

HOT BUTTON TOPICS IN CULTURAL POLICY

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The topics were originally suggested by CultureLab members, an international group of arts consultants who, since 2009, have worked with the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago and NORC to create a collaborative partnership of cultural experts from academia, policy, and practice. The goal of the CultureLab partnership is to spur innovative and critical thinking for the arts and culture field, as well as to facilitate and support practical experimentation among arts and culture organizations. We are also committed to cultivating future scholar/researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of cultural policy; and, to this end, the consultants identified a set of problems to be researched—systemic issues that face arts and cultural organizations across the sector—and agreed to guide the students as they researched these issues and wrote white papers on their findings. The five topics chosen for study ranged across a broad array of problems: the shifting nature of arts consumption and some new policy directions that this shift implies; organizational challenges in institutions and across the cultural sector; and comparative perspectives on cultural policy.

Thanks to all the CultureLab members for generating ideas for research projects. And very special thanks to the consultant-advisors—**Alan Brown, Jennifer Novak-Leonard, Tim Roberts, Roger Tomlinson, Duncan Webb, and Jerry Yoshitomi**—who provided ideas, guidance, critique, and moral support over the ten weeks that students were engaged in working on these five papers. The time and energy that you all devoted to the students and their projects made for an extraordinary learning experience.

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Encore! Encore!

Increasing Demand for the Nonprofit Arts in a Changing World

Katie Grogan and Leah Reisman

Remarks made by Rocco Landesman, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), struck a nerve in the arts world. During a NewPlay Convening in January 2011, Landesman announced: “Look, you can either increase demand or decrease supply. Demand is not going to increase so it’s time to think about decreasing supply.” Although Landesman’s comments may have incited the ire of arts practitioners, his decision to highlight a very real problem facing arts organizations in the United States was fair. After all, a new nonprofit arts organization was created every three hours between 2003 and 2008, growth that was not matched by a boost in audiences. During the same period, attendance decreased 19% and 22% at museums and performing arts programs, respectively.¹ But before we allow ourselves to be discouraged, let’s think of it this way: demand is not so much decreasing as it is shifting to new modes of cultural participation.

Landesman himself acknowledged that many benchmark arts organizations today utilize a “too limited definition of success,”² only tracking attendance figures, earned income, and national prestige. Likewise, it can be argued that the NEA draws upon a too narrow framework when measuring the degree to which Americans participate in the arts. It’s more accurate to claim that demand for the arts in general isn’t down, but has moved away from the traditional nonprofit framework. One way people are participating is through education. In the past decade, there has been a five percent increase in the number of SAT test-takers who reported at least four years of arts or music training. Additionally, between 1998 and 2007, undergraduate degrees in the arts conferred annually rose from 75,000 to 120,000.³ For people who prefer to learn outside of the classroom, technological advances have brought art to their fingertips and made it easier for them to create their own work. In the past five years, individual arts creation grew and a

¹ Americans for the Arts, *National Arts Index 2009*, 2009.

² Rocco Landesman, “#SupplyDemand,” *Art Works*. January 31, 2011.

³ Americans for the Arts, *National Arts Index*.

larger percentage of personal consumption was spent on arts and culture. Finally, community-based and culturally specific arts organizations were more likely to complete their fiscal year with a surplus than other types of arts organizations, reflecting a deeper understanding of their constituents' expectations.⁴ Maybe Landesman is right. Maybe Americans don't want or need more traditional benchmark arts organizations. They crave arts experiences that resonate with their own unique values and interests.

SHOULD WE EVEN USE “SUPPLY VS. DEMAND” TO TALK ABOUT ART AND ART INSTITUTIONS?

Many arts practitioners were angered by more than just the content of Landesman's comments. Using economic terms such as “supply” and “demand” to discuss the arts is also problematic because these concepts don't consider the purposes of nonprofit arts organizations. Instead of desire for a good, demand for the arts is better defined as desire for a quality of life that operates somewhat independently of price. Artists produce art as an end unto itself, regardless of whether or not Americans “want” more art. For them, the production of art affords intangible compensation and, in defiance of economic principles, they're willing to create their art for less than a living wage.⁵ Similarly, as their name implies, nonprofit institutions don't exist in order to turn a profit. What's less clear is what they *do* exist for. According to Diane Ragsdale, the purpose of these institutions is to “maximize mission,” to benefit society in tangible and intangible ways.⁶ The state of an organization's budget says little about the degree to which it accomplishes its mission. An arts institution might be providing quality,

⁴ Americans for the Arts, *National Arts Index*.

⁵ Aaron Anderson, “Attendance is Not the Only Measure of Demand. *Createquity*. February 6, 2011.

⁶ See Alan Brown's essay, “An Architecture of Value,” for a discussion of some of the instrumental and intrinsic benefits that individuals and communities derive from participation in the arts.

transformative dance experiences or exhibitions despite few “butts in the seats” or people in the galleries.⁷

There may be a problem with an uncritical acceptance of “supply and demand” terminology in the context of the arts, but this is now a commonly accepted part of the vocabulary in the cultural sector. Landesman suggested that decreasing the supply of nonprofit arts organizations might solve the problem, but the NEA doesn’t have the leverage necessary to do this or a metric or process with which to identify mission-failing organizations. The NEA provides a modest percentage of the funding allocated to arts organizations and the diffuse leveraging system of funding means that no one organization holds the reins. Therefore, we don’t have a governing body with enough power to engage in top-down downsizing of the arts nonprofit sector, even if we could pinpoint mission-failing organizations.

IF WE CAN’T DECREASE SUPPLY, WHAT CAN WE DO?

Unable to address Landesman’s dilemma from the supply-side alone, many arts organizations have taken matters into their own hands. They have individually mobilized to tackle decreasing attendance and evolving audience expectations. In a recent NEA monograph, 74% of Americans reported participation in the arts.⁸ Institutions need to change in order to harness some of this healthy pool of demand for arts experiences. Increasing attendance can mean more tickets sold, but also more website hits, more events and classes attended, and more broadcasts downloaded. The overview of ways to increase demand provided below, by way of case study comparisons, is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is a glimpse of some methods arts

⁷ Diane Ragsdale, “Supply and Demand Redux: Rocco’s Comment and the Elephant in the Room.” *Jumper*. February 7, 2011.

⁸ Jennifer L Novak-Leonard and Alan S. Brown. *A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation*. The National Endowment for the Arts. (Washington: National Endowment for the Arts, 2011), 16. This study tabulated attendance based on an expanded definition of “arts participation.”

organizations have used to invigorate their work. A dancer and student of museums respectively, we have chosen cases from within our disciplines that have inspired us and that we believe provide great opportunities for inspiration and learning across genres.

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE AND YOURSELF: THE IMPORTANCE OF AUDIENCE RESEARCH

Audience research is the first method by which any organization can learn about its constituents' demands. Arts institutions need to make concerted efforts to understand the composition of their existing audience, whom they would like to attract, and what these people need—an argument supported by both Andrew McIntyre and Alan Brown in studies that detail the many motivations for and impacts of arts participation. Some institutions, such as the Art Institute of Chicago, employ surveys and focus groups,⁹ others engage in electronic demographic data capture embedded in ticketing modules, and still others simply use well-designed and centrally-placed comment forms. Knowing current audiences¹⁰ allows institutions to be strategic and realistic in attracting target audiences by identifying *what* they are trying to provide to *whom*, and *why* such a thing is important. Without this step of audience research, efforts like those presented below run a higher risk of falling flat.

I See You: Transparency and Marketing at the Brooklyn Museum and Hubbard St. Dance Chicago

The Brooklyn Museum and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago provide great examples of how to increase demand through *increased institutional transparency* and utilizing *better, more innovative marketing strategies*.

⁹ Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, *Opening the Door to the Entire Community*, 1998, 5.

¹⁰ There are multiple, overlapping audience groups to consider in efforts to increase attendance and demand.

In 2008, the Brooklyn Museum opened *Click! A Crowd-Curated Exhibition*. Staff members publicized an open call for photographs on the theme “The Changing Face of Brooklyn.” Audience members uploaded submissions onto an online server, and visitors used a module to judge the photographs’ quality. Visitors couldn’t view cumulative scores or the comments of others while judging, which equalized the opinions of professionals and amateurs. An exhibition was created based on the voting results, in which artworks were sized according to their scores. An online exhibition was also produced, where visitors could view extra content and browse things like the “most discussed” images, or those with “the greatest divergence of opinion.”¹¹ The Brooklyn Museum also offers personalized “niche” memberships called *Istfans*. These \$20 memberships are marketed to visitors who either visit online or attend Target First Saturdays at the museum. Instead of providing free museum entrance, *Istfans* offers access to exclusive online content and special programming on free Saturdays. *Istfans* members are encouraged to network through online discussion groups and in-person meet-ups hosted by museum staff. In this way, a marketing strategy created a community with strong institutional ties. In its first year alone, over 500 people from 23 states and 10 countries became *Istfans* members.¹² Finally, the Brooklyn Museum offers extensive online content. It advertises programming in terms of opportunities for fun and engagement: “Follow our expedition in Egypt with Dig Diary 2011. Bring your mobile device and play Gallery Tag!” Visitor comments enrich the site with first-hand accounts, and collections are available for online browsing and gaming. Visitors can play “Freeze Tag” and “Tag You’re It” while interacting with collection objects. They can “join the posse,” annotate and favorite artworks, and save information in a personal profile.¹³

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC) engages in demand-increasing initiatives that are both similar to and different from the Brooklyn Museum. It hosts a yearly National Choreography competition, in which anyone (amateurs and professionals alike) is invited to submit pieces of choreography for performance by the company. Three winners are selected, and their pieces are rehearsed under the direction of the winning choreographer and performed by Hubbard Street 2, a smaller offshoot of the company that can be contracted by intimate venues. HSDC also offers family workshops in which company dancers lead children and their parents in creative movement based on Harold and the Purple Crayon children’s books.¹⁴ Dancer-turned-arts-administrator Gregory Russell said of the program: “It’s difficult to take your whole family to a

¹¹ Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Museum 2.0, 2010).

¹² Nina Simon, “Istfans: An Audience-Specific Membership Program at the Brooklyn Museum” *Museum 2.0*. February 12, 2009.

¹³ *Brooklyn Museum* website, accessed February 2011.

¹⁴ *The Kennedy Center* website, accessed February 2011.

dance performance as you would to a museum. What's more, even when money is tight, my wife and I feel comfortable spending top dollar on our 3-year old." Luckily, the workshops do not cost top dollar: admission is only \$5 a person. Finally, HSDC offers extensive online content. Performances are marketed through social networking sites, where visitors can cultivate anticipation for attendance. Post-performance, they can engage by viewing video footage of backstage areas and performances at usual venues, or by reading blog posts written by dancers about their experiences in the company.¹⁵

Both the Brooklyn Museum and HSDC engage in initiatives that *increase the transparency* of their organization. They let audience members participate in experience creation and view normally restricted areas. However, these institutions increase transparency to different degrees. While public contributions completely shaped *Click!*, HSDC selects the winners of their National Choreography competition. They ceded less control to visitors by retaining significant jurisdiction over programming.¹⁶

Both organizations also engage in *personalized and unusual marketing* for their experiences. They target specific audience niches with programming and memberships. Both provide online content that emphasizes fun, offers personal testimonials, and allows visitors to engage before and after experiences. This strategic use of new technologies for marketing¹⁷ generates excitement and builds relationships between organization and visitor. It attracts youth and draws in audiences that desire personalizable, participatory experiences.

¹⁵ *Hubbard Street Dance Chicago* website, accessed February 2011.

¹⁶ This is not true across the board; according to the character of the institution, it cedes varying degrees of control to visitors. For example, in *Fill the Gap*, the Smithsonian American Art Museum allows visitors to select from a series of pre-selected objects and vote for what object they believe should fill a space left by a collection item going out on loan. While visitors can contribute to decision-making in the museum, staff members retain control by selecting a series of appropriate replacements. Simon, *Participatory Museum*, 151.

¹⁷ Betty Farrell and Diane Grams. *Entering Cultural Communities: Diversity and Change in the Nonprofit Arts*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 115.

Finally, both HSDC and the Brooklyn Museum offer *extensions of visitation experiences* outside of normal repertoire. HSDC offers family programs and the Brooklyn Museum provides online activities. In other institutions such as the Toledo Museum of Art,¹⁸ this method of increasing demand entails partnerships with community organizations. Such initiatives connect institutions with visitors' creativity. They lower barriers to attendance by emphasizing organizations' abilities to serve unusual purposes. They also acknowledge the need for content tailored to multiple age groups and previously untreated populations, providing engagement opportunities for youth and families with kids.

OUTSIDE YOUR DOORS, AFTER HOURS: THE TREY MCINTYRE PROJECT AND THE DENVER ART MUSEUM

Initiatives by the dance company Trey McIntyre Project and the Denver Art Museum prove that arts organizations can maintain their foundations while fostering community enrichment. These two groups have used multiple methods to increase attendance, but we will highlight two: *extending the experience* and *changing modes of presentation*.

When it put down roots in Idaho's capital city, the Trey McIntyre Project (TMP) worked hard to show Boiseans how integral they are to TMP's creative process. To extend the experience beyond the proscenium theater and to introduce the company to the city, TMP set up a series of "SpUrbans" or Spontaneous Urban Performances, in which dancers writhe, jump, and twirl on city sidewalks, in parks, and other non-traditional spaces. To further expose the community to contemporary ballet, TMP performed at decidedly non-highbrow venues: The YMCA and the Idaho Center Arena during the NBA Expansion League's Idaho Stampede games.¹⁹ Another method of community outreach is dancing around hospital beds and in cafeterias for patients, caregivers and medical staff at St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, where McIntyre is Artist in Residence²⁰. Finally, to challenge perceptions about

¹⁸ Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, *Engaging the Entire Community: A New Role for Permanent Collections*, (New York, 1999). 21-22.

¹⁹ *Trey McIntyre Project* website. (Accessed January-February 2011).

²⁰ Alyson Oüten. "A Dose of Dance Hopes to Cure Spirits." *KTVB.com*, December 8, 2009, accessed February 2011.

traditional ballet companies, TMP integrated Boise's visual artists into the mix. Artists created original portraits of TMP's dancers —some abstract, others more realistic— that were featured along with the artist's biography and offered for sale on TMP's website.

The Denver Art Museum has also diversified its offerings to appeal to a wider audience and attract new visitors. The museum created opportunities for audience participation in *Side Trip*, a side gallery in the exhibition *The Psychedelic Experience*. This low-lit, immersive environment furnished with funky 1960s furniture invited visitors to create their own psychedelic posters with provided materials. To extend the museum experience for its visitors and to reach out to Denver's young adult audience, the museum created *Untitled*. This after-museum-hours event encourages participants to view the museum as a multifaceted social space.²¹ While sipping cocktails, visitors participate in a vibrant scene: a DJ spinning to the beat of flashing lights and images in one room, an indie rock band jamming in another, and a performance artist in the freight elevator²². In this festive atmosphere, visitors are still encouraged to interact with the art by taking "Detours" with volunteer guides from diverse non-arts careers, and by making their own art.²³

In this and the previous comparison, museums and dance organizations successfully generated buzz by *extending audience experiences* beyond the confines of regular hours and walls. However, the museums presented art-making opportunities in these experiences, while the dance organizations focused on non-traditional performances that maintained the pro-am divide. This corresponds to a recent NEA monograph that found that people are more likely to both create and attend visual arts events than dance performances.²⁴ This might be explained by the fact that dance classes are perceived to require infrastructure such as special flooring and footwear. However, the same report claimed that people that *do* identify as dancers are *much*

²¹ Ricardo Baca. "Smart Night out at the Museum." *Denver Post*. March 4, 2010, accessed February 2011.

²² Denver The Mile High City. "Expecting the Unexpected at DAM's Untitled Series," accessed February 2011.

²³ Nina Simon. "Take A Side Trip to the Denver Art Museum." *Museum 2.0*. March 27, 2009.

²⁴ Novak-Leonard and Brown. "A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation."

more likely to attend nonprofit arts events.²⁵ Perhaps this comparison illuminates the cross-genre value of providing art-making opportunities in efforts to increase demand.

