

Online Fundraising Ideas for 501(c)3 Libraries

Online fundraising has evolved far beyond simply having a PayPal donation button on your homepage. Many new platforms and options have emerged, all aimed at helping non-profits leverage the huge migration toward web-based fundraising transactions.

This summary will not address any cloud-based donor management tools, but will focus solely on auction or event-based fundraising.

We'll look at Facebook Live events, receiving donations on your Facebook page, auction and event hosting services, and selling books or other donated objects on eBay using their Charity for Good program.

Facebook Live

On a Facebook Live Book Sale or Auction, donated books are sold in real-time to the first person to comment "SOLD" with the item number. The Lawrence, KS Public Library has used this in the past, and their past videos are available at:

<https://bit.ly/OnlineBookSale>

The Lawrence Public Library has also moved to fixed-price sales at: <https://lpdff.square.site>

In addition to the basic Facebook platform, a number of 3rd party service providers offer platforms for managing Facebook Live sales, including <https://www.loyalshops.com/>

Receiving Donations on your Facebook Page

Enrolling in the Facebook non-profit fundraising tools program will allow to add a donate button to both your page headers and posts, and get paid through Facebook Payments. Payouts will occur bi-weekly as an ACH or direct deposit to your organization's bank account.



The Initial Qualifications for enrolling are:

Be a 501(c)3 organization registered with the IRS

Have a tax ID number

Have a bank account registered with a licensed financial services institution. Bank account details, including the bank name, bank account holder's name (organization's name), and a legible and official bank letter or statement dated within the last 3 months.

Provide the date of birth and address of the charity's CEO or executive director.

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Full information on the enrollment process is available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/442078379905129>

Hosted Auctions and Events

There is an ever-growing number of companies that host sites and applications to facilitate online fundraising and event management. Those mentioned this week in discussions include:

<https://www.biddingforgood.com>

<https://www.auctria.com>

<https://www.givesmart.com>

The McCullough Library in North Bennington held a successful online auction earlier this month using 32Auctions as a platform. You can see the whole product lineup and results at:

<https://www.32auctions.com/McCulloughLibrary>

The McCullough Library's experience with 32Auctions yielded several important lessons:

1. A smaller number of high quality items yields better results than a large number of less impressive items.
2. Experiences are often more highly sought than physical items. For example, 2 private horseback riding lessons received more bids combined than any other items.
3. Offering alternatives such as sponsoring a magazine subscription or children's program is a great option for people who want to donate but not bid on any of the offered items.
4. High-quality photography of the items is essential. We live in a high-definition graphics world, and people do expect clear representations of the items. This is especially true with jewelry.
5. The whole process of finding items to sell, photographing them, and writing descriptions will take more time than anticipated. Help from a dedicated Friends group is essential.
6. Publicizing the auction far and wide is essential. A combination of newspaper announcements, social media posts, paper flyers and posts to resources such as Front Porch Forum is essential. Personal friends and loyal patrons will still likely make up a good percentage of the bidders.

Tips for selling on eBay for 501 (c)(3) non-profit libraries

Initial Set-Up

Enter your Tax ID number at this site to confirm you are not yet enrolled:

<https://www.ebayforcharity.org/get-involved/become-an-ebay-charity/>

If you do not have a PayPal Business account, create a new one (be sure it is a Business account rather than a personal account). The contact point you use should be the person authorized to receive money, transfer it to a bank account, etc.:

<https://www.paypal.com/us/non-profit/fundraising/fundraising-online>

In creating the account, you can choose to be classified as a charity. Both the basic account creation and the charity designation will require the submittal of backup documentation - voided check or bank statement, IRS non-profit determination letter, etc. PayPal may continue to ask for additional documentation to establish that you're a non-profit organization.

If your non-profit already has a regular PayPal Business account, you should be able to change it to a PayPal Charity account.

After you create the PayPal account, you'll still need to formally enroll in the PayPal Giving Fund:

<https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/donations/paypal-giving-fund-updates>

Several days after you enroll in the PayPal Giving Fund, your charity should show up in the eBay database of charities. eBay pulls all this information from PayPal.

Selling

At this point there, are 2 ways you can use eBay for selling:

1. Direct Selling - Create a "Direct Seller" account using the same email address as the PayPal account. Call it something like "FriendsOfXYZLibrary". Revenue from your sales goes directly and immediately to your PayPal account, and you can transfer the funds directly to the library / friends bank account. eBay does not charge any seller fees under this program (usual fee is 10%).
2. Standard Sellers - Other people who sell on eBay can choose to donate X% of revenue to you. They do this on a listing-by-listing basis by choosing your charity and entering in the % of the revenue that they want to donate. They do not have to do any special enrollment. This money is sent to you once a month by PayPal.

If anything goes wrong or is not clear, the best way to contact eBay is:

https://www.ebay.com/help/call_me

Pricing market research: ABEBooks.com and eBay past sales (limited to last 90 days). I usually create "Buy it Now" sales rather than auctions with a fixed ending date. I have an initial price a bit above the average I found in the market research, and lower the price slightly over time until the item sells.

Reducing Costs: Selling costs can be reduced in a number of ways. First, re-use packing materials as much as possible. The library will likely have a large supply of small, sturdy boxes from their book distributors. Local organizations such as the Lions Club or Rotary can be approached for donations of packing tape, bubble wrap, and other consumables. Finally, buying postage on the eBay site may provide a savings over paying cash at the post office.