:pwiepki@iu.edu)  
[@PamalaWi](#)

**Beth Breeze, Donna Day Lafferty and Pamala Wiepking are available for interviews, writing articles on fundraising and speaking at events.**

*For further information, please contact them directly on their emails above.*

## Reviews

Please feel free to reprint the following review quotes and excerpts in your next newsletter, email communications, blog post or publication with this credit line:

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**“Fundraisers today are facing great changes and challenges. The field is under unprecedented scrutiny, yet must meet unprecedented demand. Researchers studying this essential work, instructors teaching it, and professionals looking to learn and improve how they practice it will all find this Reader an invaluable resource. It deserves to be one of the two or three books on every fundraiser’s go-to shelf.”**

**Michael Moody, Frey Foundation Chair for Family Philanthropy, Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy**

**“This Reader provides an internationally comparative view of fundraising which allows researchers, educators and students to analyse contextually appropriate approaches, of value to fundraisers and nonprofit entities alike. Each user, in whatever category they find themselves, will gain valuable insights and be empowered to develop and analyse better fundraising practice.”**

**Carolyn Cordery, Adjunct Professor Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand**

**“This book is a wonderfully curated and indispensable single-volume reading room that ensures fundraisers have access to the best thinking on their profession.”**

**Michael Newsome, Regional Chief of Fundraising & Partnerships, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific**

**“People who design and deliver programmes for all types of causes rely on fundraisers – and this book provides a wealth of material, from dozens of authors over the last 100 years, about all aspects of the profession and vocation that make it all possible. So even if you don’t consider yourself a fundraiser (and if you work in an NGO you should!) you certainly rely on these professionals, and understanding the opportunities and dilemmas they face will help you and open your eyes to the many challenges ahead.”**

**Oliver Smith, Deputy Director of Programmes, The World Wildlife Fund UK**

**“This Reader contains a treasure trove of inspiration and innovation for fundraisers the world over.”**

**Ken Burnett, acclaimed author of ‘Relationship Fundraising’**

**“The Editors have brought together thought-provoking and wide-ranging key writings in a format that encourages reflection. A must-have addition to the bookshelf of all involved in fundraising.”**

**Dr Alexandra Williamson, Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies**

**“This Reader is a monumental work that will be a key stone resource in the fundraising community for years to come.”**

**Mark Astarita, former Director of Fundraising, British Red Cross**

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## Excerpt 1 The Need for a Fundraising Reader Editors' Introduction, page xiii

There are at least three reasons that this Reader is needed:

First, fundraising is essential yet largely invisible. Nonprofit organisations need to secure resources (including but not limited to money) to fulfil their missions, yet there has long been far greater focus on the causes and their donors rather than on those who work to secure those resources.

Second, there are limited formal ways for fundraisers to acquire knowledge. The lack of accessible and affordable education and training opportunities means that most fundraisers, especially those working in small, resource deprived organisations, rely on picking up knowledge on an ad hoc and informal basis.

Third, fundraising is often misunderstood and viewed negatively. The act of asking for help, especially asking for financial contributions, has long been viewed negatively despite its essential contribution to causes that do attract broad public support. In the words of Lily Wagner, whose work features in the first section of this Reader, this creates the commonplace yet illogical combination of "sympathy for causes but antipathy for fundraisers".

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## Excerpt 2 Fundraising Theory and Ethics Section 4, page 287

Theory and ethics may be among the most important topics that both existing and future fundraisers can learn about. The Merriam-Webster dictionary tells us that theory means "a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena". Or in other words: ideas about the way the world works, and in this case, ideas about how fundraising works. Theories are just theories, until they are supported by evidence. That is what we present here in this section: tested ideas about fundraising that work – or in some cases, do not work, which is also good to be aware of.

Too often, academic research on fundraising remains inaccessible to fundraising practitioners, either because it is behind a so-called publisher's "paywall" or when it is publicly available, it is written in language that is not very accessible or clear about the practical application. The texts in this section are included in an attempt to bridge the gap between academia and practice for the topics of theory and ethics.