TMP and the Denver Art Museum also *changed their practices* to toy with visitors' expectations and cultivate audience ownership of nonprofit arts events. The Denver Art Museum offers participatory experiences where visitors can personalize and respond to exhibitions, and TMP has short, intense experiences. Both organizations create opportunities for socialization in and around their events. Despite taking these steps for increased audience engagement, both organizations remain true to their missions. They prove that “benchmark arts institutions” and “audience involvement” are not mutually exclusive. Yet we also see different approaches on the part of dance company and museum administrators. Both organizations added unexpected experiences alongside their normal repertoire, but TMP focuses on building audiences through quirky performances instead of allowing audience members to partake in the dancing. In contrast, the Denver Art Museum encouraged visitors to create their own art. TMP is less interested in blurring the line between expert and amateur—its collaboration with professional visual artists supports this—than The Denver Art Museum. Does this museum's method for engagement work better than that of this dance organization? As enthusiasm for McIntyre's company indicates, not necessarily.

THIS WAY, PLEASE: EASE OF ACCESS AT ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER AND THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

In spite of the differences in the artistic genres each organization represents, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Oakland Museum of California took similar steps in the revitalization of their physical spaces, with the intent of *easing access* for their visitors. Not to

²⁵ Novak-Leonard and Brown. “A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation.”

be construed as shallow facelifts, these infrastructural and service-oriented changes were vital for the improved connection of Ailey and the Oakland Museum to their communities.

In the early 2000s, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater broke ground for their first permanent space, a 77,000-square-foot structure and the “largest space devoted solely to dance in the entire country.”²⁶ Whereas the old building was windowless and appeared hostile to pedestrians (New York Magazine called it a “bunker”²⁷), the new space features a transparent design, with floor to ceiling windows revealing the professional dance classes happening within. Nathan Bibliowicz of Iu & Bibliowicz Architects LLP explained of the design: “Ailey wanted to bring dance to the community, so we made sure to have the studios envelope the space so that the public could see dance from the street.”²⁸ Large marble benches flank the building so that passersby can sit and watch dance classes and rehearsals up close. When the shades are drawn after hours, the windows become multi-media screens; projections of Ailey company members leap in slow motion from window to window. Finally, community groups and small dance companies can rent studio space and the dance center’s professionally equipped stage.

Attendance at the Oakland Museum of California flat lined in the 1990s; so, in 2005, the museum launched a major redesign project aimed at increasing community engagement and visitation. Efforts to *change modes of presentation* resulted in new galleries that encourage visitors to place a red dot on a map to indicate from whence they came to California, add their own stories to exhibitions and installations through written notes, and provide feedback on exhibitions.²⁹ The museum also offers exhibitions, like their yearly “Día de Los Muertos” show, that are highly relevant to local communities.³⁰ In addition, in efforts to *increase transparency*, the museum is a longtime employer of community advisory groups, which were instrumental throughout the renovation process. For example, when a youth advisory group questioned the proposed white walls, the museum took heed. As a result, the Oakland Museum is colorfully painted. It is also comfortable, with couches instead of benches,

²⁶Amy S. Choi, “Joan Weill Center for Dance: Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation Gets a New Home.” *McGraw Hill Construction*, May 2004, accessed February 2011.

²⁷Justin Davidson. “The Glass Stampede.” *New York Magazine*, September 7, 2008, accessed February 2011.

²⁸Choi, “Joan Weill Center for Dance.”

²⁹Carole Reynolds. “Oakland Museum Offers a Rich Glimpse of California History” *The Pioneer Online* December 2, 2010.

³⁰Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 275-279.

and “loaded lounges” where visitors can read, socialize, check their email, or respond to big questions posed by the museum.³¹

Both Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Oakland Museum of California reimagined their place within their communities by adjusting their physical spaces. The dance company and museum took comparable steps toward achieving *ease of access* for their constituents. Ailey’s transformation was more dramatic and expensive, as the company built a new space from scratch. The Oakland Museum renovated an existing space instead and took steps ensure visitor comfort. Other institutions, such as the Walker Arts Center, took similarly straightforward steps to become easier to visit. They dressed down guards, stocked galleries with volunteers who spontaneously convened tours, and began to offer free *Explore Memberships* to low-income groups that include transportation to and from the museum. Despite differences in scope, both Ailey and the Oakland Museum improved perceptions of what happened within their walls by adjusting what the public could see from outside, and how they were treated inside. We believe that these two strategies, reconfiguring spaces to increase accessibility and taking simple steps to make visitation easier and more enjoyable, have great potential for applicability across disciplines.

In our first comparison, the museum and dance organization *changed their practice* by adding unusual performances adjacent to normal repertoire. In contrast, Ailey chose to change their venue but not their repertoire, while the Oakland Museum fundamentally changed both venue and practice. They created opportunities for user-generated content and produced exhibitions sensitive to local minority communities. In general, the museums discussed were more likely to present opportunities for user-generated content, while the dance organizations

³¹ Karen E. Steen “People Power.” *MetropolisMag.com* September 15, 2010.

changed the timing or length of presentations. In both cases, then, institutional changes were tailored to the art forms they presented. Dance performances require extensive rehearsal and consist of a presentation *to* an audience. In contrast, visitors moving through spaces structure museum experiences. These spaces can contain elements that allow audience contributions instantly to become part of the show.

LEARNING TO GROW: ARTS EDUCATION AT THE NEW YORK CITY CENTER AND THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM

A recent monograph published by the NEA asserted a strong correlation between arts education and attendance at arts nonprofits. The report claimed that arts education is the strongest predictor of participation in nonprofit arts experiences, that people who have taken at least one art lesson in their lives are 30% more likely to attend.³² Correspondingly, many organizations are placing renewed focus on educational programs within and outside their institutions.

The New York City Center (NYCC) is a renowned performance space for big-name musical theater and dance companies ranging from American Ballet Theater, to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, to Paul Taylor Dance Company. NYCC presents *Fall for Dance*, a festival featuring renowned national and international dance companies, with all tickets \$10 each. Lines for these tickets always snake around the block and phone lines are clogged until the festival is sold out. In addition to presenting a range of performances, NYCC offers multiple modes of dance education that strive to connect students to main stage performers. To name a few, in *Young People's Dance Series: First Steps*, teachers attend professional development workshops at City Center, students receive pre-performance in-school dance workshops from professional dancers, attend a field trip to City Center to see the professional performance, and attend a post-performance workshop in order deepen their understanding of what they witnessed in the theater. In *Young People's Dance Series: Choreography Residency*, students receive “10 choreography-based, in-school workshops, where they collaborate with peers to develop their own movement phrases

³² Nick Rabkin and E.C. Hedberg. *Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation*. The National Endowment for the Arts (Washington: National Endowment for the Arts, 2011).

inspired by one of the YPDS performances. In addition, they receive pre- and post-performance workshops for a second performance, providing valuable contrast and comparison.”³³

The de Young Museum also focuses its educational initiatives on children. The Museum Ambassadors program, only one of the museum’s several educational programs, is an initiative that brings high school students from the San Francisco Bay Area into the museum and trains them as paid docents on a particular museum exhibition. These students are then sent into the community to schools, day care centers and community organizations, where they lead presentations and art-making activities for elementary- aged children. Later, these children are brought into the museum for a tour, led by their docents, and a second art activity in the museum’s dedicated education gallery. In addition to hosting these activities, this education gallery is home to visiting artists, who propose and carry out creative projects in the space. These experiences are designed such that visitors to the museum can walk into the space at any time and engage in an art-making activity.

Both the de Young Museum and the NYCC undertake *institutional initiatives for arts education* in order to increase attendance and community engagement. Both offer art making and appreciation classes in conjunction with regular attendance, and education occurs both on and off-site. The NYCC offers educational activities at certain times by sending dancers to schools and bringing groups into performance spaces for shows and workshops, while the de Young incorporated education into its normal repertoire by creating a dedicated space in the museum where spontaneous, hands-on educational activities are available for regular visitors. This illuminates a key difference in approach between museums and dance centers. Although museums are open for extended daytime hours, dance organizations are often publicly accessible only during performance times. They offer single events, in contrast to museums’ multiple exhibitions. This comparison provides an opportunity for cross-disciplinary inspiration. Perhaps dance organizations could remain open longer and provide varied experiences to attract new audiences.

³³ *New York City Center* website, accessed February 2011.

But arts education isn't only for kids. At the Toledo Museum of Art, staff members bring slide presentations and art activities to workplaces in the community for lunchtime events. In one case, a presentation on Impressionism was followed by a watercolor painting activity. After workshops, free tickets are distributed and family programs are advertised.³⁴ Art education can also occur entirely outside of the institution. In the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's *Artists and Schools at Work* program, teachers and students at neighborhood schools work with local artists to create public artworks inspired by the museum's collection. The museum also established partnerships with community organizations, and continues to offer art classes at eight Houston medical centers.³⁵

WHY HAVEN'T MORE ORGANIZATIONS CHANGED?

Despite such promising examples, efforts to increase demand aren't taken up across the board. Various types of resistance can meet attempts at institutional reform. Professionals may fear that, by changing modes of presentation, their art form will be denigrated or cheapened.³⁶ Long-time staff members may not recognize the need for change or be familiar with other cultural traditions that have historically been excluded from the canon.³⁷ They may fear the perceived loss of control associated with offering participatory experiences and allowing visitor contribution in decision-making.³⁸ Finally, board members might be wary of risks and expenses associated with attempts to increase institutional relevance and attendance.

³⁴ Lila Wallace, *Engaging the Entire Community*, 21-22.

³⁵ Lila Wallace, *Engaging the Entire Community*, 14.

³⁶ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 163.

³⁷ Farrell, and Grams. *Entering Cultural Communities*, 54.

³⁸ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 120.

WHY COMPARE MUSEUMS AND DANCE ORGANIZATIONS?

The comparisons between museums and dance organizations detailed above yield two important points. First, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Nonprofit organizations featuring distinct art forms can employ different demand-increasing strategies, ones that correspond to their institutions. The case studies prove that attempting to increase demand doesn't necessitate a total loss of control or the sacrifice of stimulating art. Some organizations, such as Ailey, forego a change in presentation in favor of easing access to their institutions. Others, such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum, allow visitors to contribute to institutional decision-making while maintaining some control over the end product. Depending on their concerns, organizations choose the demand-increasing strategies with which they feel most comfortable. Secondly, despite differences in institutional structure and art form, organizations can learn from one another. By observing different institutions' initiatives, organizations can push their own boundaries.

Finally, the above case studies establish that increasing demand isn't necessarily resource-intensive. The Denver Art Museum bought the furniture for *Side Trip* on eBay, and re-sold it afterwards.³⁹ HSDC reports that running their National Choreography competition is fairly inexpensive and mutually beneficial. It gives HSDC three new pieces each year while giving emerging choreographers the notoriety of affiliation with a renowned company. Such projects also often pay off. TMP's projects to increase demand successfully coaxed many Boiseans to support the company's in-theater performances. Demand for tickets for one series was so great that \$50 tickets were sold online for hundreds of dollars.⁴⁰ These initiatives at the Museum of

³⁹ Nina Simon. "Take A Side Trip to the Denver Art Museum." *Museum 2.0*. March 27, 2009.

⁴⁰ Claudia La Rocco. "Dancers Adopt a City and Vice Versa." *The New York Times*, August 13, 2010,

Fine Arts, Houston resulted in a 14% average annual gain in program and membership revenues, and, between 1999 and 2004, a 16% annual increase in contributions.⁴¹ These figures are encouraging, but building participation is a long-term process. A single participatory exhibition or one series of educational programming probably won't result in increased attendance. Instead, institutions must show ongoing commitment to such projects.⁴²

WHOSE JOB IS IT TO INCREASE DEMAND FOR THE NONPROFIT ARTS?

In this paper, we've tried to provide a more complete picture of the complex relationship between the "supply" of U.S. arts organizations versus the "demand" for nonprofit arts events. The need to increase demand for the nonprofit arts isn't primarily a matter of increased subsidy by the NEA or other funding bodies.⁴³ It's not an issue of increased regulation or sector downsizing by some Ministry of Culture equivalent because these entities don't have ultimate power over the behavior of arts nonprofits.⁴⁴ Many actors share responsibility for ensuring the future of arts institutions in the U.S., but we believe that the much of this responsibility lies in the actions of the institutions themselves. To this end, we've detailed some success stories and proposed methods arts organizations can use to increase attendance at their institutions.⁴⁵

We hope that individual institutions can derive inspiration from these and other examples and methods, and implement changes to become more relevant to their audiences and increase

⁴¹ Farrell and Grams. *Entering Cultural Communities*, 73.

⁴² Farrell and Grams. *Entering Cultural Communities*, 254.

⁴³ Tim Roberts. Blog Post on LinkedIn Group *ThinkAboutPricing*. February 8, 2011.

⁴⁴ Christine DeVita,. "Arts for All: Connecting to New Audiences." (paper presented at the Wallace Foundation Arts Grantee Conference April 2-4, 2008).

⁴⁵ These are broad categories, the breadths of which are not covered by the few case studies above.

demand and attendance.⁴⁶ This entails getting to know the characteristics and opinions of target populations and those who already attend. It requires institutions to identify their reason for being and define why they're important to their audience. These are big questions and answering them will entail different things for distinct organizations. Some will find justification for change in their mission statements. Others will adjust their missions to address the changing demand for the arts and stay relevant. Still others will find that their structure doesn't support mission accomplishment, and will reinvent themselves entirely.⁴⁷ The innovations that result from this self-critique will also vary according to organization and art form. We urge institutions that succeed in making changes and increasing attendance to share the good news. Disseminating success stories helps encourage other institutions. However, not all efforts will be successful. Experimentation is inherent to the project of increasing demand and attendance.⁴⁸

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO NONPROFITS THAT WON'T CHANGE?

What is most important is organizational willingness and commitment on all levels to critique themselves and acknowledge the importance of relevance in today's world.⁴⁹ Perhaps institutions unable to identify their reason for being, or unwilling to increase their relevance and attendance, should consider declaring: "mission accomplished." As Diane Ragsdale noted, "Arts really exist only in relation to audiences and their experiences...so if an organization is seeing declining audiences, then the questions are, would you sooner close your doors than change what

⁴⁶ We don't mean to suggest that organizations are on their own in increasing demand. Partnerships and coalitions between organizations have also proved to be powerful ways to increase attendance through coordination of efforts.

⁴⁷ Diane Ragsdale. "Surviving the Culture Change." (paper presented at annual Arts Alliance Illinois conference June 21, 2010), 12.

⁴⁸ Farrell and Grams. *Entering Cultural Communities*, 246.

⁴⁹ Farrell and Grams. *Entering Cultural Communities*, 90.

you do?”⁵⁰ Perhaps organizations indisposed to change should close their doors or merge with others to promote a healthier arts ecology in this changing society.⁵¹ Again, Diane Ragsdale provides an appropriate example, this time from the private sector: “If a commercial firm experiences losses year after year—unless it can successfully develop a new market for its product, or change its product to better serve existing markets, or restructure its business to reduce expenses...it will most likely shut down”.⁵² Just as the responsibility for increasing audiences falls to the individual institution, so should accountability for decreasing superfluous supply.

Such a suggestion doesn’t entail the loss of organizations’ creative capital. The Dance Theater of Harlem completely shut down in 2004, \$2.3 million in debt. While closed, dancers and community members worked to transform it. Before reopening, DTH launched an online donation bank and created an interactive website, featuring *Harlem Dance Works 2.0*, a lecture, rehearsal and performance webcast. The website also includes links to Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, WordPress and Google Buzz.⁵³ Dance education outreach became a priority for the company. In partnership with Columbia University, DTH launched a 10 week-classroom residency program that adheres to NYC Department of Education’s *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts*. The company remains committed to classical ballet, but closing allowed it to plot a thorough, far-sighted vision for itself.⁵⁴ As this case exemplifies, closing down can be considered another method of change, allowing nonprofits the freedom to re-conceptualize

⁵⁰ Ragsdale, Diane. “Surviving the Culture Change,” 4.

⁵¹ Devon Smith. “#SupplyDemand: It’s All a Matter of Perspective. *24 Usable Hours: Where Numbers Meet Art*. February 1, 2011.

⁵² Diane Ragsdale. “Supply and Demand Redux.”

⁵³ *Dance Theater of Harlem* website, accessed January-February 2011.

