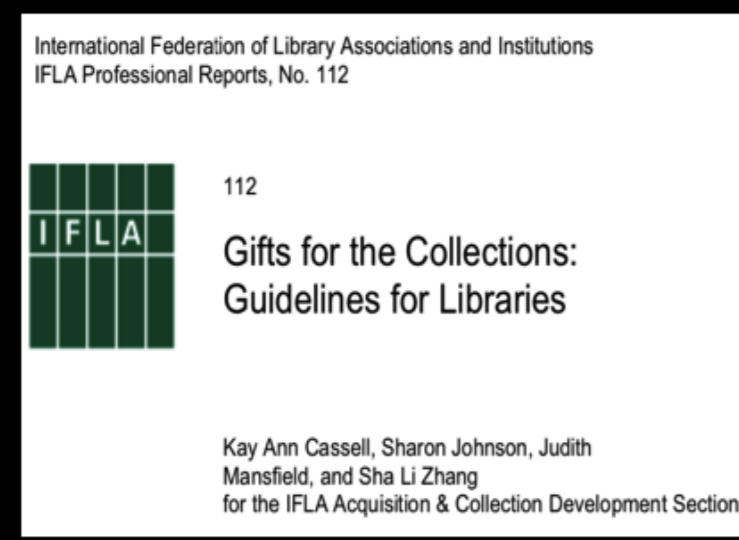


# We need to talk about donations: Policies & strategies for small academic libraries

## Policies

### IFLA Guidelines

- Includes a list and explanation of core components of a gifts/donations policy
- Provides sample language for use in your own policy
- Suggests tying gift policies to a larger collections policy

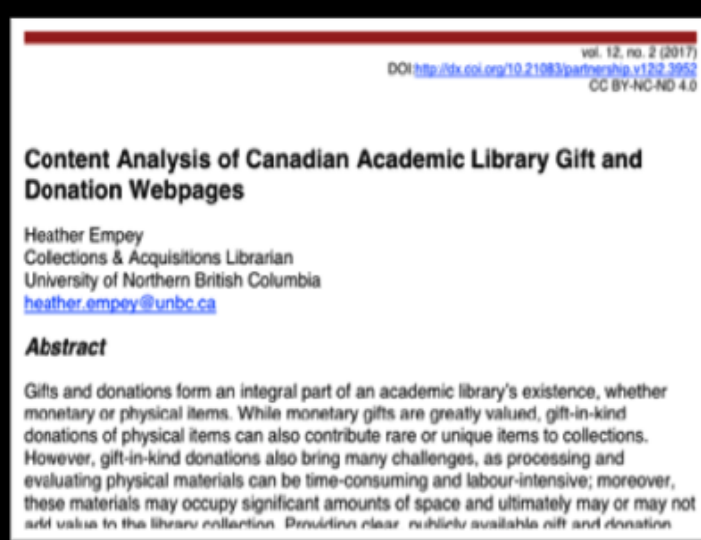


"It is advisable for the library to develop clear processes for handling and evaluating gift offers... This will provide clarity both to library staff and to donors, reduce exposure to risk and potential liabilities and ensure that future opportunities associated with items accepted into the library's collections can be fully exploited."

### Common Sections

- Gift policy statement or preamble
- Description of acceptable and unacceptable resources
- Limitations or costs to the library
- Monetary donations
- Transfer of ownership (right to determine access and disposal)
- Right to refuse
- Contact info of designated person with authority to solicit, accept, and decline offers
- Unsolicited gifts
- Screening process
- Packing and shipping
- Appraisals
- Tax receipts
- Donor acknowledgment

### Canadian Research on Donations



- Content analysis on 21 libraries' English webpages (typically larger research CARL institutions)
- Core elements: clear contact info, details on the screening process and unacceptable items, transfer of ownership, and donor acknowledgment

"Decisions about specific practices and procedures around gifts-in-kind need to be determined by each library according to various local factors, but this analysis suggests that the libraries reviewed deal with similar challenges and have relatively similar ways of addressing them."

