



**DONOR EXPERIENCE REPORT**

# Library Foundations

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# Introduction

We all want to enjoy a top-notch experience as customers. Great customer experiences are the expectation when we interact with any brand. In fact, customers rate satisfying experiences higher than price and product.

Creating an exceptional giving experience for your donors is just as crucial. Why, you ask?

Donors have the same expectations when interacting with a nonprofit as with a for-profit business. They want prompt, personalized communications that show genuine appreciation. After they've given, they want to hear how their gift has made a difference.

So let's make every interaction count! By prioritizing a top-notch donor experience, we ensure lasting relationships and a community of happy and satisfied donors.

## **But what about library foundations?**

This is even more critical for library foundations, where we must deliver both fantastic member experiences and terrific donor experiences.

This Donor Experience Report explores how library foundations nationwide communicate with donors during the first 30 days of their relationship, which is the most critical time.



# What we researched and why



This detailed analysis covers two primary areas: the online donation process and the 30-day donor journey following the gift.

This research aims to help you determine how you stack up to your peers in your space and understand how factors like your donation process, gift acknowledgment, and follow-up communications influence donor behavior and repeat gifts.

## We reviewed the following areas:

- Was the donor given the opportunity to choose to cover transaction fees?
- Were multiple payment types offered (Google Pay/Apple Pay/Venmo)?
- Was there an option to pay towards a designated fund?
- Was there an option to give as a tribute or memorial?
- Was there an option to join a newsletter or other email communication?
- Did the donor receive a receipt for their donation via email?
- Did the donor receive a personalized or customized donation receipt?
- Did the donor receive a thank you letter in the first 5, 15, and 30 days after their donation?
- Did the donor receive a thank you call after their donation?
- Did the donor receive a personalized thank you email?
- Did the donor receive a newsletter in the first 30 days?
- Did the donor receive an ask to become a recurring donor?



# What did the data show?

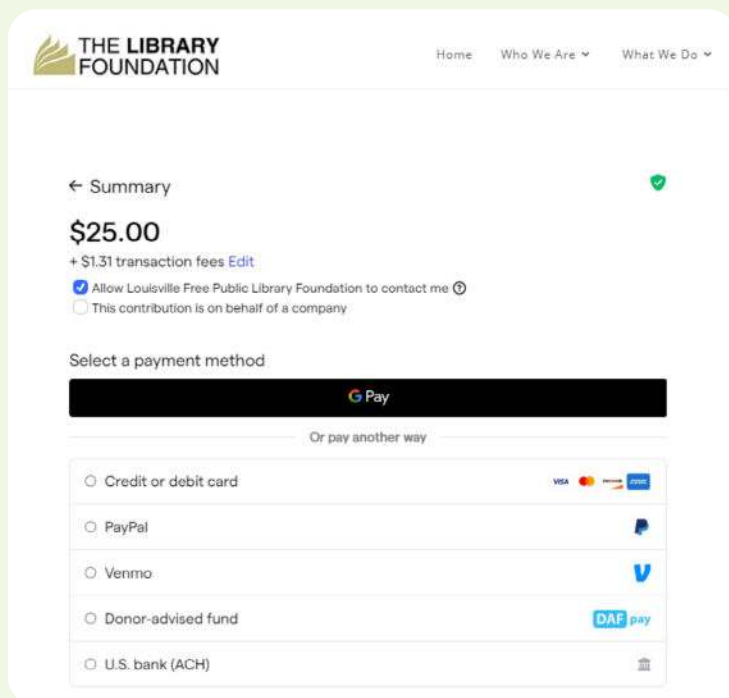
In this study, we donated \$25 to 50 library foundations across the US. This study examined the giving process and donor interactions across this segment to gain insights to improve the donor experience.

## Online giving experience

**70%** of library foundations did **NOT** offer donors multiple payment options, like Google, Apple, and Venmo.

**56%** of library foundations gave donors the option to pay transaction fees associated with their gift.

**20%** of the library foundations in this study preselected for the donor to cover the processing fees associated with their gift.