⁵⁴ Gia Kourlas, “Harlem Troupe Prepares for Act II.” *The New York Times*, October 29, 2010.

themselves. It gives organizations breathing room to consider what types of arts experiences are popular today and let them structure rebirth.⁵⁵

WHAT'S THE CATCH WITH INCREASING DEMAND?

In closing, we return to the original problem: the disjunction between the supply of U.S. arts nonprofits and the demand for their offerings. We pointed out the problems associated with decreasing the supply of arts organizations and proposed that raising demand for nonprofit arts events is a more feasible course of action. However, there are also challenges associated with attempting to increase attendance in our changed cultural climate. Today's consumer is a cultural omnivore, interested in engaging without value judgment in a broad range of arts activities that spans private consumption, electronic media and the entertainment industry.”⁵⁶

The proliferation of arts offerings outside of the nonprofit structure means that such institutions must compete for their potential audiences' limited leisure time. Increasing the demand for nonprofit arts experiences is a challenge, even using the methods presented above. However, we believe that concerted, thoughtful efforts on the parts of nonprofit arts organizations, like those presented in this paper, can meaningfully impact institutional health and staying power.

⁵⁵ Alan Brown. “Burning the House Down.” Sounding Board: Perspectives on Nonprofit Strategies from WolfBrown: Navigating Troubled Waters 4 (2008), 5.

⁵⁶ Steven Tepper, "Conclusion: The Next Great Transformation: Leveraging Policy and Research to Advance Cultural Vitality," in *Engaging Art*, ed. Steven Tepper and Bill Ivey (New York: Routledge, 2008), 366-367.

Open for Participation:

U.S. Arts Communities in Neighborhoods and Networks

Ellery Roberts Biddle and James C. Murdoch

PARTICIPATION NATION

The 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) showed that attendance at ‘traditional’ arts events such as the opera, the ballet, or an art museum had fallen to a historic low of 34.6 percent, while at the same time, participation in the arts either by attending live art events, engaging in art creation, or doing either of these things in digital space, was at 74 percent (Novak-Leonard and Brown: 16). These numbers beg the question: is it time to reevaluate what counts when it comes to public arts participation in the U.S.?

As traditional institutions have witnessed declining attendance rates, cultural policymakers and researchers have begun to shift their focus to other more participatory arts experiences, but there remains much to explore in this arena. Although adults in the U.S. have always engaged in many kinds of informal art participation, the years since the SPPA’s inauguration in 1982 have seen the flourishing of arts activities at the neighborhood level, along with the rapid evolution of arts participation within digital space. Both of these kinds of art experiences are often organized around *communities of participants*. Whether they are sharing music on Freemusicarchive.org, or working together to put on a community theater production, the often more flexible, less institutionalized nature of these activities allow people to engage as active participants. They can be creators, collaborators, critics, consumer/attendees,⁵⁷ or something in between. This paper aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the social and relational dynamics of these kinds of art experiences, and their shared value among participants.

We will use the term “benchmark” in this paper to describe arts experiences in which there is a clear distinction between the (professional) creator and (non-professional) attendee, typically

⁵⁷ We use this binary to reference the distinction between actions in real and digital space: the term “attend” is not commonly used to refer to online arts experiences. One may passively watch or listen to a piece of art online—“consume” seems like an appropriate umbrella term in this context.

characterized by a fixed dynamic of active creation by the artist and passive observation by the attendee, and taking place in an established non-profit arts institution. Examples of benchmark arts experiences might include seeing *La Bohème* at the Metropolitan Opera, listening to Wynton Marsalis play at Lincoln Center, or walking the galleries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Although benchmark arts experiences have generally been characterized by a clear distinction between the active creator and the passive observer, many contemporary participatory experiences are marked by a blurring of the line between creator and observer. Acts of creation are now often collaborative, and participants may be invited to critique, contribute to, or actively become a part of the work. We define *communities of participation* as groups of people who unite because of their common interest in a particular art form or activity, and who often work together to create an arts experience or product. For example, members of the Vimeo community have the ability not only to observe a finished video but also to remix and post an alternate interpretation of the work. At an open mic night, members of the audience are welcome to take the stage and share their own work. Barriers to participation are low, modes of participation are often flexible, and relational dynamics between participants represent an important component of the overall experience. We draw on Yochai Benkler and Helen Nissbaum's 2006 analysis of commons-based peer production in open source software and online arts communities in order to advance our understanding of these relational dynamics in contemporary arts participation.

...peer production enterprises thrive on, and give opportunity for, relatively large scale and effective scope for volunteerism, or behavior motivated by, and oriented towards, positive social relations. People contribute for a variety of reasons, ranging from the pure pleasure of creation, to a particular sense of purpose, through to the companionship and social relations that grow around a common enterprise. (Benkler and Nissbaum: 402-3)

Substituting the term “arts experience” in the place of “enterprise,” we propose that the motivations and positive social interactions that Benkler and Nissbaum describe hold steady in both online and local communities of arts participation.

“THERE IS NOTHING TOO HIGH OR TOO LOW”⁵⁸: THE U.S. ART WORLD AND THE ROOTS OF THE SPPA

Although the divide between artist and audience characteristic of most benchmark arts events may seem deeply rooted in the historical past, these dynamics were not so fixed until the late nineteenth century. Before this period, the public was accustomed to viewing performance in a mode of response and engagement that amounted to *active* participation. Citing a review of an early nineteenth-century orchestra concert in *The New York Mirror*, cultural historian Lawrence Levine writes that audience members “...stamped, hissed, roared, whistled, and groaned in cadence until the musicians played...*airs* more suited to their tastes (1990: 26).” Levine characterizes audience members during this period as “...participants who [could] enter into the action on the field...[and articulate] their opinions and feelings vocally and unmistakably (26).” He describes how social elites soon sought to ‘uplift’ culture from this socially diverse milieu through ownership (implicitly, and in some cases, literally) of ‘high’ art institutions. This brought a re-orientation of social norms of participation which became less participatory and more passive, instituted more clear distinctions between the ‘high’ and ‘low’ arts, and the social classes to which they corresponded (228). Although much has changed since this period, the foundation was laid here for the distinction between styles, tastes, and audiences for “high culture” and popular culture that continues to resonate in participation trends today. New media scholar Henry Jenkins has argued that the seemingly “traditional” dynamic of the

⁵⁸ Harper’s Monthly Magazine, September 1912

passive audience for arts experiences was, in fact, an aberration in the history of cultural participation. More common, he suggests, is the story of the active participant (Ivey and Tepper, 2006).

John Kreidler (2000) has documented the transition during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when cultural organizations in the U.S. were run as for-profit proprietary businesses to the mid-twentieth-century creation of the non-profit art organization for the fine arts, a model that was advanced and supported by the Ford Foundation. The distinction between the for-profit commercial arts and the not-for-profit fine arts has defined the structure of the U.S. art world since the early 1960s, and it was in this context that the National Endowment for the Arts was born. The NEA's primary focus on the health and sustainability of non-profit arts institutions was rooted, at least in part, in the particular historical moment in which it came into being.

Cultural historian Donna Binkiewicz describes Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society' campaign as an important driving force in the founding of the NEA. The new agency's aim was to promote "excellence and access," or in other words, to promote the production of "excellent" art and to support access to the arts for the public (2004:78). But political support for the founding of the NEA also came from lawmakers who hoped to use the arts to illustrate the virtues of expressive freedom in American democracy in Cold War-era Europe (2004:65). Arts genres such as abstract expressionist painting and jazz music received particularly robust support because they were seen as the best representations of 'free expression.' These, among other traditional benchmark arts disciplines and genres, remained central to the work of the NEA in the late 1970s, when early proposals for the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) began (Binkiewicz, 2004:171).

At its inception, NEA leaders hoped that the SPPA could serve two goals: to measure attendance to a selected group of seven ‘traditional’ art forms⁵⁹ (which soon became known as the ‘benchmark’ categories of the survey),⁶⁰ and to measure overall public participation in the arts (Tepper and Gao, 2007:26). Participation, in this context, was equivalent to attendance. During the planning phases of the survey, NEA researcher Richard Orend wrote that these two goals were incompatible, and that one would ultimately supersede the other. Steven Tepper and Yang Gao cite Orend in arguing that, although the SPPA has served as a valuable source of longitudinal data on public participation in these particular art forms over time, it has not fully succeeded in capturing data on arts participation, broadly defined, in the lives of the diverse U.S. public (2007:26). The SPPA conspicuously omits many areas of art creation and experience, more collaborative or participatory experiences among them, even as the Survey has provided an important service in measuring attendance rates for the benchmark nonprofit arts since its inception in 1982.

SHARE IT, MIX IT, AND KNOW YOUR MEME: DIGITAL COMMUNITIES AND THE ARTS

Central to our discussion of arts participation is the idea of sharing, or the free exchange of creative production and energy; the “gift culture”⁶¹ that often emerges in communities of arts participation is central to the relational dynamics of digital space. Through independent websites, but also on large web platform sites ranging from Flickr to Facebook to Wikipedia to Wordpress,

⁵⁹ The benchmark arts include ballet; musical and non-musical plays; museums; opera; classical and jazz music.

⁶⁰ We recognize that the term “benchmark” is used to describe both the experiences that fall under our definition (see p. 6) and the central categories of the SPPA; there is significant overlap in these definitions. We use the term as it is used in the field, rather than in the survey.

⁶¹ Benkler and Nissenbaum (2006) argue that the behavior of online community members who engage in the “persistent and pervasive practice of spending time and effort producing something of value and giving it freely to be used by others for no compensation can be explained as self-serving behavior in pursuit of...reputation, a more efficient and direct explanation...is the pleasure or satisfaction of giving—generosity, kindness, benevolence (408).”

communities of users share and exchange information, intellectual and creative work, insights, and opinions related to a subject or activity in which they have a common interest. Arts-focused online communities may be united around a particular kind of art creation that happens in the digital realm, or they may use online platforms to share and communicate about the art works that they create in real space. It is important to recognize that these communities, while sometimes tied to a particular geographic location, are often dispersed on a national or international scale.⁶²

New media scholar Joe Karaganis characterizes broadcast media forms that dominated mass communications in the twentieth century as embodying a “model of centralized production and ‘passive’ consumption that cast[s] individuals as consumers, rather than as participants in culture or as citizens. (2007:6)” He points out that, in digital space, these encounters no longer run one way: we have moved from a “one-to-many” to a “many-to-many” dynamic of meaning production and communication. The many-to-many dynamic does not completely dismantle, but does destabilize, the authority of the creator. Some agency is transferred to the participant, and with this the participant may choose to become active as a consumer, a critic, a true participant (a person who adds to or collaborates somehow with the creative work), or a remixer.⁶³

New media scholar Bjarki Valtýsson describes large social and cultural production sites such as a YouTube and MySpace as fundamentally changing “the nature of participation” in culture (2010:200). Like Karaganis, she observes practices of sharing and mixing, and the unique

⁶² It is important to recognize the transnational membership of many online communities of arts participation. If these communities are to be studied or evaluated by researchers, it would behoove them to frame their study in the context of a transnational rather than a U.S. experience. This does not necessarily fall outside of the purview of the NEA; much useful knowledge could be gained from a better understanding of how U.S. residents interact with transnational arts communities online.

⁶³ We define remix as the act of assembling a collage of multiple, pre-existing visual, audio, or video works to create a new, original work. This may also include original segments by the creator.

effects of immediacy in the digital realm, as drivers of a blurring of the categories of producer and consumer, or creator and participant. We argue that this blurring is not just a byproduct, but a fundamental ontological characteristic of digital space; myriad case studies on participation in online creative communities (by danah boyd, Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and others) help to illustrate this. Valtysson also briefly touches upon a problem that falls central to our purpose. She describes culture in the digital realm as capturing “the utter diversity of most cultural expressions,” and she suggests that this dynamic “...puts an end to the separation and classification of different cultural fields, categorizations and genres.” (2010:202)

The fluidity of creation and experience within the digital realm indicate that any model for measuring digital participation in the arts must be flexible enough to move with technology as it changes, and as users relate to and utilize technology in new ways.

ART ON THE BLOCK: EXPRESSION AND INTERACTION IN LOCAL ARTS COMMUNITIES

In locally-based communities of arts participation, participants again take on an active role of engagement that is conducive to collaboration and a similar re-distribution of creative and authoritative agency. In the physical world, participatory arts experiences facilitate a dynamic social interaction that often unites people of diverse backgrounds and life experiences (Stern and Seifert 2008). At a poetry slam at a café, interested individuals, regardless of professional status or experience, come together to create and perform original works in a community setting. Inexperienced or aspiring poets learn from more established poets in the community, and everyone can receive valuable input and critique from the audience that helps them further develop their work. This process of input, critique, and guidance not only helps participants improve their craft, but it can facilitate social bonds that extend beyond the arts experience.

Areas with locally-based communities of arts participation are often strong in social capital; this often improves participants' capacity to engage in collective action and to solve problems together (Stern and Seifert).

Moreover, many locally-based communities of participation produce art works that reflect certain values or beliefs that are common to the area in which they are live or work. Participants express themselves collectively and each individual is able to feel a sense of ownership over the work. One example of this kind of experience is the Groundswell Community Mural Project in New York City. This project partners professional artists with youth in the city to create public murals. Their website describes the experience of one project:

The team of primary school children who worked with the artists were excited to participate in creating a mural reflecting their school's motto – "Everyone is a Star". As a result of bringing to life a sense of adventure and excitement in brilliant color, the team felt honored to be a part of the project and proud to leave their collective mark on their playground
(http://www.groundswellmural.org/Public_Art_Projects/2010/2010_space_adventure.html).

The mural project allowed the children a rare opportunity to express themselves publicly and left them with a sense of pride about the finished work. In areas with vibrant communities of arts participants, citizens are likely to place value on their neighborhoods or towns, and to want to improve their communities as well (Tepper and Gao 2007; Grodach 2010). The collaborative and active experiences they promote represent an important element of arts participation that deserves the attention of policymakers.

FOR THE PUZZLED POLICYMAKER

If we are to propose a new mechanism for collecting data on arts participation in the U.S., we need to ask *why*, and *for whom*, is this information useful? We have argued that there is an intrinsic value in the experiences of people who come together through active engagement with the arts. There may be no explicit policy directive that emerges from this idea in and of itself, since the communities of participation that we've discussed typically form organically and conduct activities in a small-scale, often informal setting, where there is little need for policy intervention. But on a broader scale, there may be a more meaningful role for policymakers. If policymakers could know just how many “stitch ‘n’ bitch” circles, spoken-word poets’ societies, or Vimeo remixers were out there, or if they could visualize a map of these communities and how participants interact, some policy implications could begin to emerge.

We have illustrated the characteristic fluid quality of participation in this arena, where creative input, collaboration, and critique are often part of the arts experience, and where art is frequently released into a gift economy, where it is shared, circulated, and re-used by other community members. If policymakers are interested in learning about the nuances or particular relational dynamics of these communities, a set of fixed survey questions asked to a simple random sample of people may not provide them with much valuable insight. A more successful approach could come in the form of a platform that would allow individuals and groups to describe their arts experiences in a way that is valuable and meaningful to them.

WORK IT WIKILY: BUILDING WIKIARTS

At present, the Wikipedia crowd-sourcing model provides a strong example of a space where individuals have participated in the collaborative construction of an information resource for the public. Benkler and Nissenbaum describe the “happy accident” of Wikipedia as follows:

[the success of the platform lies in the] appeal to the common enterprise in which the participants are engaged, coupled with a thoroughly transparent platform that faithfully records and renders all individual interventions in the common project and facilitates discourse among participants about how their contributions do, or do not, contribute to this common enterprise (398).

In addition to its demonstrated success, the platform also emulates the interactive and cooperative nature of the communities of participation such as the ones that we have discussed. As such, we propose that the NEA partner with the Wikimedia Foundation to build an open source platform that will allow arts creators, attendees, and anyone involved in these communities to document their engagement with the arts. This site could serve as a valuable supplement to the SPPA in providing researchers with a means of gathering preliminary information about these communities for future research. In the remaining sections of this paper, we refer to this platform as “WikiArts.”