A list of donations webpages for English university libraries with enrolment less than 10,000 is on my e-portfolio:  
<https://sites.google.com/site/paulajcardozo/olibrarian/publications>

University of  
Lethbridge



## Questions for smaller libraries

- Are you being offered in-kind gifts you don't need?
- Are these gifts becoming a burden?
- Is there a perception that because you're small you need everything?
- Is it harder to say no to someone in a smaller community when you're more likely to run into locally?



Photo by Hello I'm Nik: <https://unsplash.com/photos/lm93gsDbf4>

## Top Tips

- **Communication:** Post your policy in an easy-to-find place. Be clear about your needs.
- **Currency:** Review on a regular basis with input from employees involved in the process.
- **Consistency:** Ensure all employees are on the same page, especially when communicating with the public.
- **Authority:** Appoint one experienced person to liaise with the public and coordinate the process in-house. Someone diplomatic yet firm.
- **Diversion:** Some people just don't want to throw it out. Is there another local place that wants donations?

## What's going on in your library?



Photo by rawpixel: [https://unsplash.com/photos/HcZIXWL\\_pIM](https://unsplash.com/photos/HcZIXWL_pIM)

- Do you update your donations policy on a regular basis?
- Do all employees who deal with donations have a chance to share their experience and insights?
- Do you have a sense of how much you're offered is of use?
- How well do donated resources circulate compared to purchased acquisitions?

## Strategies

### Do you know what to say?

- "Thank you for your kind offer, however, we must accept donations carefully as..." (explain costs, space, changing collections needs)
- "The costs to process this donation will divert limited funds from new resources identified by faculty"
- "We are unable to accept your offer, but the public library's booksale may be interested."



Photo by Andrew Heist: <https://unsplash.com/photos/ucck41Hkxw>

As well-intentioned as some donors may be, sometimes it is not feasible to accept certain gifts. These conversations can be uncomfortable. It helps if you already know how to respond.

### Is everyone on the same page?



Photo by pshadel: <https://unsplash.com/photos/mcspP7N-3s>

- Ensure new employees are aware of the policy and procedures
- Guidelines should be written in a way that not only provides employees with clear directions but also supports them (i.e., refusing unsolicited drop-offs at a service desk)
- Review on a regular basis and with input from involved employees to ensure currency, relevancy and buy-in

### Unsolicited Donations



Photo by El Fisher: <https://unsplash.com/photos/M-D8bNf04>

- If unsolicited donations are an issue at your library, the following strategies may help:
- Clearly state that unsolicited gifts will not be accepted in your policy. Ensure frontline staff know the rules (and support them on it).
  - If your donor form is on the website, consider removing it. The form can instead be provided by the donations coordinator if the gift is to be accepted. Establish an internal procedure in which gifts not accompanied by the form will not be accepted.



### Do you need money instead?

- Some small libraries are requesting cash donations instead of in-kind gifts:
- A link may redirect to the university's Advancement office.
  - It can include an explanation for why the library is requesting money based on changing collections needs or facility upgrades.
  - Examples: Thompson Rivers, Emily Carr, Fraser Valley, Winnipeg, NB, CBU, St. FX, Lakehead, Laurentian, St. Paul, UOIT, Bishop's, PEI.

### My Research

- Focusing on English donations policies of smaller university libraries in Canada (less than 10,000 students)
- Looking to identify any policy trends specific to the small academic library environment (i.e., are they more likely to request money, to mention unsolicited gifts, or have moratoriums?)
- Also based on my experiences as donations coordinator at my previous small library
- Content analysis performed last spring, writing up the results, hoping to submit for publication soon!
- The future? Perhaps interviews with librarians and library technicians involved in donations

Paula Cardozo  
Professional Librarian II  
University of Lethbridge

Interested in this topic?  
Email me!  
[paula.cardozo@uleth.ca](mailto:paula.cardozo@uleth.ca)