



CASE STUDY: HOW A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE USED A SMALL GRANT TO GARNER BIG PRESS

Cultivating press coverage not only raises the visibility of your work but can also help in building a broad network of champions for the humanities and humanities institutions. As this case study of Earlham College demonstrates, even a small grant, combined with a strong press release and an accommodating stance toward media professionals, can reap great rewards in terms of local and national coverage. We hope Earlham's successful strategy will be helpful as you engage with the media.

In December 2017, Earlham College's Joseph Moore Museum was awarded a Preservation Assistance Grant (PAG) from the National Endowment for the Humanities. These small grants support the care of humanities collections and help build capacity among small and mid-sized cultural institutions. For the Joseph Moore Museum, winning the grant meant that it could hire a conservator to design an open storage unit for "Lady Ta'an," the museum's mummy—it also presented an opportune moment for press outreach that would help raise the profile of the college and museum both locally and nationally.

At \$4,621, this grant was by no means Earlham's largest from the NEH. In 2017 alone, Earlham was also awarded a \$97,607 grant to develop an academic program in medical humanities. Rather than learning about the grant in a formal announcement, the college's public relations officer, Brian Zimmerman, heard about it through Twitter. As someone with a press background, Zimmerman quickly realized that this would make a strong story. People like stories about mummies, he thought, and the grant was already receiving a bit of media attention, if only because of its unusual subject.

Ann-Eliza Lewis, the Joseph Moore Museum's collections manager, was on board to contribute to a press release—and to welcome press to the museum. "We want to make sure the museum gets noticed, so we advocate for ourselves both on and off campus," said Lewis when reflecting on the process. Lewis provided Zimmerman with the original grant proposal and offered feedback as he wrote a press release that, crucially, announced the grant and articulated why it was important to the museum, the university, and to the larger community.

"Lady Ta'an" is more than an ancient object, a novelty in a rural museum. The mummy is historically-significant to Earlham College and to Richmond, Indiana. The Joseph Moore Museum contributes to Earlham College's museum studies minor by providing students with practical experiences; by bringing a conservator to the college, the



grant will offer these students yet another educational opportunity. Zimmerman's press release, which included several images of "Lady Ta'an", provided salient details about the mummy's history and the college's educational programs, as well as quotations from Lewis and a student who works in the museum.

Zimmerman's press release was met with great success: it was picked up by the local news as well as major outlets like the *Seattle Times* and *U.S. News and World Report*. For the first time in at least six years, local television stations made trips to the museum to showcase "Lady Ta'an." Lewis emphasized that being "as accommodating and as available as possible"—and responding to small outlets as quickly and as courteously as to large ones—was key to their success.

Cumulatively, these media hits helped raise awareness around the nation about Earlham College and its unique student programs. Locally, it informed people about the Joseph Moore Museum, encouraging them to visit and instilling a sense of pride in the region's unique history. Zimmerman and Lewis hope, too, that people will remain aware that the NEH grant "is a starting point, not an ending point." More funds will have to be raised to actually build "Lady Ta'an's" case—and making people aware of her is just the first step in that process.

See Also:

["Earlham College Works to Preserve Egyptian Mummy."](#) CBS4 Indy. 22 Feb. 2018.

["Wayne County Home to the Only Two Egyptian Mummies in Indiana."](#) Indiana Public Media. 2 March 2018.

["Earlham College Gets Funding to Help Preserve Egyptian Mummy."](#) The Associated Press. 10 Feb. 2018.

Images and Press Release Courtesy of Earlham College.



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release: Feb. 2, 2018

EC's Joseph Moore Museum awarded funding by NEH to begin mummy restoration project.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded funding to Earlham College's Joseph Moore Museum to begin a long-term preservation project of the Egyptian mummy in its collection.

The grant will support the design of a temperature-controlled storage case for "Lady Ta'an," the daughter of an Egyptian priest dating back to the period between 300 B.C. and 30 B.C. Once the design is complete, the museum will seek additional funds to construct the case to ensure that future generations of visitors will also have the opportunity to encounter and learn from this ancient ancestor.

"We are fortunate to have this great object in our collection but we need to do our part to ensure that the mummy is stored in a climate-controlled setting," says Ann-Eliza Lewis, collections manager for the museum.

Lady Ta'an arrived on Earlham's campus in 1889, the result of a purchase during one of former Earlham president Joseph John Mills' international trips, at a time when many prominent museum collections were being established. It is one of just two mummies known to reside in Indiana. The other is located just miles away from campus at the Wayne County Historical Museum.

Earlham's mummy has survived both time and catastrophe. When the museum caught fire in 1924, Lady Ta'an was one of the objects that endured, although soot from that blaze remains on the mummy's sarcophagus.

"While it may be surprising that both of Indiana's mummies landed in Richmond, I think it says a lot about the history of Richmond and our commitment to providing experiential learning opportunities for Earlham students and visitors alike," Lewis says.

Today, the mummy remains one of the Museum's core artifacts, which includes a mastodon, a planetarium, the world's most complete giant beaver fossil skeleton, and vast ethnographic, bird, mammal, herpetology, invertebrate and paleontological collections. It is incorporated into the many educational programs available to the thousands of visitors that come to the museum each year, including field trip and summer camp participants. Many of these special events at the museum are entirely led by Earlham students as part of a growing work-study program or as a requirement of the College's Museum Studies minor.

"I've been working at the museum since I arrived at Earlham," says Lydia Evans '18, an Environmental Studies major from Ann Arbor, Mich. "In one of the first semesters I was here I actually designed an educational outreach program based around the mummy. We looked at lots of different things related to Egyptian history but also some general information about museum collections. It was really helpful to have this large, impressive object for our visiting students to look at and engage with."

Students who work for the museum receive expert mentorship from Lewis and museum director Heather Lerner, also an assistant professor of Biology and Museum Studies.

"I think this is one of the great things about the Joseph Moore Museum," Lewis says. "Our students learn museum best practices first-hand by doing real programming. Everything they do has to be professional quality because we want our visitors and the community to have a high-quality experience that represents Earlham well."

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Earlham College, a national liberal arts college located in Richmond, Indiana, is a "College That Changes Lives." We expect our students to be fully present: to think rigorously, value directness and genuineness, and actively seek insights from differing perspectives. The values we practice at Earlham are rooted in centuries of Quaker tradition, but they also constitute the ideal toolkit for contemporary success.