The Louisville Public Library does a pitch-perfect job of providing donors with payment options that include using their digital wallet, credit card, bank transfer, or donor-advised fund.

# Two ways library foundations can improve the donor's online giving experience

1

## Offer donors multiple payment options, including using their digital wallet, credit card, bank transfer, or donor-advised fund

Restricting donors from using their digital wallet to give via PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, or GooglePay leaves money on the table.

### Why is offering digital payment methods such a game-changer?

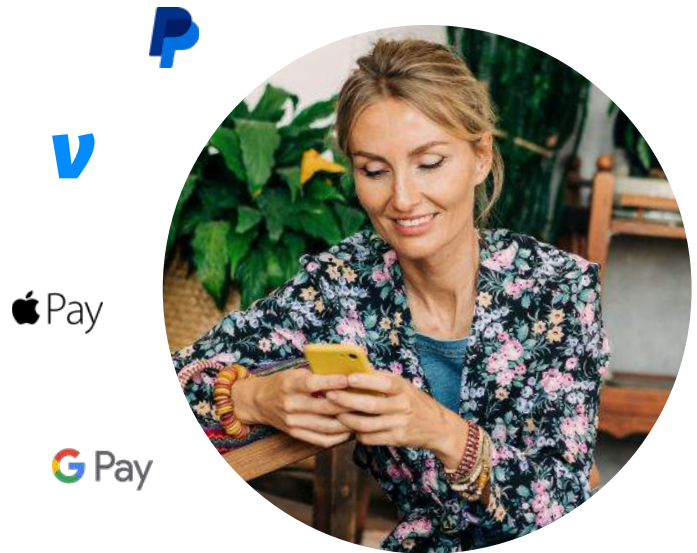
COVID rapidly accelerated digital adoption. In 2019, just 41% of customer interactions were digital, and seven months later, in July 2020, a whopping 65% were digital. (Source: RDK Group)

[Studies show](#) that making digital payment options available reduces donor checkout friction, builds trust, and [increases unplanned gifts by 32%](#) and repeat donations by 79%.

Yes, you really *can* increase your donation conversions by 32% just by adding digital wallet options like PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, and Google Pay to your donation form!

### Why is providing the option to give through bank transfer (EFT/ACH) or DAFs important?

As seen in the example screenshot, Louisville Public Library goes above and beyond by also offering donors the option to give via electronic funds transfer (EFT) or through their Donor-Advised Fund (DAF).



Every nonprofit should enable donors to make gifts, especially monthly gifts, using EFT. Why? EFT relies on bank account information. According to a [study by Bankrate](#), the average person's bank account remains open for an average of 16 years. On the other hand, credit cards typically stay open for just nine months on average. Offering EFT for monthly donors eliminates the need to follow up on expiring or declining credit cards. Even better, studies have shown that adding the EFT option doesn't decrease conversion and can boost the lifetime value of a donor by 55%.

