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Report on UK Donations to Science Research
January 2014

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Science Funding Overview

In 2011, total UK expenditure on scientific research and development was £27.4bn[1], with non-profit organisations funding (and therefore raising by various means) £1.306bn of this. The money donated to scientific research by non-profit organisations funds their own research and other non-profit organisations' research projects, as well as funding the research undertaken by universities, public research institutions and UK businesses[2].

Non-Profit Organisations

Overall, research charities are largely reliant on funding from individual donors, receiving 52.8% of their income this way [3]. In 2011/12, medical research was supported by 33% of donors and has been the most popular cause in every year figures have been recorded, making up 15% of total donations[4].

Several annual reports have cited the difficulty in 'fundraising' at the moment[5, 6, 7]and indeed, there has been a decrease in the overall money donated to charities in the UK, with fewer people donating routinely and on average less money[8].

Managerial or Professional groups continue be most likely to donate in society, but again there has been a reduction in donors and the amount donated; dropping from 70% donating regularly in 2010/11 to 66% in 2011/12, and the median amount decreasing to £17 from £20.[9] Women tend to give more frequently than men. Women in the age groups 45-64 and 65 and over are the most likely to donate when assessed by age and gender, and give the most money: £15 median per month[10]. It is unclear from information available which sectors donate most to science research.

Donations made through Direct Debit account for 31% of money given, rising from 22% in just 2 years with a significant decrease in credit card/cheque donations during the same period from 29% to 18%.[11]

In 2010/11, the voluntary sector received £1.7bn from 'Legacies', donations left in wills, 4.5% of overall their income[12]. However, some of the larger charities receive a far greater proportion of their income through legacies. Cancer

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[1] National Audit Office, June 2013, "Research and Development funding for science and technology in the UK", p17
[2] National Audit Office, June 2013, "Research and Development funding for science and technology in the UK", p19
[3] NCVO UK Civil Almanac, http://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac13/almanac/voluntary-sector/income/do-different-types-of-voluntary-organisations-rely-on-different-sources-of-income/
[4] NCVO, CAF,"UK Giving 2012" , p13
[5] Arthritis Research UK, 31 March 2013, Annual Report and Financial Statements, p6
[6] Stroke Association, 31 March 2013, Annual Reports and Financial Statements, p25
[7] Cancer Research UK, Annual Report and Accounts 2012/2013, p10
[8] NCVO, CAF, "UK Giving 2012", p4. An overall decrease of £11bn in 2010/11 to £9.3bn in 2011/12 donated. 55% of UK adults donate each month in 2011/12 compared to 55% in 2010/2011. The median amount donated has reduced from £12 in 2009/10 to £11 in 2010/11 and again to £9 in 2011/12
[9] NCVO, CAF, "UK Giving 2012", p12
[10] NCVO, CAF, "UK Giving 2012", p12
[11] NCVO, CAF, "UK Giving 2012", p10
[12] NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac, http://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac13/almanac/voluntary-sector/income/how-much-does-the-voluntary-sector-receive-in-legacy-income/

Research UK received £142.5m[13] in this way in 2012/13. Both Arthritis UK and Diabetes UK received more than a third of their income from legacies in the last year, as did The British Heart Foundation receiving £53.9m[14, 15, 16].

A report spreadsheet containing details of donations received by the UK's largest non-profit organisations whose activities include science research is available.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding websites allow projects seeking finances to be listed for a limited period, through which potential donors or investors can browse. They can directly invest in projects through the website and often receive benefits correlating with the size of investment. Although many crowdfunding websites are focussed on investments opportunities or arts and community projects, there are two crowdfunding sites specifically for donating to scientific research:

http://www.petridish.org/
https://www.microryza.com/

Research projects listed on these sites tend to request only hundreds or a few thousands of pounds. The benefits can vary depending on the project and size of donations, but can be as little as a research report[17].

