

Speaking of *fund raising*

by Bette Levy

Various SDA board members have been invited to inform the membership about what they do in their respective positions. Bette Levy, Director of Fund Raising, writes about her role.

What I do as Director of Fund Raising may seem fairly obvious, but how that fits into SDA and into your lives as SDA members may not.

A major responsibility is fund raising to underwrite conference expenses and activities, such as the 2005 Fashion Show and production of the member show CD. I do this type of fund raising by writing grants and making direct solicitations to businesses, corporations, and individuals. I assist other board members and volunteers in their grant writing and direct solicitation efforts. I also work with Jason Pollen on the members' fund raising campaign. Funds from this campaign have been applied toward the special Gallery Issue of the journal, expansion of the web site, provision of outstanding student awards, and various SDA grants. Working with Jan-Myers Newbury as co-chair, I also oversee the silent auction which funds the new Creative Promise Award for Student Excellence, other SDA grants and awards, and a special fund with CERF (Craftsman's Emergency Relief Fund) to help surface design artists in financial crisis. Finally, I oversee several of the committees that review and disburse grant funds to SDA members.

As you can see, many of my responsibilities have to do with the raising and distribution of funds for SDA grants. In this regard, I'd like to say that it has been a wonderful and inspiring experience to read your applications. The projects you are proposing are almost uniformly worthwhile and meaningful. Because of this and because of the sheer volume of grant proposals we now receive, differentiating between them is difficult and time-consuming for us and highly competitive for you. Accordingly, I'd like to offer some guidance to those who may be considering writing an SDA grant application.

Most importantly, keep in mind that, regardless of merit, the grant that is well-written is much more likely to be funded. So read the web site carefully and be sure to include everything that is requested. Write clearly, avoiding jargon, overly technical terminology, and cute phrases or poetry. Be specific, including exact dates, locations, and time frames. Be sure your timeline and budget are reasonable and appropriate to the project. Submit a complete budget, including even those items SDA doesn't fund. State in your request the portion of your total budget for which you are seeking SDA funds. Use readable fonts in black ink.

Here are some other guidelines:

- Meet the deadline. The committee will not consider any applications postmarked after the deadline.
- If you want your materials to be returned, be sure to include adequate postage.
- If you send CDs or DVDs, be sure they can be opened.
- If you're attending or putting together a workshop or event, include the names of the instructor(s), location(s), dates, and description of the workshop(s).
- If you're developing a travel grant, include specific information about people or organizations that will be involved, commitments made, goals and outcomes of the project.

- If you're going to develop a product or piece of equipment, state the need for such an item and how your project will be different from or an improvement on what already exists.
- If a body of work is expected to come out of your project, describe what this will be in full detail. Don't just state that you expect to create something wonderful at the end.
- If you expect that while you're in a particular location additional things will evolve, such as an opportunity for you to teach, try to be very specific about where and when that may happen. If at all possible, try to get this lined up before writing the grant so specific information can be included.
- Define your outcomes. If you believe that the results of your grant may change the field of surface design, explain and define what impact it will have on the field.
- If you're applying for a personal development grant, one of the requirements is that this not be an extension of an existing project or something already begun. So don't apply for something already underway. But we all know that no one starts from ground zero in a creative project; we all work from existing knowledge and skills, and our work is a continuum based on what we've done before. So if you are planning a project that takes you to the same location as a previous project, you can apply for a personal development grant. But be sure to explain how the second project is substantially different from the first one. Explain how this next project will give you a "jump start" or take you in a completely different direction, content-wise or skill-wise.
- Be sure that the creative work described in the grant will be work that you're doing yourself, not work you're supervising or overseeing.
- Before sending in the grant, give yourself at least a week's "breathing space" so you can re-read it with fresh eyes. Better still, give the application to someone else to read and critique for you.
- Finally, don't be intimidated by any of the above. Just go ahead and submit your proposal. Who knows, yours just may be the one to be funded!



Bette Levy stitching in her studio.