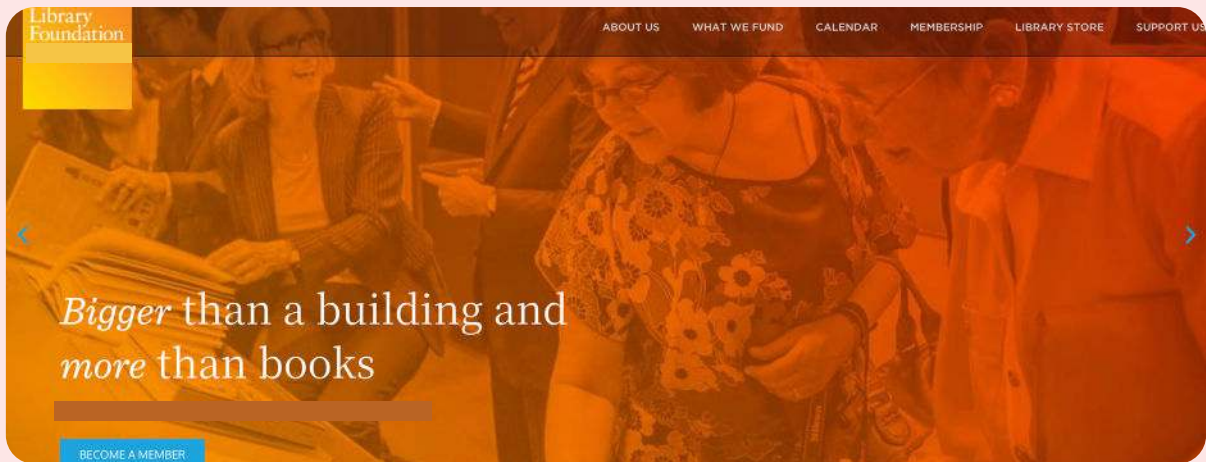
2

Make sure the call to action to give on your homepage is obvious by using a bright, contrasting color donate button or pop-up box



Both the Louisville Public Library Foundation and the Stillwater Public Library Foundation have brightly colored donate buttons that stand out on their homepages:





✘ Offering digital payment options is a must-have. But, without a brightly colored donate button or popup box to give, website visitors might not notice it. Case in point, this library foundation, as seen above.

The “Support Us” link is the same color and size as the “About Us” and other top-right navigation options. It’s washed out and virtually indistinguishable.

## How can we improve the donor’s online giving experience?

**52%** of the library foundations in this study had homepages that lacked a brightly colored donate button and any call to action to give.

That’s a huge missed opportunity. Giving needs to be infinitely obvious and compelling on the homepage.

# Gift designations

**64%** of the library foundations did **NOT** present donors with options to contribute to a specific fund.

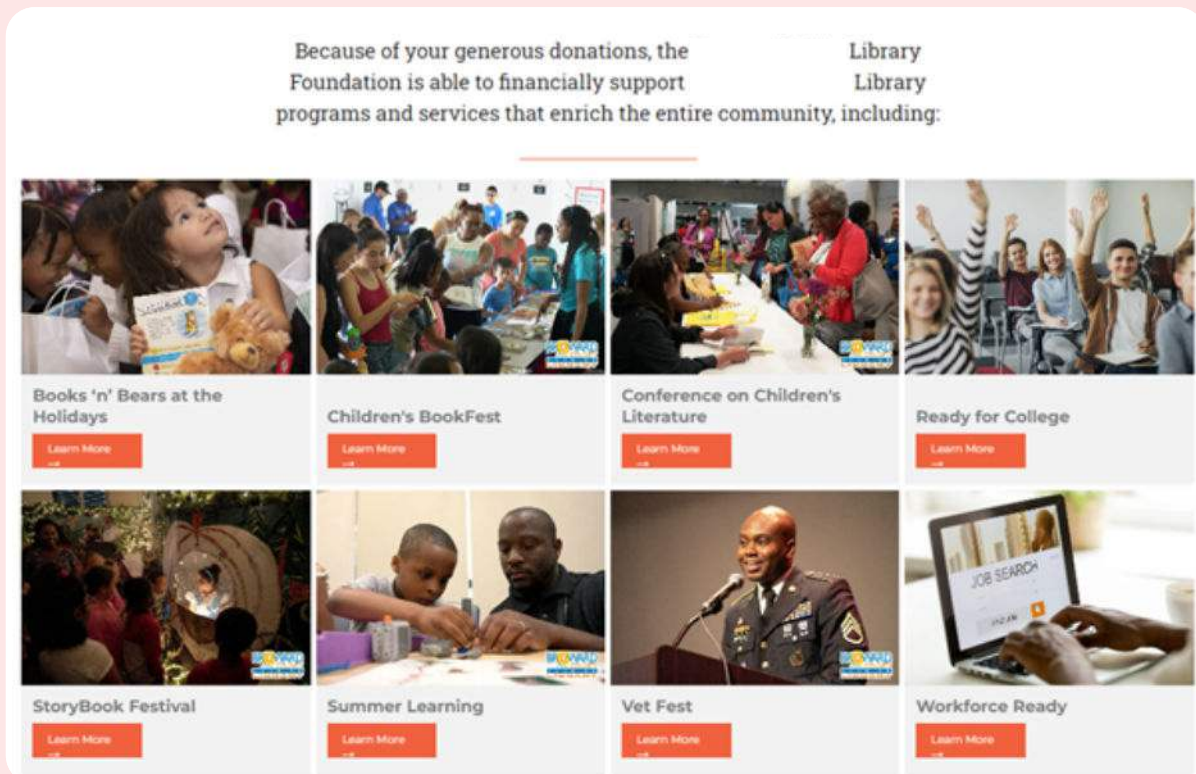
**38%** of the library foundations did **NOT** offer donors the option to make a memorial or tribute donation.

