



*Research in Practice*

**Research Grants: Does My Research Need Funding?**

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More and more librarians are conducting research to inform practice and to further the profession of librarianship. As this unfolds, more complex research is taking place and as a result, additional resources are necessary in order to complete projects. At the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) Library, the number of librarians who are successfully applying for research funding is growing. From the very first librarian President's SSHRC grant of \$7,000CAD (an internal U of S grant designed to be seed funding to get a project off the ground) in 2011 to a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) (Canada's national funding agency in social sciences and the humanities) Insight Development Grant (IDG) in the amount of \$54,000 in 2015, librarians here are seeing the value of seeking funding to assist with research.

It wasn't always that way. The attitude used to be, what do we need money for? Our research consists of small projects that require a computer, a printer, and various other bits of office supplies...maybe some specialized software. But we have professional development funds for that, right? Then our library hired a Research Facilitator, someone dedicated to assisting us with our research endeavours. We quickly discovered what all we could do with research funding: pay for transcription, travel for conferences, hire a research assistant, purchase equipment, get assistance from the Social Sciences Research Lab (a U of S initiative) – per our research facilitator, the list is practically endless!

However, librarians in other institutions are no strangers to applying for grants. At Penn State, where research is a requirement for librarians,

Fennewald (2008) found that while librarians have some internal funds for conferences and research costs, “additional support comes from competitive research grants” (p. 112). In a look at the literature to support their study entitled *Examining success: identifying factors that contribute to research productivity across librarianship and other disciplines* Hoffmann, Berg, and Koufogiannakis (2014) found that one “measure of research productivity that was most commonly used was grants or funding received” (p. 19). Another indication of librarians applying for research grant funding is the number of research grants available for librarians. For example, HLWiki International has a substantial reference list of awards available for academic librarians and others. ([http://hlwiki.slais.ubc.ca/index.php/Awards\\_for\\_academic\\_librarians](http://hlwiki.slais.ubc.ca/index.php/Awards_for_academic_librarians) )

Grant writers can face barriers that are much the same as the barriers that can be involved in conducting research: lack of time, lack of experience, little support from management, low motivation, and so on. There are, however, so many benefits that can be derived from applying for grants that go beyond the money (although the funding is great; don't get me wrong!).

Some of the benefits of applying for funding include:

1. Taking the opportunity to hone your research project: grant writing makes you think of the research objective, the methodology, the literature, what resources are essential to completing the project, timelines – everything you will need to move your project forward.
2. Acquiring experience in writing grants. Practice makes better, and every time you write a funding application you will learn something.
3. Being able to take portions of your written grant proposal and incorporate them into your research ethics application.
4. Gaining the confidence to apply for subsequent grants. Apparently like potato chips and tattoos, obtaining funding can be a bit addictive. Bet you just can't apply for one!

To get going at your institution, someone needs to start. Back in 2011 when I was about to go on sabbatical, I came across the President's SSHRC grant, internal funds to help a researcher get a project going. I figured I had nothing to lose except a bit of time so I filled out the application and sent it in. I was pleased to be awarded \$7,000 towards my sabbatical research project. I was the first U of S librarian to get the President's SSHRC, but that's only because no one had tried before. The next year, we had four librarians apply for the grant and the majority were successful. And every year since then, a librarian's grant application is adjudicated by the President's SSHRC committee and our success rate is very high. Sometimes all it takes is someone to blaze a trail, opening the doors of possibility for others to do the same.

If there is already some funding activity in your library, share the experiences with one another. Share grant proposals, form a support group for grant writing, check with professional associations for available grants, and look internally to your institution for funding opportunities that may be open to librarians. Reach out to colleagues for grant mentorship. And then when you are successful, become a mentor in turn. As we continue to conduct research and to take advantage of the resources that are out there to assist us, we as librarians are contributing to the culture of research in our profession.

## References

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