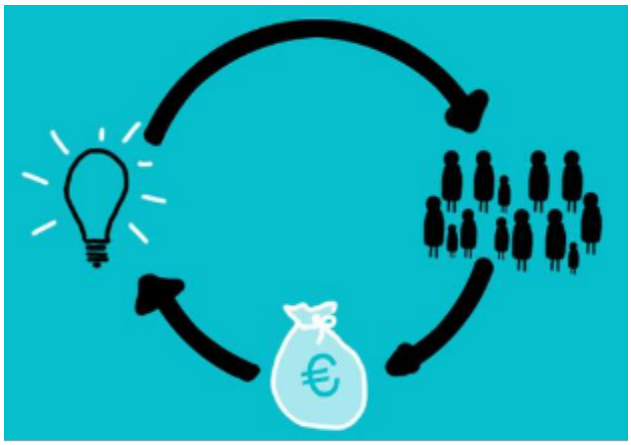

Image credit: "Crowdfunding" by Rocio Lara (CC-SA)

Higher Education Institutions

The National Audit Office report that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have an increasing role in funding and carrying out research, with expenditure rising 86% between 1995 and 2011 from £3.8bn to £7.1bn per annum[18]. HEIs now carry out 27% of the science research conducted in the UK[19]. They received £987m from private non-profit organisations, such as charities, in 2011[20]. However, this does not include money that universities raise themselves.

It is unclear from the information available how much HEIs receive on average in donations or how much of this is spent on research, but Universities UK note that there has been an expansion of fundraising for universities, including phone call campaigns targeting alumni[21]. Consequently, HEIs have received a growth in donations receiving record donations in two consecutive years (reaching £774m in 2011/12) from over 213,000 donors[22]. Almost 170,000 were alumni donors and almost 44,000 were non-alumni.

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[13] Cancer Research UK, Annual Report and Accounts 2012/2013, p28
[14] Arthritis Research UK, 31 March 2013, Annual Report and Financial Statements, p7
[15] Diabetes UK, Annual Report 2012, p41
[16] British Heart Foundation, Annual Reports and Accounts 2013, p27
[17] The Guardian, 23 October 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/science/occams-corner/2013/oct/23/non-scientists-scientific-research-communication
[18] National Audit Office, June 2013, "Research and Development funding for science and technology in the UK", p4
[19] National Audit Office, June 2013, "Research and Development funding for science and technology in the UK", p6
[20] National Audit Office, June 2013, "Research and Development funding for science and technology in the UK", p16
[21] Universities UK, 2009, http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/Philanthropy.aspx
[22] Council for Advancement and Support of Education, 1 April 2013, "University Giving Trends Buck Economic Gloom"

Many HEIs have webpages that encourage donations, often linked to their 'Alumni' pages, some that allow donors to choose a particular fund or project specifically.[23]

Science Publications

It does not appear that any science publications actively generate an income to fund science research. Nature Publishing Group has numerous philanthropic projects which centre on science communication and advancing science in developing countries, but does not appear to fund research in the UK. Requests for confirmation of this have not received an answer, however.

Observations and Assumptions

It is probable that to effectively generate income from donations, engaging with the general public is required, whether emotionally or intellectually. This is no doubt the reason why medical research is such a popular cause, because people appreciate and have an understanding of the benefits of new discoveries. A personalisation can be seen in some fundraising activities by charities, such as Cancer Research UK's Race for slogan 'Cancer, we're coming to get you' or naming people who you are 'running for' on your bib.[24]

Universities target alumni, because they already have an emotional investment in the institution and are likely to care about it's ongoing success. The Institute of Physics, having recently launched their first ever public donation appeal, cites the Higgs Boson research as an example of the discoveries their work might uncover, presumably because of the huge public interest it generated.[25]

A good example of a very successful crowdfunding campaign, researching how spammers harvest email addresses, shows how engaging the general public in research they understand the benefits of (and believe they will advantage from) can garner donations (in this case over 500% of the required total)[26]. This proposal also benefitted from humour that helped 'sell' the research, obviously not possible with a lot of projects. However, it illustrates that provoking an emotional or intellectual response helps when fundraising with the general public.

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[23] Examples of HEIs fundraising online for research:
http://www.southampton.ac.uk/supportus/our_priorities/gift_of_sight.shtml
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/giving/whattogiveto/whatelsecanigiveto
http://www.cardiffnetwork.cf.ac.uk/research
http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/givingtoglasgow/supportscienceengineering

[24] Cancer Research UK, http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/support-us/find-an-event/charity- runs/race-for-life

[25] Institute of Physics, 2013, http://www.iop.org/about/fundraising/index.html

[26] Microryza, 2012, https://www.microryza.com/projects/how-do-spammers-harvest-your-e-mail-address