## What are gift designations, and which ones are important?

A gift designation enables a donor to give to a specific fund or give in honor or memory of someone.

It's human nature to believe that the more options we offer people, the better. However, presenting a donor with lots of options and forcing a choice can easily overwhelm them and result in their abandoning the donation process.

✗ Below is a screenshot of eight programs at one public library foundation that donors can fund. Too many choices, especially ones the donor is not familiar with, can overwhelm a donor and make them abandon the gift process.



As long as you have a clear and compelling case for support on your donation form, you needn't complicate or add clutter with a drop-down of multiple fund designations.

There is, however, one gift designation that all library foundations should offer: memorial and tribute designations.

The Anne Arundel County Public Library Foundation does a great job offering memorial and tribute gifts while asking for the honoree's contact information, as seen in the screenshot on the right.

The most popular gift designation is memorial or tribute gifts. This is a must-have for nonprofits in the library space since library foundations have the potential to be an immensely popular option for family members to invite mourners to give to in memory of their loved ones.

### The right way to do tributes and memorials

When someone opts to donate in honor or in memory of someone else, your platform should have the capability to prompt them to fill out the honoree's information so that the donor can properly and promptly recognize them, as shown here in the Clark County Library District's donation form:

Don't offer memorial or tribute gifts without a platform that provides functionality to prompt the donor to share their information so you can properly recognize them.

The process needs to be intuitive and easy.

✓ Make sure you have an easy way to capture the honoree information for memorial or tribute gifts as the Anne Arundel County Public Library does.

✓ This form asks if the gift is in honor or in memory and offers the option to notify the honoree via email or mailed letter of the gift made in their honor.

✗ Putting the responsibility on the donor, as seen in the screenshot above, increases the odds the donor will find it cumbersome and abandon the process.

# Inviting donors to get more communications from you

**88%** of the library foundations did **NOT** offer donors the option to receive further communications from them at checkout.

This statistic was surprising. It would be less shocking if the library foundations opted not to do this because the donors were already members, and the foundation had their email addresses in the database.

## Why (and how) should I invite donors to sign up to hear from me?

Your goal is to give everyone—donors included—frequent and compelling reasons to provide you with their email addresses.

Library foundations should consider enticing donors with an item of value or content they want, like a curated reading list. They could also encourage donors to take meaningful action, like pledging to read a certain number of books or fighting book banning. Some additional merchandise ideas include a stylish library card holder, bookmarks, door hangers and signs, bumper stickers, or laptop stickers.

If you add an opt-in box for future communications on your donation form, make sure that it only appears after the donor has made their gift and offers value to the donor. Make sure that opt-in sounds exciting. Signing up to “receive a monthly newsletter” is not as enticing as “click here to get exclusive offers and special invites from us” or “click here to stay updated on all the ways your gift is making a difference.”