There is a wide and seminal literature related to the role of ethics in fundraising. Understanding what is and isn't ethical in fundraising is of crucial importance to anyone involved with fundraising. Above all else, fundraising needs to be an ethical profession because the organizations the funds are raised for are expected to be "holier than thou", operating for the public good. There are many ethical dilemmas that fundraisers may encounter, ranging from accepting "tainted" gifts described by Moody and Pratt, to O'Neill's exploration of pressuring donors into giving or Fischer's concern with overestimating the outcomes of interventions in communications with donors. Several of the texts selected offer different practical frameworks for decision making to handle ethical fundraising dilemmas, which we hope are helpful to anyone encountering ethical dilemmas.

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## Excerpt 3 Being a Fundraiser Section 5, page 385

The first four sections of this Reader have focused on what fundraising is, and what the tasks of fundraising involve in terms of key concepts, practice, theory, and ethics. It may therefore seem that our current focus has already been covered: surely "being a fundraiser" is simply implementing those tasks? You will not be surprised to learn it is a little more complicated than that.

The act of "raising funds" may provide the elements that gives the profession its title (i.e. fund-raising), but the parameters of the job are far wider – and often far more imprecise – than that compound word suggests. The extracts in this section show that the work requires implementing a broad range of skills, expertise and knowledge, deployed with high levels of emotional intelligence, in order to secure the resources needed by nonprofit organisations to fulfil their mission. However, that is not all. As fundraisers serve both their nonprofit employer and their donors, the work also involves ensuring that the experience of donating these resources brings greater meaning, purpose, and satisfaction to their supporters. Achieving the alchemy of turning financial transactions into fuel for both good work and good lives, is closer to an accurate description of what is involved in being a fundraiser than the misleadingly simplistic suggestion that it simply involves "raising funds".

This intrinsically tricky task is complicated even further by the high standards that fundraisers often set for themselves, as well as the sometimes idealised and unrealistic expectations that others hold about them. Meeting the ever escalating demands of colleagues who may see no contradiction in raising fundraising targets whilst decreasing investment in the fundraising function, and also whilst trying to be "all things to all supporters" is exhausting, and may help explain observed patterns in high turnover and burn out in this profession.

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## Excerpt 4 Trends and Debates about making Fundraising Better Section 6, pages 473-474

The future is important because fundraisers need to see one step ahead. Planning and delivering appeals and campaigns takes time, a decision today may not impact outcomes for a year or more. Adjusting organisation culture to support fundamental change takes even longer. While fundraising strategies usually project forward three years or more, the nearest we can get to knowing the future is to observe trends and significant influences. Their pattern of evolution can suggest their future trajectory and the impact that they might have on how effective our fundraising delivery is.

Another consideration is where to focus our attention. The previous sections in this reader demonstrate that fundraising is highly dependent on both the internal and external environments. Therefore the choice of where to focus attention must be tailored to each organisation, the nature of its mission and the specific context of its environments. But in this section a number of common key themes emerge including: donor relations; donor behaviour; organisation culture; ethics and regulation; and technology. This list is not exhaustive, and reading these extracts will also offer insights into other trends worth tracking.

As noted in the Editors' introduction to this reader, the role and practice of fundraising is complex and contested, its legitimacy is questioned by some people, and the methods by which some funds are raised also invites critique and concerns. Extracts in this section offer insight into the nature and contours of some of these key debates such as whether the fundraising profession is sufficiently diverse (Zumaya and Martin- John in Section 6.1), whether fundraising practice ought to focus on donors or beneficiaries (Section 6.2), the ethics of using behavioural science to "nudge" potential donors (Croucher et al. in Section 6.4) and how power imbalances affect the relationships between those who are asking and those who have the resources to give (Le in Section 6.1; Bull and Steinberg in Section 6.3). The section – and the reader – end with trends and predictions for fundraising (Section 6.5). Whilst it is healthy to debate all these topics and more, doing so in a way that is informed by research and reflections on best practice is better still.