MAP YOUR ARTS, MAP YOUR COMMUNITY

WikiArts could be presented to arts participants as a space that is for them, but one that is also valuable for policymakers. It should be made clear to users that, by participating in the site, they will be putting their activities and/or groups “on the map,” drawing attention to the value of their arts activity, and giving policymakers the opportunity to recognize the importance of that activity within the broader ecology of arts participation in the U.S. Site participants would be encouraged to build top-level pages that correspond either to a particular location or arts activity. This will give site users (and researchers) a simple choice when they are searching for information: they can search by location, or by activity. Users will be free to develop sub-level pages that discuss activities, groups, ideas, or events significant to particular activities. For example, a page on Chicago community theater might contain an “opportunities” section listing

locations of various theatre establishments in Chicago; a “buzz” section, listing relevant tweets, Facebook “likes,” and media mentions;⁶⁴ and a section describing the unique features of Chicago community theatre relative to other communities.

Users would be encouraged to identify their location when creating or editing pages so that location data can be coded using GIS technology, in order to form an arts map viewable at local, regional, and national levels. Users would also be invited to tag specific keywords that are relevant to their contributions, and they will thus establish ties with other pages that share some of the same tags.⁶⁵ As more users contribute to the site, the map and the information on arts activities will become richer and more informative for users, researchers, policymakers, and the public at large.

Although WikiArts will not collect statistical data on average participation rates or trends as the SPPA does, the site will allow the NEA or any research entity to understand the scale and importance of a more diverse range of arts activities and participants. Moreover, the mapping function would allow this information to be analyzed both by activity and by location, at local, state, and national levels. As a supplement to the NEA’s current research, then, this data will provide useful insight into what new questions might be asked on future surveys to get more quantitative data on arts participation. The mapping, tagging, and overall interconnectivity of the site will help identify trends in specific areas that might help to inform funding policies as well as contextualize public policies targeting specific areas. The open source format will incorporate

⁶⁴ These would appear via pingback. Each time a person linked to the URL of the WikiArts page, or to one of the sites identified with the page, it would appear in the buzz section.

⁶⁵ Here is an example of how this would work: dance collectives that do site-specific performance work may include a tag for the term ‘site-specific’; if a user were to search ‘site-specific,’ the search results would include the pages of each of the dance collective that used the ‘site-specific’ tag. This would give users a way to find which groups do site-specific work, and it would allow these groups to learn about and connect with each other.

voices from many diverse communities into the data, increasing the likelihood of creating good policy contextualized in communities of practitioners .⁶⁶

OPEN FOR PARTICIPATION

WikiArts has the potential to become a site of considerable value for arts community members, policymakers, and the public at large. But the success of the site is at the will of its users; WikiArts, like Wikipedia, will be based on a crowd-sourcing model. This means that its value will only increase as more people use it and add information to its structure. Its launch will require aggressive outreach efforts on the part of local, state, and national arts agencies, organizations, and cultural policymakers; and this effort will need to continue in order for the site to gain momentum. There may be additional specific strategies that the NEA can employ to incentivize participation in the site. The demonstrated success of the Wikipedia brand will be critical to this process, since unlike other, smaller sites that provide spaces for arts “networks,” the Wikipedia model is well known among Internet users and thus has a much greater potential to build a large and diverse group of contributors.

In a report released by the James Irvine Foundation in 2009, researchers noted the importance of networks within the arts and arts policymaking worlds and described how arts non-profits have reaped great benefits from “working wikily” (Gowdy et al, 2009:12). WikiArts could potentially become a platform for the kinds of information networks that the authors discuss, helping to facilitate the sharing and development of institutional resources and knowledge within cultural policy and arts communities across the country. The site will give arts

⁶⁶ In his monograph, “Towards Cultural Citizenship: Tools for Cultural Policy and Development,” Colin Mercer presents a detailed outline of how GIS mapping of the cultural sector can serve as a useful instrument to policymakers (Mercer, 165). It was his proposal that originally inspired our decision to include a mapping function within this tool.

communities in diverse regions or with diverse interests an opportunity to connect with one another. It may help to increase communication and collaboration between arts communities that exist primarily online, and those that exist in real space. It may also be particularly useful for small arts groups that have little or no web presence, as it will provide them with a user-friendly, arts-specific platform through which they can share information about their organization without needing to establish domain space or design their own site.

In sum, the goal of WikiArts is to create an innovative, flexible, and ever-evolving source of information about arts communities in the US, and within this, to promote and enrich connectivity and sharing between these communities. If the site can become a space where all those who have a stake in arts communities in the U.S. go to describe their experiences and learn about those of others, it will prevail not only as an increasingly rich and robust source of information, but also as a resource that enriches the networks and communities of arts participants themselves.

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Producing Theaters, Producing Paradoxes:

Negotiating Organizational Effectiveness and Artistic Mission within
Chicago Theaters

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INTRODUCTION: THEATER PRODUCING PARADOXES

“This isn’t the place to come to make a whole bunch of money, or even a living.”⁶⁷

--Eric Burgher, Profiles Theatre Ensemble Member

Nobody gets into theater management for the money. It’s the artistic successes, the joy of crafting and performing the impossible, and the expressive community connections that motivate those seeking theater careers. Yet theaters in the United States—whether for-profit or nonprofit organizations—are still businesses. The art may come first, but, in order to survive, theaters must balance their budgets and have sound organizational management.

Commercial businesses are primarily concerned with profits, whereas non-profit arts organizations are driven by mission statements. Consider the mission of Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago’s second largest theater founded in 1974, which “remains rooted in the original vision of its founders: an artist-driven theatre, whose vitality is defined by its sharp appetite for groundbreaking, innovative work.”⁶⁸ For many producing theaters, delivering on the promise of a creative vision is the key measure of success, rather than a well-organized balance sheet.

Running a producing theater like a business—specifically in terms of leadership, organizational management, and governance—can complicate a company’s commitment to its artistic mission. There are often “paradoxes of creativity”⁶⁹ in this relationship. What defines “success” in the for-profit world—growth—does not necessarily have anything to do with the production of successful theater. A small theater might always wish to remain a small theater,

⁶⁷ Eric Burgher, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, December 3, 2010, Chicago, IL.

⁶⁸ “The Ensemble | Steppenwolf Theatre Company,” accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.steppenwolf.org/ensemble/>.

⁶⁹ DeFillippi, Grabher and Jones, “Introduction to Paradoxes of Creativity: Managerial and Organizational Challenges in the Cultural Economy,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 28.5 (2007), 513.

and can creatively thrive just as well as one of the bigger companies. Nor can success necessarily be judged in terms of financial gain, as many theaters produce acclaimed works while operating at a loss at least some of the time.

How can we account for “success” when it isn’t measured in a ledger? To investigate this question, we focus on four theater companies—each at a different stage in its life cycle—in Chicago, the second largest theater market in the United States.

The aforementioned Steppenwolf Theatre Company was founded in 1974 by three friends when they were fresh out of high school. They could not have anticipated that almost four decades later, Steppenwolf would be the internationally recognized organization it is today. Reporting over \$12 million in revenues in 2008,⁷⁰ Steppenwolf ranks as the second largest theater in Chicago (behind the Goodman Theater), and in the top 12 nonprofits nationwide.⁷¹ Not only has Steppenwolf continued to produce compelling theater as it has grown, but it has also contributed significantly to the ecology of Chicago theater, by helping to establish a strong and vital community of producing theater companies in many shapes and sizes. As a business organization, Steppenwolf reflects a very traditional structure borrowed from the for-profit sector, with a board of trustees, Executive Director, Artistic Director, and staff.

By contrast, The Hypocrites is an itinerant theater founded in 1994 which has produced acclaimed shows in Steppenwolf’s Garage space and other spaces in Chicago, as well as in its own resident space. The Hypocrites struggles with operations, but boasts artistic success, having

⁷⁰ “Steppenwolf Theatre Co, *watchdog.net*,” accessed February 25, 2011, <http://watchdog.net/ein/510149370/steppenwolf-theater-co>.

⁷¹ Tony Adler, “Steppenwolf’s Dramatic Arc”, *Bloomberg Business Week*, December 17, 2007, accessed February 25, 2011,

http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/dec2007/id20071217_110078.htm

received critical accolades and dozens of Jeff⁷² awards and nominations. We will also briefly discuss Profiles Theatre, a nonequity storefront theater founded in 1988, and emerging company Pavement Group, which was founded in 2006 by interns from the Steppenwolf Theatre Apprentice Program.

Few companies will ever grow to an operating budget on the scale of Steppenwolf, but many producing theaters have no aspirations to do so. Success for most producing theater companies comes in the form of accolades, media recognition, artistic innovations and a vibrant position in the larger theater ecology of the community. Striving to meet these goals brings challenges including no-to-low wages, inadequate boards who fail to oversee budgets, and poor intra-organizational communication. Navigating through these successes and challenges will require unique approaches in every organization. There is no single “just right” for the management of theaters. Yet successful companies do share certain commonalities. Investigating producing theaters in the Chicago revealed three key elements present in all successful organizations, regardless of institutional age, scale, or budget: a clear mission statement, strong leadership, and access to diffuse skill sets. These keys take different shapes at different theaters, but all are present in surviving companies, and provide the compass that helps navigate the paradoxes between creative ideals and financial realities.

Clearly defined leadership roles also increase a theater’s ability to navigate producing paradoxes, though the exact structure can vary from theater to theater depending on specific needs. Steppenwolf is dually led by an Artistic Director and an Executive Director, whereas The Hypocrites is solely led by a strong Artistic Director. Most theaters also have a board of directors

⁷² The Jeff award is the annual award given by the *Joseph Jefferson Awards* Committee to honor excellence in professional theatre produced in the immediate Chicago area. See: <http://www.jeffawards.org/home/index.cfm>

which oversees budget decisions, and artistic associates who work as non-paid company members and assist with productions. Many theater professionals in the small and medium-sized companies are also cross-trained artists,⁷³ who work day jobs outside of the theater in order to support their roles therein. Cross-trained artists are a necessary downside to the lack of funding for theater operations. Regardless of their artistic success, cross-trained artists are often strained by external commitments, and this is another paradox of creativity.

Many of the paradoxes facing theaters also present themselves to other kinds of mission-driven organizations. Arts in practice in the contemporary economic moment, a post-recession time when traditional funding sources have radically shifted, is forcing non-profit businesses of all kinds to reassess their organizational structure and examine closely what “success” means to them.⁷⁴ In theater, as in any field, there is no single one-size-fits-all model that will lead to creative and financial success. New and established theaters alike will need to evaluate what is right for their particular organization, but our “three key” proposal can offer signposts to guide the way.

⁷³ This is a term identified by Chad Eric Bergman in his 2010 Theater Topics article, “‘We Do Storefront Theatre’: Using Chicago’s Storefront Theatre Model as the Foundation for a Theater Curriculum.” Bergman discusses theater practice and pedagogy in conversation with the 2008 economic recession and provides some clues into the organizational structure of local theater. He champions the storefront theater model—the model that permeates a myriad communities with small scale (often under 99 seats) theaters—as a teachable remedy to budget cuts in theater programs at the university level. In particular, Bergman identifies organizational qualities of storefront theater, including “the cross-trained artist.” (56)

⁷⁴ John Kreidler, “Leverage Lost: The Nonprofit Arts in the Post-Ford Era,” *Motion Magazine*, February 16, 1996.

THE FIRST KEY: MISSION STATEMENT

What a mission says, and what a mission does

“I want our mission to be ‘we make theater’ because that’s all we do.”⁷⁵

--Sean Graney, Founder and Artistic Director, The Hypocrites

At the 2010 Theater Communications Group National Conference, David Hawkanson, Executive Director of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, delivered a speech about the institutional challenges of managing a theater post-recession. He said:

(Steppenwolf has) never forgotten or dropped its original DNA and that DNA is: always putting yourself at risk, being able to turn on a dime, decision-making being open within the institution, respecting the artists, and understanding that the core of this theater is the voice of the artist. As we are dealing with extremely difficult institutional challenges in our post-recession period of time, as we’re trying to figure out how to reconstruct our institutions...everybody is a little more shakier about exactly what...the models for the future are going to be. We’re all searching for the new normal. I would argue that that’s a great opportunity for us as artistic leaders whatever our institutions are, whatever the model is, whatever the size is, to really use that opportunity with our funders, with or community and our trustees to think about where the artist fits in it, and realize and recognize that many voices are better than one voice.⁷⁶

The mission of Steppenwolf Theater Company is “to advance the vitality and diversity of American theater by nurturing artists, encouraging repeatable creative relationships and contributing new works to the national canon. The company...is dedicated to perpetuating an ethic of mutual respect and the development of artists through on-going group work.”⁷⁷ As Steppenwolf has grown, it has created opportunities for many of Chicago’s smaller theater companies to produce on its Garage stage—an intimate performance space dedicated to

⁷⁵ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

⁷⁶ From David Hawkanson, speaking at the 2010 Theater Communications Group National Conference. Citation: “2010 TCG National Conference – Morning Manifesto Group 4 – David Hawkanson,” accessed March 12, 2011, <http://vimeo.com/15164276>

⁷⁷ “History of the Company | Steppenwolf Theatre Company,” accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.steppenwolf.org/ensemble/history/>.

showcasing new work and works by visiting companies in residence. Their outreach efforts as a venue for smaller companies has helped build Chicago's vital theater ecology, and its international awards are a testament to Steppenwolf's success at contributing to the cannon. Thus, it is clear that Steppenwolf's mission statement is indeed its driving principle from which all decisions are made.

The Hypocrites is one smaller company that has produced at Steppenwolf. They define their work as a "theater of honesty." Their mission begins with "We make theater our mission"⁷⁸, a statement which founder Sean Graney based on the missions of other theaters he admired. But as The Hypocrites grew, Graney began to see its mission as too narrow and confining. But his frustration grew when The Hypocrites' (now ex) Executive Director hired a consultant to meet with the Board of Director and redefine the mission: "Her main goal was to rewrite the mission because she didn't [like it]," Graney said. "So [the consultant's] main goal was to meet with everyone on the Board. It was a waste of time and money for me."⁷⁹ Graney felt that the mission statement functioned more as a marketing tool, an advertisement which spoke more to potential funders and audience, rather than a guiding intra-organizational principle. "The very first mission I made was the true expression of what I wanted to do at the time. Any mission since then has been modified and felt very forced. I want our mission to be 'we make theater' because that's all we do."⁸⁰

Graney's concerns recognize several paradoxes. First, mission statements—however necessary and effective for producing theater—may limit what a theater can do or may be used

⁷⁸ "Our Mission | We Make Theater," accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.the-hypocrites.com/mission>.

⁷⁹ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

⁸⁰ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

for purposes beyond artistic production. For Hawkanson, referring to Steppenwolf's mission was an effective way to talk about how the theater plans to produce and grow during the economic times. For Graney, using The Hypocrites' mission beyond its artistic purposes (such as for marketing) ruins the theater's "true" expressive goals. Thus for Hypocrites, the mission statement is only effective insofar as it supports the art, whereas for Steppenwolf the mission is central to all organizational actions.

Perhaps a theater's mission statement is only effective if the organization and individuals within that organization are fully engaged with and committed to it. The Hypocrites has rapidly grown in staff size, perhaps at the expense of full mission engagement, as newer staff members have no personal connection to the original mission and don't consider it a driving principle. By contrast, Profiles Theatre, a 50-seat storefront theater founded in 1988 and located in Chicago's Uptown, is driven by a mission "to bring new works to Chicago that illuminate the determination and resiliency of the human spirit"⁸¹, and has maintained a staff of only seven individuals. Ensemble member Eric Burgher said that Profiles eschews organizational growth and keeps its staff small to better support its mission. "It's a really small ensemble," Burgher said "And people are very rarely invited in. And not because it's exclusive or anything but because we, our ensemble, is very important to us. There are a lot of companies that have really large ensembles, people that they want to work with, but they aren't involved in everything, occasionally they do shows. But here, our ensemble is that we all do everything together. And we're all really behind the mission of the company."⁸²

⁸¹ "Ensemble," Profiles Theatre, accessed March 12, 2011, <http://www.profilestheatre.org/ensemble.html>

⁸² Eric Burgher, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, December 3, 2010, Chicago, IL.