If the donor doesn’t elect to sign up after making their gift, entice them to sign up in your thank you email. Again, lead with the value to the donor, as seen here: “We’d love your email address to invite you to exclusive special events with authors and give you curated reading lists and exclusive digital content.”

## Do I really need to ask permission to email them in my donation form?

When donors make donations and share their email addresses on your form, the [CAN-SPAM guidelines](#) allow you to email them. (Yes, you **can** email them even if you did not expressly state that you **would** email them when they filled out your form.)

As a fundraising consultant, I advise leaving out the question of receiving future emails from your donation form.

Why? For starters, you want to streamline the process for donors to make a gift, and any non-critical fields can slow them down or, in the worst case, lead them to abandon the check-out process.

Second, I want your donors to receive a prompt, meaningful, and personal thank you from you. If that comes through email, asking for their opt-in and having them decline to grant it could jeopardize that.



# Saying thanks

**100%** of the library foundations in this study sent a thank you email receipt.

**2** Only 2 of the library foundations made an actual phone call to thank the donor.

**62%** of the library foundations personalized their email thank you receipt.

**68%** of the library foundations did **NOT** follow up with a mailed thank you letter, even after 30 days.

An immediate email gift acknowledgment is essential; it informs the donor you received their gift. However, it doesn't tell the donor how their gift made a difference. Research on donor behavior tells us that the communications content that most influences whether a donor gives again is knowing the results achieved by their gift.

Therefore, it's not enough to simply thank a donor; it's crucial to report back to them to tell them how their gift made a meaningful impact.

When you consider that just 23% of new donors will make a second gift—and for donors giving less than \$100, that rate drops to 18%—you can see how following up with donors to tell them how their gift made a difference makes a significant impact on your bottom line.

The bright spot in this study is that 62% of library foundations were thoughtful enough to personalize their thank you email to their donors but sadly, only 2 actually picked up the phone to thank their donors.



# Recommended donor appreciation timeline



Since donors making a second gift to an organization are 60% more likely to give another gift, we recommend crafting a new donor honeymoon for the first 90 days to show your appreciation and how their gift made a difference with personal touches before you make another ask.

Below is a timeline to help. It's loaded with personal touches to show you care and opportunities to learn more about your new donor, from a quick donor survey to an invite for a tour.

## New donor cultivation timeline (first 90 days)



Keep in mind—the invitation is the cultivation. Even if your new donor doesn't come for a tour—and even if they don't answer your call and you have to leave a thank you voicemail message—it still makes an impact.

Picking up the phone to thank a new donor within 48 hours of their gift increased the odds of them giving again [by 400%](#).

This is why it's such a gut punch that of the 50 library foundations in this study, only two foundations called to thank their donors over the phone.

Who doesn't want donors who are four times as likely to give to you again?

# Summary



This study revealed that most library foundations aren't giving donors a meaningful welcome, thank you, and follow-up communications that let the donor feel the impact they're making.

The good news for any library foundation reading this report is that you can quickly implement a new donor cultivation timeline to change all that!

The opportunity to surprise and delight donors simply by saying thank you is present more often than you might think!



# About the authors



## **Rachel Muir, CFRE**

Rachel has worked every side of the Rubik's cube that is the nonprofit sector. When she was 26 Rachel Muir launched Girlstart, a non-profit empowering girls in math, science, engineering and technology in the living room of her apartment with \$500 and a credit card. Several years later she had raised over 10 million and was featured on Oprah, CNN, and the Today show. Today Rachel delivers workshops and offers a monthly membership, [League of Extraordinary Fundraisers](#), transforming people into confident, successful fundraisers. Learn more about Rachel at [www.rachelmuir.com](http://www.rachelmuir.com).



## **James Goalder**

With almost 20 years of experience working in nonprofit technology and sales and relationship management, James brings the perfect blend of experience for his role as Partnerships Manager at Bloomerang. In addition to his work experience, James volunteers with Project Grows, a community farm in Virginia, serving on the Board and on Volunteer Nights with the organization.

# Create a world inspired by giving



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