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# University of Kent Special Collections & Archives

News and views from the Special Collections & Archives team at the University of Kent.

## History of Fundraising

Posted on **July 22, 2024** by **Beth Astridge**

**This blog was originally written in 2022 as part of a series of panels for the ‘Exploring Philanthropy’ exhibition. The panels were written by Rhodri Davies, Pears Fellow at the Centre for Philanthropy, and have been re-published here to support the Exploring Philanthropy virtual exhibition.**

### The History of Fundraising

One of the most important factors in motivating people to give is simply being asked, and fundraising has played a crucial role in the history of philanthropy. Throughout the 17th century, one-off national fundraising appeals known as “charitable briefs” were issued in response to specific disasters. These were often fires, which caused huge damage and loss of life in towns and cities around the UK. In 1666, for instance, a charitable brief was issued following the Great Fire of London, which succeeded in raising over £16,000.

It was only with the arrival of new forms of “associated philanthropy” from the late 17th century, however, that we see a greater degree of organisation and the emergence of entities that look something like what we would think of as modern charities. These entities wasted little time in finding ways to drum up support and resources for their causes, and the 18th and 19th century saw a huge amount of growth and innovation in fundraising.

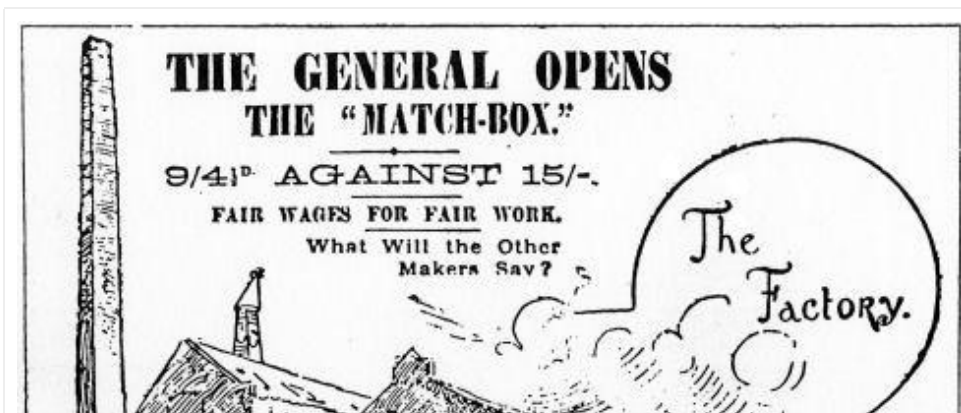
From early on it was recognised that the star power of celebrities was a powerful tool: The Foundling Hospital in London, for example, convinced the artist William Hogarth (with a number of his friends) to paint murals in their building, and also had organ in the hospital chapel donated by the composer George Friedrich Handel; on which he gave a performance of *Messiah* in 1750 that raised £728 for the charity.



— Credit: Foundling Hospital, London. Etching by H. Roberts, 1749, after J. Robinson after T. Jacobson. Wellcome Collection. <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/zkckq8hp>. Public Domain Image. Titled: This view of the hospital for the reception of EXPOSED and DESERTED YOUNG CHILDREN erected in pursuance of a Royal Charter granted by his most sacred Majesty King George the 2nd Dated the 17th day of October 1739 is most humbly dedicated to the Governors and Guardians of the said hospital, by their most obedient servant Jeremiah Robinson.

Later on in the 19th century, some well-known charity figures such as Thomas Barnado and “General” William Booth became celebrities in their own right, and would sell memorabilia playing on their fame to raise money for their organisations; including postcards, plates and teapots bearing their image, and LP recordings of speeches.

The Salvation Army under Booth also pioneered other innovative approaches to fundraising. In 1891, they began selling safety matches under the brand “Lights in Darkest England”; in part to raise awareness about the plight of young women working in match factories who suffered the horrifying condition known as “phossy jaw” due to prolonged exposure to white phosphorus. The Lights in Darkest England matches were made in factories with better pay and working conditions, and were presented to the public in these terms; making them both an early example of “ethical consumerism” and a canny piece of fundraising for the Salvation Army.



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