Thus, all three of these leaders, Burgher, Graney and Hawkanson, link the strength of a producing theater's mission to the structure and organization that supports it. But the usefulness of the mission is only effective insofar as the staff understands and commits to it. This would seem to coincide with the organizational management theory produced by the for-profit sector for application to the nonprofit sector. Whereas the former measures effectiveness in terms of financial gains, the latter relies on more qualitative measures. The complication derives from the fact that missions are varied, and contain language that is highly subjective and will mean different things to different people even within one institution. Herman and Renz, for example, found that with nonprofit effectiveness, success cannot necessarily be measured in quantitative outcomes and that participants in their study "...frequently described...what we regard as organizational inputs and processes, not what we regard as outputs or outcomes...[T]hese criteria were often qualified by...very judgmental terms—for example effective board members, clear missions and thorough or well-done needs assessments."⁸³ A clear mission statement may drive the decisions of many departments within an organization (productions, staff, marketing, etc.); but although the mission is vital, it is not the sole key to success. If a mission is only as successful as the staff's commitment to it, then perhaps our second key—a strong leader or team of leaders—can serve to motivate the staff and engage them in committing to mission fulfillment.

⁸³ Robert D. Herman and David O. Renz, "Multiple Constituencies and the Social Construction of Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 26:185 (185-206), 190.

THE SECOND KEY: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE *CLEAR ROLES, STRONG LEADERSHIP*

*“The CEO must be willing to share responsibility, and the board must be willing to follow the CEO's lead--and ask questions.”*⁸⁴ --Taylor, et. al, Harvard Business Review

A traditional institutional leadership model is comprised of a Board of Trustees, an Executive Director or CEO, and an Artistic Director. This is the structure at Steppenwolf. But smaller companies do not necessarily have all of these elements, or the elements are not as distinct from one another (an executive that is also the artistic director, for example). If, as Hawkanson pointed out, more voices are better than fewer, then diverse leadership is a key to success. But multiple strong leaders working together can also cause inherent tensions. Comparing the organizational structures of Steppenwolf and The Hypocrites prompts several questions: how can executive and artistic directors have effective relationships? What is the role of the board in a producing theater? How are artists integrated into a theater's operations?

Structurally, Steppenwolf is governed by a large Board of Trustees, an Artistic Director (Martha Lavey, a long-time ensemble member who has been in place since 1997), and Hawkanson the Executive Director as of 2003, along with a full-time staff of more than 80 and numerous affiliates and temporary workers.⁸⁵ Sean Graney founded and leads The Hypocrites as Artistic Director and also directs most of The Hypocrites' productions, along with two other staff members: Megan Wildebour, Managing Director and the sole full-time staff member, and

⁸⁴ Barbara E. Taylor, Richard P. Chait, and Thomas P. Holland, "The New Work of the Nonprofit Board," *Harvard Business Review*, September - October 1996, 37

⁸⁵ "The People of Steppenwolf | Steppenwolf Theatre Company," accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.steppenwolf.org/contact/people/index.aspx>.

Shanstella Barnes, a shared Finance Manager who works for The Hypocrites and two other companies. There is also a seven member Board of Directors.⁸⁶

One clear difference between Steppenwolf and The Hypocrites is the role (or absence) of an Executive Director. Steppenwolf is dually led, whereas The Hypocrites is led only by its Artistic Director. This has not always been the case. From 2004 to 2008, Artistic Director Sean Graney did work alongside an Executive Director, a hire supported by a grant from the Chicago Community Trust. After years of an uncomfortable working relationship with Graney and with the Board, The Hypocrites' Executive Director was eventually replaced with the current Managing Director. Graney explains:

We hired an Executive Director. With that title came certain expectations of autonomy, of making decisions. She basically felt that she had veto power over me, which in my mind was ridiculous. That led to a lot of problems down the way. So when we hired [someone to replace her] we wanted to make it clear that if push came to shove that I would make those decisions, which is not helpful in the grand scheme of things. Ideally, you have two people working for a common goal and you can have a helpful debate with each other.⁸⁷

What Graney alludes to—the need for clearly articulated roles, communication and healthy relationship among leadership—are also important qualities for a Board of Directors. Organizational management scholarship emphasizes that communication between the Executive Director and the board is vital. Many institutions are marked by a two-silo structure in which a strong-willed director withholds information from the board in order to keep them out of decision-making so as to control outcomes to his or her preferences. Conversely, many boards assume a disengaged position, remaining complacent and avoiding getting involved in planning

⁸⁶ “Company | We Make Theater,” The Hypocrites, accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.the-hypocrites.com/company>.

⁸⁷ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

and governance. A more successful approach is to: “Make the CEO paint the big picture. The litmus test of the chief executive's leadership is not the ability to solve problems alone but the capacity to articulate key questions and guide a collaborative effort to formulate answers...The CEO must be willing to share responsibility, and the board must be willing to follow the CEO's lead--and ask questions.”⁸⁸ This theoretical picture of success was a practical failure for the board of The Hypocrites. Over the past two years, the board has failed to ask questions or to execute its role of providing budgetary oversight. In turn, The Hypocrites lost money and became a cash-poor—though still artistically celebrated—producing theater company. “Our goals are clear for what the board is,” Graney said. “Our goals are that we try to ensure the viability of the company. Financially, they approve a budget and then they are supposed, in theory, to be responsible for all the fundraising and make sure that we don’t run out of money if we don’t meet our box office goals...But that doesn’t really happen.”⁸⁹

The failure of The Hypocrites’ board to oversee the budget comes not from a lack of articulation of board roles and expectations, but rather from a failure of execution of those roles and a failure of commitment of board members. Although the board includes seven members (Mayor Richard M. Daley is Chairman of the Honorary Board), Graney admits that there is only one board member “who does a lot of work.” By contrast, the Steppenwolf’s board is made up of a diverse array of academics, artists, and professionals. Several bankers, lawyers, and CEOs are included, as well as university faculty, high-ranking publishing and media executives, recognizable Chicago philanthropic family names, and nationally-recognized celebrity actors and

⁸⁸ Barbara E. Taylor, Richard P. Chait, and Thomas P. Holland, "The New Work of the Nonprofit Board," *Harvard Business Review*, September - October 1996, 37

⁸⁹ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

actresses, most of whom attend regular meetings and get involved with the organization in some direct capacity on a frequent basis.

Organizational structures at these theaters also necessarily include artists in their operations. Like many Chicago theater companies, Steppenwolf, The Hypocrites, Profiles Theatre and Pavement Group are each ensemble companies and as such, rely on members to be involved as cast and crew in each production. Alongside its staff of 80, Steppenwolf has about 42 ensemble members who serve as actors, directors, writers and other creative. The Hypocrites has fifteen company members and three artistic associates who serve as technical crew for productions. Profiles Theatre has seven ensemble members, alongside two artistic associates and a technical staff member. Pavement Group has nine company members and five artistic associates who support Pavement Group as actors, playwrights, technical crew and producers. Organizational management scholarship has not substantively covered the role of associates and ensembles—often volunteer or low cost labor—in sustaining producing theaters. However, for many theaters, artists in operations are crucial to the process of successfully and sustainably producing play after play. “Being a company member is not about getting on stage,” Eric Burgher said, “It’s about being a part of an ensemble. Sometimes we’re in a show, sometimes we’re not, and then we do other stuff.”⁹⁰

Artists are certainly necessary for operations in a creative business, but their presence poses another paradox: motivating commitment from volunteer labor. Without a buy-in (wages or otherwise), individuals are less likely to be able to fully support the organization. Which is not to say that volunteers do not support the mission because they do not get paid, but rather that the

⁹⁰ Eric Burgher, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, December 3, 2010, Chicago, IL.

practical realities of having personal bills to pay can sometimes pull them away from the theater organization, and this poses numerous potential problems. Graney explains:

We added company members because there were two of us doing basically all the work. It got too big for us. We both had day jobs. We could bring in all these actors that we had been working with and make them company members. That worked well for a while and then people weren't getting the roles that they wanted. They weren't allowed to make any decisions. So they just got sick of it after awhile and rightfully so.⁹¹

Clearly delineated roles are key to producing successful theater. Strong personalities lead the organizations either as singular individuals or as a team working in conjunction with one another. However The Hypocrites' financial insolvency is also due in part to the lack of execution by its board. What matters is having people in the organization that can get a variety of tasks done, regardless of their job titles. So while it is important to have a gravitational center to an organization in the form of a leader or leaders, what is truly vital is our third key: access to skill sets.

THE THIRD KEY: SKILL SETS

Cross-trained artists as leaders, and effective community relationships

*"I did whatever I had to do to be able to work in non-equity theater."*⁹²
--Eric Burgher, Profiles Theatre Ensemble Member

Perhaps the most ineffable qualities for surviving producing theaters are the skill sets at an organization's disposal. A strong Executive Director may have all the skills needed to run an organization, but it is more likely that multiple people at all levels (staff, management, board)

⁹¹ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

⁹² Eric Burgher, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, December 3, 2010, Chicago, IL.

will collectively comprise the vital know-how. It is the full suite of experience and expertise everyone brings to the table that will translate into success.

David Hawkanson has been a theater manager for over 30 years, holding executive positions at theaters in Minnesota, Connecticut, and Arizona. He has also worked as a consultant and advisor to numerous arts organizations, including the Ford Foundation's Working Capital Fund, as well as serving on the boards of the Alliance for Arts Advocates, Theater Trustees of America, New York Stage and Film, and the American Arts Alliance, and others.⁹³ Additionally, he has served on staff at the National Endowment for the Arts, also serving as chairman of the NEA's theater program.⁹⁴ The hiring of such a qualified executive marked Steppenwolf's remarkable transition over 30 years from a fledgling labor of love by a close-knit group of actors with a commitment to their vision and little else, to the significant cultural institution it is today. Scaling up has resulted in financial difficulties, but under Hawkanson's leadership strategic cuts to staff, increased productions at the less-expensive Garage space, and an overhauled marketing strategy have moved the company in a positive direction.⁹⁵ Hawkanson has increased employee salaries and benefits despite budget shortfalls, and the resulting increase in staff morale coincides with a general upswing in revenues, which has also been spurred by critically-acclaimed productions and awards.⁹⁶ Thus for Steppenwolf, focusing on the art being produced and investing resources accordingly—including investments in staff that elevate company loyalty and

⁹³ "Alumni Profiles: David Hawkanson – Lawrence University," accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.lawrence.edu/alumni/profiles/hawkanson.shtml>.

⁹⁴ "Executive Director, David Hawkanson | Steppenwolf Theatre Company," accessed February 25, 2011, http://www.steppenwolf.org/contact/people/executive_director.aspx

⁹⁵ Tony Adler, "Steppenwolf's Dramatic Arc", *Bloomberg Business Week*. December 17, 2007, accessed February 25, 2011,

http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/dec2007/id20071217_110078.htm

⁹⁶ "David Hawkanson executive director," little biggy, accessed February 25, 2011, <http://littlebiggy.org/viewSubject/2899257>

productivity—have resulted in finer productions, which are creating a buzz that results in higher revenues from audiences. In this way, the original mission is indeed being upheld thanks to the business savvy that Hawkanson brings to the table. The job of selecting productions and creative partners is left to the experience of Artistic Director Lavey, and the diverse Board of Trustees offers key knowledge of finance, law, politics, local community relations, and the theater industry at large.

Sean Graney has an artistic background: he holds BFA in Theater and Writing from Emerson College and is a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts/ Theatre Communications Group Career Development Program for Directors. Even as he has been lauded in the Chicago press as a performing artist⁹⁷, Graney has continued to hold several outside jobs to support his artistry, working as an adjunct lecturer at the University of Chicago and directing at other Chicago theaters. For Graney, leadership includes a mix of skills. “I think (leaders) should be patient,” Graney said. “They should be able to lead people and provide vision, get people excited about that vision, be generally respectable, and they should be charismatic.”⁹⁸

David Perez leads Pavement Group as the Artistic Director, writes, and directs many of the productions. Perez’s background is also artistic: he graduated from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, WA and has worked and interned at a variety of theaters, including Steppenwolf, Teatro Vista, Collaboracion, American Theatre Company, and About Face Theatre.⁹⁹ Perez additionally works a 9-to-5 day job in the advertising industry; and Pavement Group’s company members and artistic associates are also employed full-time outside the theater.

⁹⁷ “Company | We Make Theatre,” The Hypocrites, accessed February 25, 2011, <http://www.the-hypocrites.com/company>.

⁹⁸ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

⁹⁹ “Company Members,” Pavement Group, accessed February 25, 2011, http://www.pavementgroup.org/?page_id=16.

That Perez and Graney work outside of their roles as artistic directors points to another paradox of producing theaters: the leadership skills that “cross-trained” artists bring to their theaters are often honed in the outside jobs that compete for the artists’ time and energy. Much like the volunteer artists who support productions, cross-trained artists are often pulled in multiple and competing directions.

Eric Burgher emphasized how the need to support himself with an outside job—teaching acting at Columbia College—fits well with his career, but involves balance: “[It] will continue to be ... a process of how I do something during the day that doesn’t make me want to kill myself that will supplement doing this,” said Burgher. “I did whatever I had to do to be able to work in non-equity theater.”¹⁰⁰ By contrast, after more than a decade of working in multiple jobs to support his role as Artistic Director, Sean Graney says that any paying job he is offered now trumps his artistic leadership at The Hypocrites:

If somebody is paying me it will automatically cancel out any obligations I have to The Hypocrites. Last year we had a season planned, and I got this job really late and I was like ‘I am not going to be able to do this show, I have to move it.’ That was the arrangement that I made with the company. I will continue to work with the company but only so far that it not get in the way of me to make money, pay my rent, eat food, live comfortably because I am 38 years old. And I am doing well as far as theater standards go, but not as far as general 38 year olds go.

When a director is pulled in so many directions, much of the work might fall to other individuals within the organization. A skilled pool of volunteers can help offset the shortcomings, as may a functioning board with diffuse expertise, as it did with Steppenwolf. However, smaller organizations already strapped for resources and time can also augment their pool of accessible skills through strong ties to the larger theater community.

¹⁰⁰ Eric Burgher, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, December 3, 2010, Chicago, IL.

Implicitly, Steppenwolf supports Chicago's theater ecology through its network of current and former interns and employees, many of whom founded or worked for Chicago theater companies following their stints at Steppenwolf. Like David Perez, who met the co-founders of Pavement Group while an apprentice at Steppenwolf, many of Steppenwolf's interns work for little to no pay. Steppenwolf therefore serves emerging and adolescent theaters as a resource and support network, bringing together a wide group of diverse organizations and helping them to connect. If the internal structures of these smaller organizations are too strained to comprise all the skills necessary to sustain themselves, perhaps looking outside to the larger community and forging new collaborations can help to fill in the gaps.

CONCLUSIONS: KEYS, NOT GUARANTEES

There is no single way that producing theaters can or should run. Navigating the winding path between fulfilling the principles of the creative mission, and maintaining a solvent business is extremely difficult. The traditional organizational model—that of a board, Executive Director, and Artistic Director working above a staff—may work well for a large and established company such as Steppenwolf, but smaller itinerant groups can function with alternative models and achieve success as well. Just as internal structures will look different from theater to theater, success will mean different things within each organization. Yet in all “successful” organizations, we argue that there are three key elements. The first is a clear mission that motivates the company and to which the staff are committed. The second is a leader or group of leaders with strong convictions and vision. The third, and perhaps most important, is a pool of skills and expertise at the theater's disposal. These skills may be found in the Executive Director, the board, elsewhere among the staff, from the larger community, or a mix of all of these, but they must be present for the organization to be sustainable.

In comparing how these keys operate in several producing companies, it is evident that there are still many tensions and challenges to overcome intra-organizationally. We have investigated these tensions by identifying “producing paradoxes”—those paradoxes that arise while running a theater for a mission and as an organization. While there is no ideal model that fits all organizations, there are some additional ways to refine the three key elements so as to produce even more efficient success. We propose that:

1. Missions make sense and motivate: As Sean Graney discussed, sometimes a mission can frustrate rather than guide, if it is not drafted as a tool but rather an advertisement. Organizations struggling with this kind of difficulty should consider rewriting a mission that can cover more of operations and serve to engage, rather than hamper the staff.
2. Clearly-defined roles extend to the corps of non-paid board members, artistic associates and ensemble members. The nonpaid cross-trained artists have become a new, needed reality for many producing theaters to balance budgets. Although established and successful, Steppenwolf relies on apprentices, interns and ensemble members to support the production of shows. Company members at The Hypocrites grew frustrated by a lack of buy-in. Perhaps one way to provide more labor leverage in producing theaters is through clearly defined and better supported roles for nonpaid members.
3. Support from the theater community, and from the larger civic community can anchor and serve to positively benefit organizations of all sizes. The smallest of storefront theaters may struggle to balance their books because their leaders are spread so thin trying to make ends meet in their personal lives that they cannot devote themselves fully to their creative passion. Strong network ties between theaters of all shapes and sizes

can help to build a support system—as demonstrated with Steppenwolf’s outreach efforts. If theaters of all sizes are recognized as being part of an ecological system, then perhaps resources (human, financial, creative) could be pooled for the benefit of all. Additionally, a unified community might be able to secure additional support from local governments so that cross-trained artists could garner sustainable wages, opportunities for professional development, or other programs in service of supporting the arts manager. This support need not be financial. Graney suggests that theaters would benefit from “a designated...person at city hall ... to help figure out how to do things safely and legally and as cheap as possible.”¹⁰¹

Of course there is no magic model that can guarantee a theater’s success. But with the three identified keys, and open lines of communication both intra- and extra-organizationally, we believe that theaters can thrive on any scale, regardless of the specifics of their organizational structures. Established and start-up organizations alike can examine their structures for efficiency and make changes based on what we have suggested here, but tailored to the unique nature of their own company, and make an informed choice about what “just right” means to them.

