

**Eastern Illinois University**

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**From the Selected Works of Bradley P. Tolppanen**

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## Book Donations: Trash or Treasure?

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Available at: [https://works.bepress.com/bradley\\_tolppanen/8/](https://works.bepress.com/bradley_tolppanen/8/)





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- A collage of 15 baseball-themed book covers, including titles like 'Baseball Catalog', 'American Baseball', 'Baseball: The Game', 'NATIONALS (PART TIMES)', 'DOMINION', 'THE WORST BASEBALL GOLD', 'TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME', and 'THE PLAYERS'.

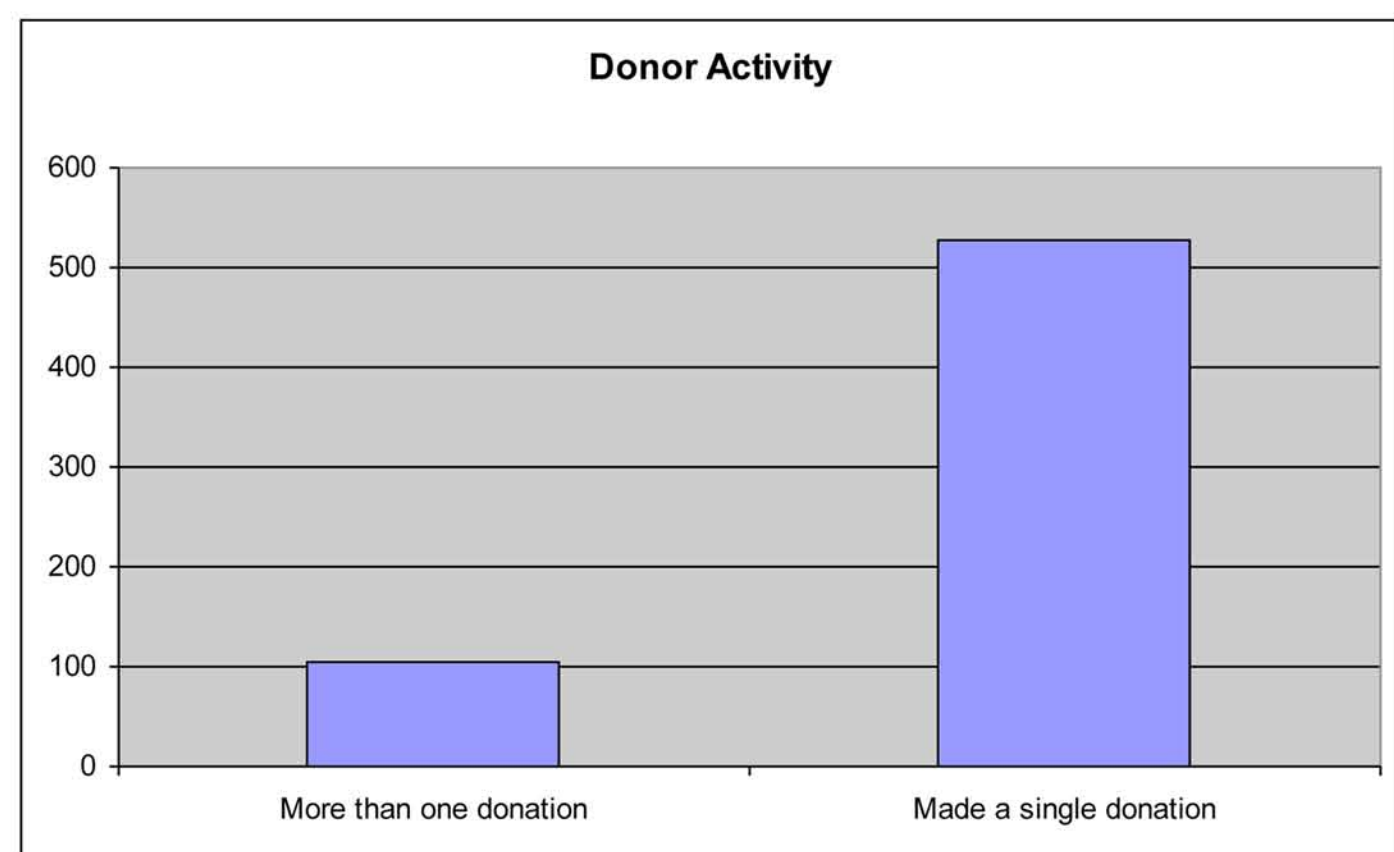
## Sample Donation – Baseball books, videos, and DVDs