¹⁰¹ Sean Graney, interview by Jasmine Mahmoud, March 7, 2011, Chicago IL.

The Diffusion of Knowledge and Practice in the Cultural Sector

Christian Lopez and Danielle Wrobel

You can't solve a problem with the same consciousness that created it.

–Albert Einstein

The nonprofit arts sector faces daunting challenges for achieving success using limited resources. Although many organizations face similar sets of difficulties, they often work alone to find solutions. This is a problem for several reasons: It is an inefficient use of resources to produce a new solution when other organizations may have already created one; solutions created independently might not work out as well as ideas formed elsewhere and improved over time; and focus is drawn away from the organization's mission as it becomes consumed by the logistical details of innovating independently. Organizations slow to innovate miss out on opportunities to maximize their invaluable resources to breed new successes. In short, they threaten their ability to fulfill their own missions. As individual organizations struggle, the arts sector as a whole suffers. In this paper, we evaluate key factors contributing to imperfect diffusion and consider model efforts underway to improve the situation.

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS BUILD BRIDGES

In the ideal system, innovating organizations would freely spread news of their innovations to their peers, who stand to benefit from making similar operational improvements. The usefulness of these innovations would likely transcend local communities, disciplines, sectors (e.g., arts sector and social sector) and, occasionally, even the great divide between the nonprofit and for-profit worlds. Effective channels for communicating are essential to this process, yet this is where the trouble often begins.¹⁰² Traditionally in the arts sector, service organizations have worked as bridges to facilitate this exchange. However, we would like to begin our discussion with how easy it is for these well-meaning institutions to miss their mark.

The League of American Orchestras (LAO) is a recognized leader in successfully serving its constituency, a wide membership of orchestra organizations in the US and Canada. As described in its mission statement, the LAO works as a centralizing force to “stimulate exchange

¹⁰² For a thorough catalogue of obstacles to creating a culture of successful innovation diffusion, see the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's "Report on 'Leveraging Lessons Learned' Meeting," prepared by Alan Brown of WolfBrown, Nov. 2007.

of innovative ideas and practices and to promote unity across the orchestra field.”¹⁰³ Through their website, they offer a wide array of knowledge resources to orchestras, such as industry reports, assessment tools and seminars. These tools are all meant to aid in sharing innovations across the orchestra field; the usefulness of these resources to that community makes them indispensable.

One key instrument on their website is the Innovations Forum, a platform through which they broadcast many examples of successful business practices. The LAO website acknowledges the value of sharing innovations: "Everyone wants that next great idea. And that great idea could already be in place at an orchestra near you!" So the Innovations Forum is designed to make sure that "the next great idea" reaches its target beneficiary. These ideas are categorized across a variety of areas, including administration, audience development, fundraising and marketing. The Innovations Forum is built on the premise that individual organizations constantly come up with good ideas that could benefit other organizations. From this we easily see evidence that, in the LAO's view, sharing innovations is an important method for strengthening the orchestra field.

An education program called Essentials of Orchestra Management is also available, with comprehensive courses on good governance practices. Seminars and workshops are geared heavily towards individuals entering the field with little prior experience, rather than those with established positions. Thus, Essentials of Orchestra Management cultivates competent leaders who might serve not only for the present time but longer into the future. This imparts knowledge to others in a different way from the Innovations Forum. Rather than releasing information on a website, as they do with the Forum, through the Essentials program the League actively inculcates future orchestra leaders with useful models to take with them into the field. These

¹⁰³ <http://www.americanorchestras.org/>

newly trained managers, directors and executives are therefore given transportable tools to foster good management practices and innovation to take anywhere. In a sense, Essentials of Orchestra Management and the Innovations Forum respond to a similar mission to promote and diffuse innovation through its network of managers spread throughout the orchestra field.

TRAPPED IN SILOS: ORPHAN INNOVATIONS

The strength of services offered by the League makes it difficult to begin to see the larger problems that can become roadblocks to innovation. Yet, if the system needs to improve, service organizations such as the League carry an important share of the responsibility. In order to analyze where shortcomings in the system may exist, it is helpful to start by learning from another example.

In one study, a new way of supplying food banks with food for the poor made national headlines and even garnered formal recognition from the President of the United States.¹⁰⁴ Here, simple broadcasting of innovation information was clearly not a problem. The country as a whole, even the public, was made aware of the accomplishment. Leaders in the social sector initiated efforts to reproduce the concept around the country, so that other food banks might begin to serve the poor more effectively. Yet their strategy was simply to gather interested leaders from other food banks, tell them the information they thought was relevant, and check in a year later. These attempts at producing mere copies of the program, just as it was done in the original program in Southern California, were unsuccessful.

The answer came when, after considerable disappointment, involved leaders revisited the issue. As the food bank study revealed, the problem was that information on the original program

¹⁰⁴ Evans, Susan H. and Peter Clarke. "Disseminating Orphan Innovations." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011: 43 - 47.

was given unmodified to other programs simply to emulate. Until this good idea was actually put to use in other needy places, it faced becoming an orphan innovation. An orphan innovation is a good business practice model that fails to take root in other places. As a consequence, the potential benefit to other organizations, sectors, and especially the communities they serve, is lost. In the case of the food bank program, the gap was between dissemination (simply sharing information) and diffusion (making sure a new idea is successfully instituted). Only when efforts went past disseminating information, and took on the more involved work of diffusion, did the new food bank model spread, helping to provide charitable food to countless needy individuals around the country.

The Innovations Forum at the League demonstrates the same problem: It is a platform for information broadcasting only. However, building mere channels of communication is not always effective. The problem that is demonstrated by the cases of both the food bank and the LAO is one of incomplete diffusion. As a tool for disseminating innovations, the Innovations Forum and other LAO services are inadequate. A vice president interviewed at the League admits that it does not actively pursue innovation uptake with their members, either by way of the Forum or through the other service instruments they provide.¹⁰⁵ Thus the League's involvement extends to disseminating knowledge, but not actively ensuring it is instituted. One of the strengths of the League's design is that it targets a specific discipline and provides tools tailored at least minimally to the demands of that field. Yet this strategy comes with a cost: it creates silos resistant to information exchange. Bound in these silos of innovation containment, good ideas are inevitably orphaned.

¹⁰⁵ Email interview conducted 14-Mar-2011.

Information broadcast tools such as the Forum need to be supplemented by active monitoring and organization involvement to ensure effective adaptation. These instruments are currently a passive service; they demand that users deliberately seek out information and learn what they can. Struggling arts organizations are then left on their own to attempt to implement the model without the guidance to adapt it to their own needs.

Table 1 presents the difficulties in customizing innovations before they can be properly implemented. As can be seen, the decision to innovate requires an abundance of information.

Considerations Before Customizing Innovations				
Become informed about innovation's operating details	Recognize a need for solid evidence about the innovation's worth for specific organization, including costs	Learn about specific local conditions and develop a flexible repertoire of solutions for personal needs and possibilities	Identify barriers to adoption and sympathize with people's psychological mind-sets that prevent new ideas from taking root.	Expect to devote substantial time to the effort, and accept that change might be measured over years, not weeks or months.

Table 1: Considerations Before Customizing Innovations, from Evans, Susan and Peter Clarke. "Disseminating Orphan Innovations." Stanford Social Innovation Review. Winter 2011: 43 - 47.

Everything from recognizing the basic purpose of the innovation to anticipating obstacles within the arts organization itself needs to be addressed before committing to the task of implementing a new program or idea. This information is important because it gives administrators the chance to respond to what is or is not working. Thus, diffusion is a much more complicated process than the LAO's website suggests. The League condones dissemination—broadcasting useful information. But, by omitting a follow-up program, service organizations like it overlook the complicated, but essential, process of real-world diffusion and implementation. Again, the lessons learned from the food bank project are noteworthy in this regard, for, without a more active effort to adapt the idea to a specific organization, an innovation risks becoming useless and forgotten.

In business lingo, “best practice” is the common term used for an off-the-shelf solution. Rather than emphasizing the concept of the innovation—its techniques, requirements, objectives—this term creates the misconception that the innovations are set up for copying, when they are actually quite idiosyncratic. The implication is that what is "best" is best for all. So "best practices" are sought as an easy way to improve operations. Not being able to evaluate a new idea makes it difficult for administrators to restructure an innovation according to the needs of their own organization. The complicated process of adaptation often demands that a close eye follow an organization to make sure it adapts and institutionalizes a practice successfully.

BREAKING DOWN ARTS COMPETITIVENESS

Such considerations are among the kinds of structural changes that service organizations could, with careful planning, begin to put in place. However, an additional set of obstacles, more intangible in nature, can also plague the process of the diffusion of knowledge and practice. One major challenge is competition among arts organizations within the same field.

Many arts organizations prefer to keep any advantage they have to themselves due to the need to compete for scarce funding and audience attendance. Especially from the standpoint of a small arts organization, disseminating innovations to peer organizations does not appear to be a viable option in the short term: the task requires too much work with too little reward. Competitiveness across the sector can also occur within service organizations and among arts funders. These entities have a natural desire to see the specific organizations they support succeed, and they may go to extra lengths to promote their success (implicitly, at the expense of the organizations not under their umbrellas). This makes many arts managers reluctant to share information with their peers in an effort to gain an “edge” over their competitors for the audience’s time and discretionary dollars.

Competitiveness among arts stakeholders damages the community as a whole by discouraging collaboration and information exchange. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. Participatory programs, such as the LAO's Mentoring Circle, are targeted at remedying this very problem. The Mentoring Circle seeks to connect orchestra directors with each other in order to exchange up-to-date management techniques and ideas. This is a noteworthy attempt on many levels. In our view, non-competitive networks for sharing and collaborating are the most important solution for the cultural field as a whole to pursue. As we discuss at length below, there is an important role that can be played by professional networks functioning as non-competitive communities of practice¹⁰⁶ between organizations. But, first, we identify other barriers to the diffusion of knowledge and practice in the cultural sector: economic, psychological, and cultural.

ADDITIONAL BARRIERS TO DIFFUSION

The first barrier any organization encounters is how to fund changes to their organization, but even ample funding is no substitute for thoughtful strategy. In other words, there is a difference between efficient and inefficient funding. A small grant received at just the right time, for just the right use, can be pivotal. In the case of the food bank program, a well-placed \$1,000 donation set up a sustainable system for solving the community's needs well into the future. This strategy was notable for its contrast to conventional fundraising approaches, which often seek only to fill the next funding gap. Unfortunately, many of the smallest organizations cannot afford *not* to address their immediate budget concerns in this way. The challenge of resource limitations—monetary and otherwise—is very real. Nevertheless, investments in innovation take aim at exactly this problem—maximizing success with minimal resource expenditure.

¹⁰⁶ Wenger, Etienne. "Communities of Practice." June 2006. <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

Funding is an ever-present obstacle for many places, but it is not the only one. Instead we would like to emphasize the variety of non-funding obstacles to innovation diffusion, some of which we introduced above. In addition to these problems—information silos, lack of service organization follow-through, and the current, competitive nature of the arts sector—innovation is hampered by other barriers less tangible than the issue of money.

Psychologically and culturally, organizational change is difficult. In particular, insurmountable psychological and cultural barriers arise when arts organization leaders try to protect their organization's identity or are skeptical about a new business practice applying to their circumstances. This skepticism can persist even when an innovation is recognized as having worked successfully elsewhere.

In some cases, arts organizations tend to adopt change only after others have done it first. To an extent, this conservatism can be healthy. For many nonprofits, bound by a tenuous budget situation, the cost of failed innovation can threaten the organization's viability. As a result, an aversion to risk is often programmed into institutional policies and procedures. This becomes problematic when aversion is so great that it leads to forestalling even healthy innovations. Fear of failure can itself lead to failure. Leaders must take courage, acting and thinking (carefully) to improve the structure, the activities, and the processes of the organizations they run. This includes preparing one's organization to amend their policies so as to allow good, strong innovations from other organizations to permeate their boundaries.

The silo effect in diffusion stems from an issue common to the culture of the arts community: the belief in each organization's sense of a unique artistic vision. Many arts organizations seek to create and maintain a distinct status and identity, emphasizing their

individuality. This can extend into administrative practices, where leaders often spend time thinking up novel innovations rather than adopting another organization's successful practices. They spin their wheels on resource-consuming work (including the precious resource of their own time) when they could more easily find a well-matched solution elsewhere. Individualism in this case breeds a culture of insularity. Without an initial step of knowledge dissemination, good innovations fade away, returning us to the problem of innovation silos.

Innovative ideas and practices can be inherently useful to an organization. But without social interaction and context for openly communicating these ideas, they can fall into orphan status. To gather momentum and build this context, the social environment of the arts needs to change. What is needed is to encourage a new culture of information openness and a knowledge-sharing community. As explored below, some professional networks address this issue by embedding administrators in a framework for collaboration and a milieu of positive change.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITIES OF DIFFUSION

The question we are faced with is how to encourage arts leaders to participate in the process of active and sustained innovation diffusion? There is an opportunity here to learn from other arts innovators and, in the process, demonstrate how meaningful learning by example can be.

Much productivity in any field results from managers making incentives to spark a response from their staff or clientele. Knowing how to persuade people to think and work creatively includes understanding what they might consider rewarding or enjoyable. One performing arts organization faced with declining attendance, for example, responded by creating a reward system for their audiences. In the face of rising gas costs, they invited guests to participate in a carpool and also provided them a glass of wine at intermission. This created a more social

experience for guests and cut their fuel costs, appealing to both their emotional and rational preferences. In another instance, Oregon Humanities moved their monthly conferences out of an auditorium and into a brew pub. These meetings, called “Think and Drink,” made for a lively discussion and enjoyable experience out of a conventional lecture event.

In adopting such unusual practices, these organizations risked certain failure. Would they damage their reputation by positioning themselves outside the traditional venue of a fine arts setting? The power of the social should not be underestimated. Both places took the risk of adapting to today's social environment, where facilitating sociability helped to stimulate discussion and participation. . Both organizations increased attendance at their performances and participation in their monthly discussions, respectively.

A similar lesson about the power of creating a dynamic, rewarding social experience can be applied to innovation diffusion. One example of this is the LAO's Mentoring Circle, a model of a successful “community of diffusion.” The Mentoring Circle organizes participants in a social network for mutual assistance in instituting change. A *community of diffusion* is our variation on the concept of a community of practice.

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain... [They] are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Wenger, Etienne. "Communities of Practice." June 2006. <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

We identify a community of diffusion in the arts sector as consisting of the consultants, service organizations, arts funders and all third-party stakeholders in the arts sector who provide the indispensable resources for producing knowledge and facilitating exchange.

Confronted by the immensity of the arts sector, individual administrators may balk at the push to network with so many peers. Yet, communities of diffusion can be facilitated by the new social media provided by the internet. Blogs, virtual social networks, and wikis allow an information sharing culture¹⁰⁸ that can benefit anyone with internet access.

New technologies such as the Internet have extended the reach of our interactions beyond the geographical limitations of traditional communities, but the increase in flow of information does not obviate the need for community. In fact, it expands the possibilities for community and calls for new kinds of communities based on shared practice.¹⁰⁹

These tools could be a resource of immeasurable utility. Provided some of the psychological and cultural barriers described above can be overcome, it will be a rare organization that does not benefit from participating in a community of shared practice. The key is to envelop leaders in an environment of forward-thinking. Taking a general view, an arts sector-specific network can surmount the boundaries implicated by innovation silos; it can breed a collaborative attitude that dissolves competition; it can turn simple information such as that found on the LAO's website into a system of support and follow-through. There are other benefits, too. For example, contacts at innovating organizations can be made accessible to those who want to attempt the same innovation but need help in how to customize or execute the new practice. Organizations who are early adopters of innovations, and whose position as leaders

¹⁰⁸ La Piana Consulting. "Convergence: How Five Trends Will Shape the Social Sector." The James Irvine Foundation: 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Wenger, Etienne. "Communities of Practice." June 2006. <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

often inspires others to emulate them, could also make themselves accessible as informational resources to adopting arts organizations.

Additionally, there is no shortage to the number of more tangible benefits it would provide. The network could simplify finding an arts consultant with the right mix of experience, specialty area and fees charged in keeping with an organization's needs; the community could also write reviews of consultants' services for others to consider. A struggling local theater could find a consultant known for increasing audience participation strategies, while an expanding science museum could find a consultant experienced with improving fundraising practices.

The largest benefit may be in triumphing over innovation silos. Social media can potentially help surmount the intangible barriers across disciplines and sectors. Orchestras and dance companies, local museums and virtual heritage programs—quirky cultural projects in the arts sector and indispensable health programs in the social sector—could eventually unite through these social media into a large, dynamic innovation-sharing community. As these cross-genre arts organizations come together to solve mutual problems, they can more easily communicate with each other in a collaborative spirit.

AN IDEAL REAL-WORLD MODEL

Another example worth comparing to the efforts led by the LAO is the Participation Learning Network (PLN) in Massachusetts.¹¹⁰ The PLN is a prime example of creating a community of diffusion marked by openness and collaboration.

The PLN was established in 2006 by three major funding organizations: the Boston Foundation, Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Wallace Foundation. Its goal was to

¹¹⁰ Full information can be accessed at http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/services/audience_engagement.asp

increase attendance at 22 participating arts organizations in the Boston metro area. Part of the PLN's strategy was to oblige participating organizations to enter into an active information-sharing dialogue with each other. The program asked each organization to send two representatives, who would remain mostly consistent across the duration of the program, to attend a variety of events designed to strengthen bonds between these organizations and stimulate information sharing. Strategic grants facilitated this interaction.

Unfortunately, the PLN was conceived from the outset as a temporary funding program. It was dissolved at the end of its stipulated term as funds dried up, thereby curtailing many of the rich benefits it offered to its members. Interestingly, many of the professional connections made during the program have continued to endure. This surprising phenomenon has happened in complete absence of the strategic funding and free database of knowledge the PLN provided. As participants explained, the opportunity to share knowledge among peers proved an invaluable resource, even when the PLN's grants ended. This benefit motivated many of the members to continue meeting and interacting, seeking each others' advice. The channels of reciprocity that the PLN generated directly aided administrators in making decisions for their own organizations. These channels also embedded them in a milieu of change which fed into a culture of collaboration and progress.

If there is one macro-level lesson to be learned from the case of PLN, it is that arts organizations, while perhaps initially reluctant to initiate communities of diffusion, ultimately come to value and sustain such interactions of their own accord. Networks of professional contacts are where diffusion begins. Making these networks into perpetually active channels of knowledge sharing is pivotal to driving successful diffusion in the cultural sector.

INNOVATING IN THE ARTS—MORE THAN A GOOD IDEA

There is an urgent need to encourage innovation and change in the arts sector. And there is a great need to share knowledge, rather than isolate innovative ideas and practices in silos.

According to one participant at a conference of arts leaders:

Concern was expressed that if we do not continue this discussion, each service organization will continue to invest in proprietary knowledge systems that are somewhat redundant, and the development costs that could be amortized across the organizations will not be. Moreover, there is a concern that individual funders will develop diffusion systems on their own without consulting each other...“To go another five years, the silos just get bigger. We need to discover our collaboration points now, rather than later.”¹¹¹

Members of the community of diffusion are constantly producing useful ideas that could benefit others. What is apparent in examples described in this paper and elsewhere is the earnest enthusiasm from innovators to share the tools they develop. However, this enthusiasm is not a substitute for useful channels by which to share information. Much of the attitude not only in the arts sector, but other areas as well, is that as long as the innovation is disseminated—broadcast to the community—there will be uptake. However, silos of innovation can arise any time an organization decides to keep information to itself. As we have argued, the answer to this problem begins with service organizations such as the LAO, the PLN, and other influential institutions starting to convene communities of diffusion. This can be done through live conferences, the new social media, or other methods of producing information-sharing opportunities. As the networks develop, different organizations from different disciplines, sectors, and fields should be encouraged to join and contribute to (and benefit from) these communities of practice and

¹¹¹ Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. "Report on 'Leveraging Lessons Learned' Meeting." Prepared by Alan Brown. Nov. 2007.

diffusion. Once the communities have begun they are likely to perpetuate themselves, as the case of the PLN demonstrated, thus helping to inaugurate a new culture of exchange and support.

This model draws its power from a mechanism of accumulating influence. An idea can start with a single individual in an isolated organization who convinces a close circle of co-workers, who then garner a director’s support. On a sector-wide scale, an early adopter organization can encourage other institutions to consider an innovation, and the growing consensus serves to encourage a wider circle of others to experiment and adapt new practices to their own needs. Third parties are always needed to analyze objectively and offer new strategies for improvement. So, arts funders, consultants and service organizations can bring in their respective areas of expertise and services to aid arts organizations in trying, adapting, and institutionalizing new practices as part of their own repertoire..

A system utilizing all of these approaches would be effective because it breeds positive information flow in a social environment. Meetings, conferences, and local networking add a “personal touch” to communications that information on a website does not allow. As the community develops, each stakeholder will need to assume certain responsibilities. **Figure 1**

proposes new responsibilities for the three main types of stakeholders: funders, service organizations, and early-innovating arts organizations. These roles need to be incorporated as crucial activities in propagating a community of diffusion.

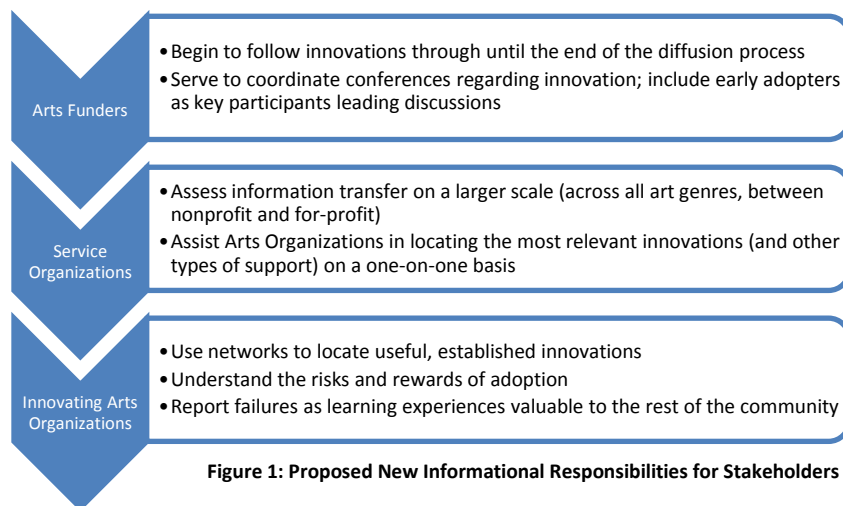


Figure 1: Proposed New Informational Responsibilities for Stakeholders

At the outset of this paper, we suggested that leaders within professional service organizations already play an important role in fostering networks in which new ideas and practices are broadcast. Yet the process of diffusing and customizing those ideas broadly across the highly fragmented cultural sector is more complicated than that. More cooperation, coordination, and sharing across the arts is vital to the sector's success in the future. New communities of diffusion, working as networks of innovation exchange, are a promising, creative response to the kinds of structural barriers that currently limit the field:

The challenges are many. To meet them, nonprofits must first recognize them and uncover the opportunities they bring, while managing the accompanying uncertainty and risk. They must also cultivate a willingness to experiment with creative responses. In other words, they must be futurists.¹¹²

¹¹² La Piana Consulting. "Convergence: How Five Trends Will Shape the Social Sector." The James Irvine Foundation: 2009.

Re-thinking Cultural Policy:

What can we learn from international cultural policy programs?

Rupal Soni, Bianca Vilanova, and Sophia Yan

INTRODUCTION

Many cultural organizations and individuals all over the world face the same problems: the amount and dependability of funding for arts and culture organizations, how to coordinate different actors and spheres of culture, and how to regulate different arenas with respect to culture, among many others. In this spirit, this paper will examine these issues in an international context, drawing examples from all over the world to shed light on interesting practices in funding, coordination, and regulation. Although this paper just scratches the surface of the many creative and ground-breaking practices in these arenas, the intent is to provoke interest in and discussion about these issues and their potential adaptability for different locales, in response to problems that are common worldwide.

The paper will begin by exploring the topic of funding cultural organizations, then move to the regulation of those organizations, and conclude with a discussion of the coordination between different organizations and policy domains. Each section will begin by providing background information, discussing a particular challenge faced by many nations in that arena. Following this, examples of particularly effective or ineffective practices will be provided. Finally, an analysis of this practice will be provided, with thoughts on its benefits and potential challenges, and its potential for adaptability in other national contexts.

INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF CULTURAL FUNDING

To begin our discussion on funding, it is important to note the differences between international funding models for arts and culture organizations. This is necessary to understand different contexts in which cultural organizations operate and how practices arose, in addition to determining the potential for adaptation of funding, regulation, and coordination practices across nations. In the book *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future*

Directions, Jennifer Craik proposes the following models to categorize different international approaches to funding the arts: the Engineer model, the Architect model, the Patron model, and the Facilitator model. These can be understood as positioned along a continuum, from highly centralized to highly decentralized models of state support for the arts, as illustrated below:



Most Western countries are characterized by the Architect, Patron, and Facilitator models of cultural funding policy, with the Engineer model more characteristic of state-centralized systems in which culture is promoted to reflect and strengthen state political policy and national values.

Under the Architect model, a dedicated ministry is responsible for culture. The government is more interventionist and funds cultural projects directly, and cultural and artistic policy can be aligned with social welfare and national policy objectives. Among Western European nations, France is the strongest example of this model of cultural policy. In the Patron model, governments offer direct support through arts councils primarily to prominent and well-established artistic and cultural organizations that are favored by cultural tastemakers and gatekeepers. Several countries characterized by the Patron model include the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Nordic countries. Finally, under the Facilitator model, the government aims to create the conditions that allow cultural production to happen, but provides

relatively little in the way of direct funding support of the arts. This model is based on a highly decentralized arts infrastructure, with cultural organizations and cultural production are essentially subsidized by taxes, since contributions to cultural organizations are made tax-deductible for the philanthropists and corporations who support them. In essence, the government encourages cultural patronage by its citizens and private organizations, rather than through public funding. The US is the primary example of a government with a Facilitator model in place, although other nations are increasingly interested in turning to tax incentives to encourage arts funding (Klamer et al, 2007, 2). For the purposes of this paper, examples will be drawn from countries operating under the Architect, Patron, and Facilitator models of public funding for the arts.

Although there are many variations and combinations (for example, the US also has government-supported institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts and state arts agencies that also allocate funds, and many other countries also offer some form of tax break for arts support), these models give a brief but descriptive explanation of cultural policy-making institutions in a number of countries, which will be helpful in discussing the applicability of a number of different approaches to funding problems in the arts and culture sector that are increasingly common worldwide.

FUNDING CHALLENGES

One problem facing many nations is budget cuts in the arts. The vast majority of nations are currently affected by a deep economic recession, necessitating decreases in government spending – and unfortunately, the arts have been hit hard. The United States Congress is currently debating a 2011 budget that includes a staggering number of budget cuts to arts and culture organizations, including the \$20 million decrease in funding to the National Endowment for the Arts and the

complete elimination of the federal Arts in Education program, among many others (Staff, 2011). The United Kingdom faces even more extreme cuts, including 29.6 percent of funding cut from Arts Council England, 15 percent from national museums and galleries, and the elimination of the UK Film Council (Brown, 2011). In countries that have historically provided substantial public funding for the arts this is especially problematic, since many do not have a cultural tradition of private philanthropic giving that would help offset decreased public funding. It is clear that new and innovative strategies for finding funding for arts organizations, artists, and projects are needed internationally, as the arts everywhere are facing more stringent budgets and challenges to their traditional means of support.

Example: Crowd-funding - Kickstarter, WeDidThis, InCUBATE

The concept of “crowd-funding,” seeking funding for groups or projects from small donations by many individuals, has its roots in several ideas and industries. Charitable organizations have long relied on individual donors to provide funding, while Web 2.0 ventures have increasingly allowed individuals to determine what services or products are offered. Several tools for “crowd-funding” models for cultural projects have found success in the United States. One of the most popular methods for such funding is a web start-up called Kickstarter, billing itself as “A New Way to Fund and Follow Creativity.” Organizations or artists seeking funds post an online description of their proposed project and set the amount that they are seeking to obtain by a given date (Borrelli, 2011). Individuals can then browse these projects and choose to donate to them; and the money is only taken if the project goes ahead (i.e. if the full amount of funding is reached by the deadline). If donations are made and the project goes ahead, contributors receive rewards depending on the amount they give, and they are continuously updated on the state of the project as it moves forward. To give an example, a project that was

recently featured on Kickstarter's homepage sought \$2,500 in funding for costumes for a dance production in Eugene, Oregon, called "Tyranny of the Senses." Donations of \$10 received a postcard and a recorded message from the dancers, while donations of \$200 or above would receive tickets to the production, a t-shirt, a CD, and program credit.

In fact, Kickstarter's methods proved to be so popular that they have been replicated across the Atlantic. WeDidThis, a crowd-funding platform supporting UK arts organizations, was launched at the end of January 2011. Ed Whiting, the founder of WeDidThis, notes that crowd-funding is representative of a "culture shift" that the arts sector must adapt to—the "culture of asking" (Whiting, 2011). Future plans for WeDidThis include the creation of a "pop-up" marketplace to support individual artists to fill empty public spaces with art, and extending offers to businesses, which can donate a set amount and allow their employees to choose the specific projects they fund (Whiting, 2011).

A similar project can be found in Chicago, where the Institute for Community Understanding Between Art and The Everyday (InCUBATE) gives "micro-grants" to artists through their monthly "Sunday Soup" dinners. Dinners are sold for \$10 apiece to subscribers. Artists propose projects that need to be funded, and subscribers then vote on which project to fund with the proceeds of that month's dinner. This method has proved so popular that the "Sunday Soup Network" stretches throughout the United States, and even has some members internationally, in Ontario and the Ukraine. Different projects occasionally vary price, artist involvement, and menus, but the funding principle remains the same.

Crowd-sourced funding methods are beneficial in several ways. Under the Kickstarter model, the artist has no obligation to go through with a project proposal without full funding,

preventing disappointment for both the funder and the artist when a project envisioned with \$10,000 worth of materials must be made with \$2,000. This also means that artists can feel free to “test” concepts with the public and gauge their response without committing to it fully without funding. Finally, it means that funders who are excited about particular projects can encourage others to donate in order to ensure the project occurs. Thus far, in about two years of existence, Kickstarter has raised \$30 million for about 15,000 projects (Borrelli, 2011). Other crowd-funding sites, such as IndieGoGo and RockHub, provide similar platforms for artists to find alternative sources of funding, with slight variations.

Ultimately, these crowd-sourced models are extraordinarily adaptable and can be used in most national contexts, no matter which governmental funding model has historically prevailed. For the artists and organizations, there are low barriers to entry and there is great flexibility in the project-based nature of the funding. Moreover, the very nature of the funding increases public engagement with smaller projects and increases their visibility, and it can even serve as a type of marketing research in the sense that support for an artistic project may be a measure of its commercial appeal. Additionally, this type of “micro-philanthropy” could broaden and diversify the cultural funding base, particularly in nations that have had higher levels of public funding for the arts and more limited experience with private philanthropy.