1300 of the added items were on baseball

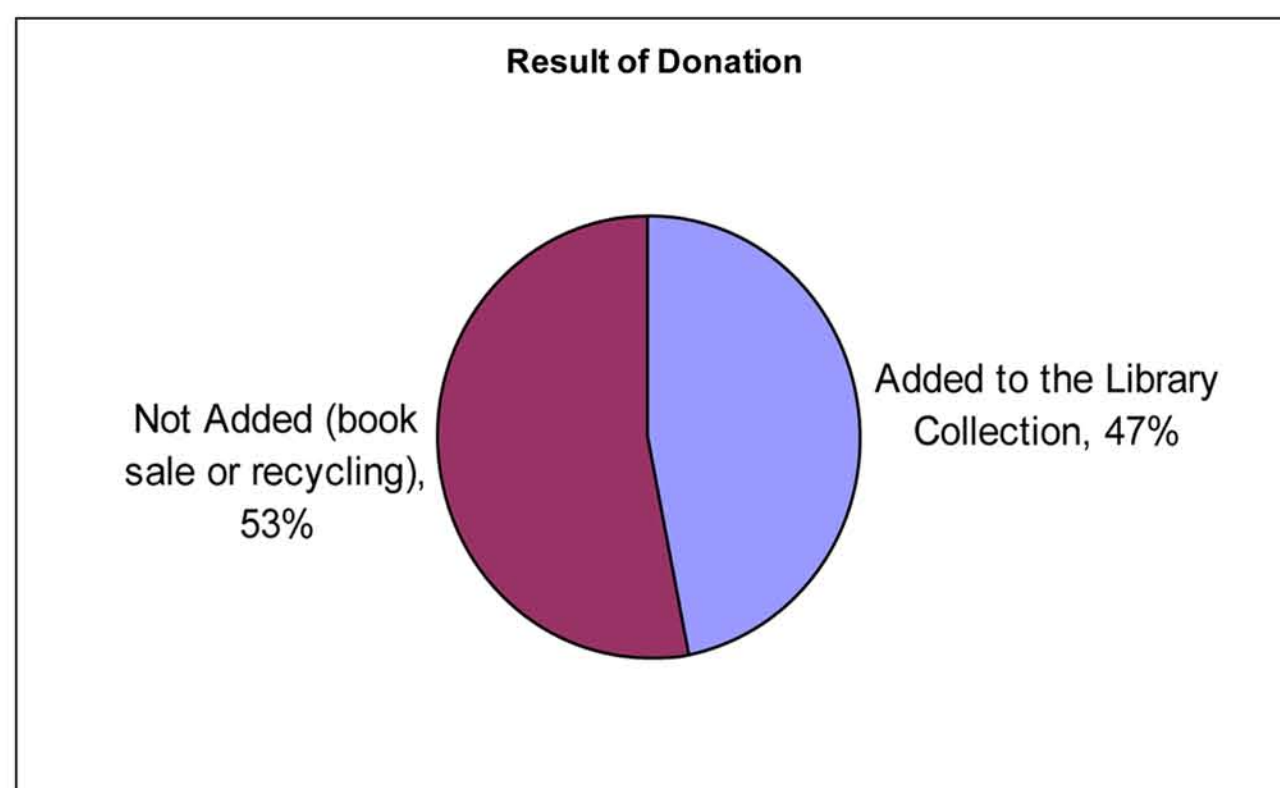
In 3 years the items on baseball have circulated 702 times

# Booth Library, EIU Experience with Donations, FY04-FY11

Donor Type	Percentage
Given by Organizations	25%
Given by Individuals	75%



# of Items	# of donations
1 item	297
2 items	92
3 to 5 items	80
6 to 10 items	58
11 to 20 items	59
21 to 50 items	87
51 to 100 items	77
101 to 200 items	57
201 to 500 items	47
501 to 1000 items	12
1001+ items	7



# Book Donations: Trash or Treasure?

"Academic libraries are cautioned to consider whether a gift is really a gift. [...] The problem [is] to ascertain whether the cost of collection transport and library staff labor [is] worth the yield in number of materials actually added to the collection."

## Procedures

## Promoting Donations

- Don't be afraid to ask for donations! Donations can be requested in the library newsletter, on the library's website, etc.

## Donor Relations

- Establish a library contact person to deal with donors.
- Some donations will be a simple anonymous drop off, while others will involve detailed negotiations.
- Plan ahead if the donation needs to be picked up. A pick up requires vehicles, bins, and enough people to easily load and unload the donation.
- Establish a time frame with the donor for convenient pick up.
- Be prepared, some donors will be hesitant to give up their books.
- Be honest with donors about the donation process. It is important to let the donor know that not all items will be added. Many donors think that their books are very valuable and do not want to hear that their materials might end up in the library's book sale.
- Be prepared to say no to a donation if the materials do not meet the needs of your collection, or if the donor has too many conditions.
- Some donors will want the library to value their donations, do not do it; the library can only acknowledge the number of items donated.

## Initial Processing of the Donation

- All donations will require preliminary processing before being sent for cataloging.
- A library can add books not already owned; a second copy for highly circulating titles; or a copy to replace a worn out or lost library copy.
- Books in poor condition should be recycled.
- Books not needed for the library can be offered to another library or sold at the annual book sale.

## Recognizing the Donor

- Book plates with the donor's name can be added.
- All donations should be acknowledged with a thank you letter.
- News releases for the newspaper and library publications are a nice way to thank donors of large or important donations.
- Creative displays showcasing newly donated items promote use as well as recognize donors.
- In all acknowledgements of the donation respect the privacy wishes (if any) of the donor
- Follow up with the donor to let them know how frequently and in what ways their donation is being used.

"Gifts, bequests, legacies and deposits are to libraries what clots are to the circulatory system in that they obstruct the bloodstream."

Rinaldo Lunati, 1975

"Anybody who's worked around libraries knows that people love to give us books. The problem is that by the time we get those books they are usually too old, too passé, or too tattered and worn to be added to the library collection, so they just end up in the book sale. Even the few we do take for the collection often require special handling and processing and may cost us more than they are worth."

Steve Coffman, 2006.

## Disadvantage

- Staff time required (also directs tech services staff away from newly purchased materials)
- Not the items you want
- Poor condition materials
- Takes up space in storage rooms
- Could require lots of work for little gain
- Negative donor reaction to donation being sent to the book sale
- Brings in bugs & mold



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Poster Session  
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