The crowd-funding model is not without its problems, however. Fewer than half the projects posted on Kickstarter meet their funding goals, and those who do not reach their goals do not receive any money, meaning that funding levels are undependable (Borrelli, 2011). Further, a lack of participation might cause difficulties in nations whose citizens are not known for private philanthropy. However, Whiting and others see crowd-funding as a means to bring about a social change that he argues may be necessary for the future growth of the arts sector

internationally (Whiting, 2011). Many organizations (particularly throughout Europe, where government funding to arts organization has been cut dramatically in recent years) are being forced to seek creative funding strategies or face extinction, and Whiting argues that crowd-funding platforms can “build a movement to save” them (Whiting, 2011). Crowd-sourcing may yet prove to be an effective stopgap measure for funding individual arts projects for larger arts organizations, or as smaller-scale methods of funding for individuals and small groups.

EXPANDING THE CULTURAL DOMAIN: THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF REGULATION

As many now argue, the “cultural domain” extends far beyond the issue of arts funding. Cultural regulation represents a much broader area for cultural policy analysis.

We live in a cultural world in which the products of cultural activities surround us in our daily lives. We listen to music, read books and watch TV or movies; we visit museums and theaters (Lewis 1994). As Justin Lewis (1994) correctly points out, “our environments are visually shaped by planners, architects, and designers, from the clothes we wear to the billboards, buildings, and shop fronts that make up our landscapes. There is nothing fixed or inevitable about this cultural world. It is not the way it is because we, as citizens, have thought about it and decided that it should be so. Certainly our history, traditions, and desires influence the shape of our culture, but it also looks, feels, and sounds the way it does because of the ill-considered mix of free market forces, government regulations, and subsidies that constitutes the political economy of culture.”

Although they have a direct impact on our lives, issues such as “copyright laws, media regulation and censorship, urban planning and public liability laws that impact upon the viability

and diversity of cultural expression are beyond the reach” of government agencies (Eltham & Westbury 2010). These are nevertheless areas of enormous importance for cultural policy.

Regulation and government intervention can be pictured as a continuum. On one end of this continuum there is a ‘hands-off’ approach, where the government decides not to take a role in shaping and regulating the cultural environment. On the other end there are “hands-on” governments that become heavily involved in shaping, funding and creating their cultural environment—most likely based on a “traditional, narrow notions of art and artistic value, thus limiting the state's role to the protection of a limited selection of cultural activities, such as drama or classical music” (Lewis 1994).

The United States is a country that leans towards the “hands-off” approach. According to Bill Ivey (2008), the U.S. does not have a mechanism to consider the cultural impact of policies, laws, regulation, and corporate practice as they are developed or implemented. Accordingly, the market-driven nature of U.S. laws, regulations and corporate practices in which “art, heritage and information are created and consumed have drifted far from public purposes” (Ivey, 2008:24-25). Though some organizations advocate for specific cultural policy on copyright, Internet music royalties, the price of cable television service, trade in cultural products, mergers in the entertainment industry, it is usually a piecemeal approach (Ivey, 2008:30).

We will now examine some useful comparative examples of how aspects of the cultural domain are regulated around the world and what the impacts of those regulations are.

Example: Is too much regulation harming Australia’s culture?

As argued earlier, Australia has adopted the Patron Model of cultural funding. The government is involved in the cultural sector, but it funds a relatively limited number and type of

cultural activities, mostly those related to traditional Western forms of art such as the opera, and established artists. Beyond its public funding policies, however, a myriad of regulations that affect culture are in place and can act as a barrier for cultural development. Regulations related to hosting events, food and liquor licenses and other aspects related to staging live performances, have been pointed out as the reason for the declining number of performances by emerging artists (Murn, 2008). For example, in early 2010 Liquor Licensing Victoria in Melbourne decided to implement a regulation requiring burdensome security requirements on live music venues. As a result, one of the city's best-loved rock venues was forced to close its doors and "many other venues were threatened with the same fate" (Eltham & Westbury 2010).

Example: Copyright regulation in New Zealand

Copyright is one of the central issues of cultural regulation. Finding a good balance between the protection of intellectual cultural property and encouraging cultural innovation and experimentation is crucial. As Suzy Frankel observes in "Digital Copyright and Culture" (2010), "on the one hand, copyright law is too protective if it constricts the types of artistic, literary, and musical works that can be made." It becomes too restricting if people will not make these works because they are not sure if they can and do not wish to expend time working out if a license to use copyright is affordable or even available. Such uncertainty can have a chilling effect on creativity and innovation.

On the other hand, protecting rights in copyright serves many valuable functions. Copyright contributes to culture through supporting the people who create it: authors, artists, and owners of copyrighted works. This support is economic, as it allows gains from their works. It also allows these contributors to culture some control over when and how their works are used by others and, in the case of some, to make a career out of their creativity" (Frankel, 2010:150).

New Zealand had traditionally adopted the United Kingdom's regulations regarding copyright with minor or no adaptations. However, in 2006, New Zealand recognized that although it has a developed market economy, it is, unlike the UK, a small economy and as such the country is more of a consumer than a producer of copyright works. The new copyright law, which was approved in 2009 and will be up for revision in 2014, details permitted acts regarding copyright work. It reflects the particular needs of New Zealand regarding copyrights and deals with issues such as trade agreements, copyright protection, copyright work communication for its owners and Internet provider protection. It also makes provisions for possible amendments due to the constant changing nature of the field. This is a case of flexible adaptation of copyright law in New Zealand—an attempt to balance protection and creativity.

Example: Urban Planning Regulation in Georgia

Urban planning is another area of the broader social domain that has an impact on culture, even if not explicitly defined as cultural policy. The way cities are planned and designed and how and by whom the space is used has a direct impact on the cultural lives of its residents. Urban planning laws also have an impact on the protection of the cultural assets of a city as they can be used to protect the cultural patrimony of a city. Many European countries have a vast cultural patrimony in their cities, and one example of a country that has instituted regulations that explicitly deal with architecture and urban planning is Georgia.

Among some of Georgia's notable cultural regulations are the "Law on Architectural Activity," which seeks "to create and develop an adequate, eco-friendly, aesthetic environment and to promote architectural art in Georgia" (Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe: a Compendium of Basic Facts and Trends - European Culture Policy Database, n.d) and the "Law on Spatial Management and Urban Planning Principles," which "regulates the process of spatial

management and urban planning in Georgia. As well as being responsible for private development, this Law regulates the process of accommodation, development of settlements and infrastructure in compliance with the requirements of protecting the cultural heritage and environment, and establishes in this sphere the rights and responsibility of governmental institutions and natural and legal persons.” (Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe: a Compendium of Basic Facts and Trends - European Culture Policy Database, n.d)

Countries vary enormously in terms of the extensiveness and explicitness of their cultural regulations. Georgia’s laws regulating architecture and urban planning are an example of highly explicit regulations in the cultural arena; in many other cases, however, cultural regulation occurs as a by-product of other laws, perhaps with unintended consequences for culture. But even cultural regulations established with explicit intent may require change and revision over time. New Zealand’s copyright law provides a good example of how regulation can be readapted from another context to fit local issues. One key lesson from New Zealand’s policy is the importance of recognizing that the cultural sector is in constant flux, and regulatory policies that affect culture will need to be responsive to changing conditions.

COORDINATION OF ARTS AGENCIES

One means of insuring that regulations do not have an unintended, negative cultural impact is through the increased coordination of arts agencies. For example, the cultural policy in Australia is said to have “evolved as an ad hoc series of decisions by governments of all levels. The result is that there is no coherent set of principles to underpin the way our governments at all levels support and regulate culture. Rather, a set of de facto policies has evolved, often haphazardly, which are inconsistent and contradictory” (Eltham & Westbury, 2010).

Currently in the United States, the two national agencies in the government given primary responsibility to support the cultural sector are the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). These two agencies, trusted with the charge to support, protect, and encourage America's culture, are mainly funding agencies. They do not have the ability to affect the scope of the cultural domain as they are dependent on political will for their budget size as well as their very existence. They also do not have the ability to coordinate the many federal agencies that impact American culture; for example, federal agencies ranging from the Department of Education, the armed services, the Library of Congress, to the departments of Justice and the Interior all have budget allocations for arts and cultural programming, yet have no substantive ties to the NEA or the NEH.

For the past three decades in the United States, arts advocates have been calling for increased coordination of American arts agencies. In 1989, Congressperson Mary Rose Oaker (D-Ohio) introduced a bill to establish a Department of Arts and Humanities. Cherbo (1992) has made a case for unifying the fragmented federal arts support in American under the umbrella of a Department of Cultural Resources, arguing that the cabinet position would make the many scattered federal arts programs more effective and coordinated. In 1992, there were estimated to be over 200 federal programs that provide resources, activities, and support for the arts. In addition, she argues that more coordination could "help formulate a presently nonexistent national policy agenda on the goals and purposes of federal arts support" and provide legitimacy to America's heritage (Cherbo, 1992). This type of coordination would have the potential to support the nation's art and culture through sponsorship, as well as "preservation, education, policy coordination, access to public facilities, information gathering and dissemination, economic promotion and protection, and international exchange and export." (Cherbo, 1992)

In a 2008 opinion-editorial written for the New York Times, William Ferris, the then-chairperson for the National Endowment of the Humanities discussed the need for a cabinet-level position for a secretary of culture. In addition to the NEA and NEH, the U.S. has established a wide array of federal cultural programs including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, NPR, PBS and the Smithsonian Institution. As the leader of one of these institutions, he saw that many of the institutions in the cultural sector, “though shared by a common goal, can sometimes run into conflict with one another” (Ferris, 2008). From his macro-level view of the cultural sector in the United States, he saw a need for “cohesive leadership” to coordinate these agencies.

Examples: National Coordination

Australia provides another example of the need for coordination among culture-affecting agencies. Although the Australian Government has the Australia Council for the Arts as their dedicated arts policy and advisory agency, it has not been restructured, refocused, or retooled since its inception in the 1970s. Namely, in not redrawing the boundaries of the cultural domain as it evolves, some have argued that “the Australia Council is increasingly irrelevant to culture today... [in terms of] defin[ing] both what culture is and how it should be administered.” As one example, Eltham and Westbury (2010) noted that the Australia Council has had little meaningful engagement with digital and new media arts, social networking, or gaming, and as a result, “much of the cultural policy action has taken place outside the Arts portfolio.” For example, although the development of a National Broadband Network guarantees the largest cultural infrastructure initiative in Australia’s history, it has been debated and evaluated in the Communications portfolio, which is separate from the Arts portfolio (Eltham & Westbury, 2010).

An inspiring example from the international context that represents effective coordination among arts agencies comes from the model in Scotland. In 2008, Scotland's culture minister Michael Russell established "Creative Scotland" to coordinate support for Scotland's creative sector. Partners—from both the commercial and nonprofit creative industries—spanned a wide range of perspectives and thirteen sectors, including business, local government, broadcast, communications, fashion and textiles, film, software development, theatre, education, and gaming.

These partners signed a Framework Agreement focused on cohesive and effective support for the cultural sector. The partners, by signing the agreement, also took an active role in both redefining and widening the size and scope of the cultural domain. The agreement, according to partners, was an effort to create "a single support structure, coordinated by Creative Scotland" (Scottish Government, 2008). This centralized process between partners was designed to "ensure that artists and creative practitioners find appropriate support, and experience a seamless journey right from the first point of contact" and to bring arts practitioners to "the center of developing a shared vision" for the future of the sector. According to Seona Reid, Director of Glasgow School of Art, "The Framework Agreement...emphasizes the central role of Creative Scotland in providing overall co-ordination - and thus provides the creative industries with a long awaited national champion and ... gives the creative practitioner a crucial voice in shaping policy and priorities" (Scottish Government, 2008).

Another international example of the positive impact of coordination of agencies within a country is found in Canada. Created in June 1993 by consolidating several government departments, the Canadian Department of Canadian Heritage coordinates all cultural policies for Canada. This Department reports to Parliament and represents a wide range of independent

federal agencies, including those in charge of film, broadcasting, arts, radio-television, and telecommunications, as well as the National Library, National Museums (of Science and Industry, Aviation, Nature, Civilization, War), and the National Archives (Cliche and Cowl, n.d.).

The track record of the Canadian Department of Heritage is quite extensive; and the effectiveness of its coordination capacity is demonstrated in the number of legislative acts it has sponsored and the breadth of its reach across the cultural domain. The legislation that the Department has administered in whole or in part include policy topics as varied as libraries, broadcasting, museums, film development, public archives, artists' status, multiculturalism, telecommunications, historic sites and monuments, heritage railways, transportation, official languages, copyright, communications, control of property export and import, national parks, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Cliche and Cowl, n.d.). One of the reasons that so many laws and regulations shaping cultural policy were successfully passed was undoubtedly because of the coordination across Canada's cultural agencies.

Examples: International Coordination

Beyond coordination *within* a country, one macro-level example of coordination of cultural agencies *among* different countries is the European Capital of Culture. This European Union (EU) program was created in 1985, with a different city highlighted as the chosen Capital of Culture each year since (with the exception of nine cities chosen for 2000). These cities provide a year of cultural programs and receive financial support provided by the European Commission. In 1992, the Commission additionally created and provided financial support for European Cultural Month, which highlights the cultural assets of cities for a month. "The aim has been to

highlight not only the cultural wealth and diversity of individual cities, but also the cultural heritage and cultural vitality across Europe (Cogliandro, 2001, as cited Hughes, et. al, 2003).

As with any undertaking of this magnitude, there are many perceived strengths and weaknesses to this program. A few of the strengths include an opportunity to market the city's image internationally; increase tourism to the city; benefit from economic growth (Hughes et. al., 2003); increase local pride; stimulate culture; encourage cross-border cultural cooperation, social cohesion and urban regeneration; and restore cultural infrastructure (The Malta Independent Online, 2011).

A case study of the city of Krakow's experience with this program, however, also underscored some specific weaknesses. For example, some felt the program consolidated existing festivals and events instead of focusing on creating new material; that the program highlighted world and European culture over native arts and culture; and that small organizations and/or emerging artists were not given much of a chance to participate in or compete with the programming. An additional and often cited weakness was that the funding primarily favored major and existing institutions and artists, and that the allocation of funds seemed to be made on a political, rather than an artistic, basis (Hughes et. al., 2003).

Examples: Regional Coordination

Finally, to establish that not all coordination must happen on a national, macro-level scale, one could look at coordination in Singapore. In recent recommendations to the Minister Lui Tuck Yew, The Arts and Culture Strategic Review Steering Committee included a coordination effort between the government of Singapore and a network of performing arts centers and affordable gathering and rehearsal facilities. Included in the recommendation was a call to retool

and upgrade school halls and theatres to open up to public and community groups, and roll out “pay-per-use” shared facilities to artists and arts groups. The twofold benefit of this program would be to increase access of space to artists and arts groups, as well as to expose more communities to their local arts and foster more local arts participation. Beyond these regional hubs, the coordination effort included incentivizing community clubs to house arts and culture groups within their facilities (Government of Singapore, 2011).

The range of international coordinating agencies and strategies that serve to link the arts and leverage their impact provides useful models for the highly decentralized arts sector in the U.S. Three decades of arts advocates have called for more coordination of the arts in the United States, and the examples cited here are among the many international examples that U.S. can learn from and draw on in efforts to improve coordination. For instance, Scotland’s “Framework of Agreement” can demonstrate the lessons learned from shaping a centralized support structure for the arts, and the Canadian Department of Heritage’s extensive legislative track record demonstrates the ability of an umbrella organization to voice the cultural impact of legislation. The European Capital of Culture program may offer ideas about how to mobilize regional U.S. cultural participation and the possibilities of federal-state partnerships. Finally, the coordination recommendations recently presented by the Government of Singapore serve as a reminder that national-regional coordination can be an important tool in encouraging vibrant local arts and culture.

CONCLUSION

Despite the vast range of international approaches to cultural policy, many cultural organizations and individuals all over the world face the same problems: the amount, sources, and dependability of funding, how to access and address the potential cultural impact of regulations, and how to coordinate different actors and spheres of culture. Although many unresolved dilemmas remain, some of the international frameworks and examples in addressing these issues may provide inspiration to other countries to apply to their specific contexts. From exploring crowd-sourcing as an avenue of funding, to understanding different frameworks and scales of cultural regulation, to developing partnerships and infrastructure conducive to the coordination of arts agencies, there are important international practices that may seed ideas for fostering more vibrant and robust cultural sectors around the world.

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