

# ***A Profile of Art Galleries in Ontario Phase Two : In Their Own Words***



<http://www.hillstrategies.com>  
[info@hillstrategies.com](mailto:info@hillstrategies.com)

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ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
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# ***A Profile of Art Galleries in Ontario: Phase 2 – In Their Own Words***

## **Section 1: Introduction and Methodology**

This report summarizes the results of interviews with directors, curators and board representatives of 15 art galleries across Ontario. Gallery representatives were asked about their mandate, collection, community, successes, challenges, and priorities for the future. Gallery participants were asked to answer the questions based on their experience in their role at the gallery.

The project was undertaken for the Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) by Hill Strategies Research and funded by the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). Respondents were assured that nothing they said during the interviews would count for or against them in terms of provincial funding but that the OAC intended to translate and publish the report so that galleries could compare themselves and identify similarities and differences in their operations.

It was felt that this study would provide valuable information on the current state of art galleries in Ontario and could be repeated by OAAG in five or ten years in order to examine changes in the state of Ontario's art galleries. This qualitative study complements the quantitative analysis provided in *A Profile of Art Galleries in Ontario: Phase 1 – Statistics from the 2003 OAAG Data Exchange*. That report, also prepared for OAAG by Hill Strategies Research, summarizes the submissions of 39 OAAG members to the 2003 Data Exchange. The statistical report also examines changes in galleries' finances and activities between 1993 and 2003.

Each of the 15 galleries interviewed for this project are OAAG members. Kelly Hill of Hill Strategies Research visited each of the galleries in person between January 17<sup>th</sup> and March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 to conduct the interviews in the gallery setting.

Fourteen of the 15 interview sessions were recorded, and many of the comments in this report are exact quotes of the interview participants' comments.<sup>1</sup>

### *Selection of galleries*

Gallery data from the 2003 OAAG Data Exchange was used to group galleries based on region, revenue size, attendance levels, operating structure, collection type and size, as well as date of establishment. From this data, the project researcher determined that 15 galleries would provide both a manageable sample in the timeframe for this project (December 2004 – March 2005) and a solid representation of OAAG members.

A broad spectrum of galleries participated in the interviews. In terms of revenue size, the galleries ranged from the Latham Gallery in Stouffville to the Art Gallery of Ontario. Geographically speaking, the galleries are located across the province, including representation from the north (Thunder Bay Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Sudbury), eastern Ontario (Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Ottawa Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Peterborough), Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario,

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<sup>1</sup> The background noise level was high during the Mercer Union interview, so this interview was not recorded.

Textile Museum and Mercer Union artist-run centre), the Greater Toronto Area (Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto-Mississauga and Latcham Gallery in Stouffville), and southwestern Ontario (Museum London, Grimsby Public Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, and the Woodland Cultural Centre).

Table 1 shows the galleries interviewed as well as the locations and dates of the interviews.

<b>Table 1: Art Gallery Interviews</b>		
<b>Gallery</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
Museum London	London	January 17
Grimsby Public Art Gallery	Grimsby	January 21
Agnes Etherington Art Centre	Kingston	January 25
Ottawa Art Gallery	Ottawa	January 26
Art Gallery of Hamilton	Hamilton	February 4
Mercer Union	Toronto	February 4
Tom Thomson Art Gallery	Owen Sound	February 7
Blackwood Gallery	Mississauga	February 8
Art Gallery of Ontario	Toronto	February 17
Textile Museum	Toronto	February 21
Latcham Gallery	Stouffville	February 23
Woodland Cultural Centre	Brantford (Six Nations)	February 24
Thunder Bay Art Gallery	Thunder Bay	March 2
Art Gallery of Sudbury	Sudbury	March 3
Art Gallery of Peterborough	Peterborough	March 7

### *Interview participants*

The key component of the research was a series of interviews with the Director, Curator, and senior Board representative of art galleries across Ontario to obtain their perspective on the gallery and their individual role within its development. It was the researcher's intent to conduct these interviews in person at the gallery with all three parties present.

All of the interviews were indeed conducted in person at the participating galleries. However, board representatives were not as readily available as gallery staff members. Eight interviews were conducted with a board representative (usually the Chair or President) present as part of the interview group. Seven were conducted without a board representative in the room because of scheduling or other practical difficulties. In all of these cases, a board representative was interviewed separately.

In five galleries, the director holds the dual position of Director/Curator. In these cases, no separate curatorial representative was available.

Table 2 lists the interview participants in each of the 15 galleries.

<b>Table 2: Interview Participants</b>			
<b>Gallery</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Curator</b>	<b>Board representative</b>
Museum London	Brian Meehan, Director	Melanie Townsend, Curator of Contemporary Art	Ron Robinson, Board President (separate interview)
Grimsby Public Art Gallery	Rhona Wenger, Director/Curator		Sue Granger, Chair of Advisory Board
Agnes Etherington Art Centre	Janet Brooke, Director	Dorothy Farr, Curator	June Anderson, Advisory Board member (separate interview)
Ottawa Art Gallery	Megan Williams, Acting Director	Emily Falvey, Curator and Milena Placentile, Curatorial Resident	Johanna Mizgala, Board member (separate interview)
Art Gallery of Hamilton	Louise Dompierre, Director	Shirley Madill, Curator	Michael Schwenger, President
Mercer Union	Natalie de Vito and David Dymont, Co-Directors		Michelle Jaques, President (separate interview)
Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery	Stuart Reid, Director/Curator		Michael Warren, President
Blackwood Gallery	Barbara Fischer, Director/Curator		John Armstrong, Advisory Committee Chair
Art Gallery of Ontario	Matthew Teitelbaum, Director	Dennis Reid, Curator	Charles Baillie, President (separate interview)
Textile Museum	Natalie Nagy, Director	Sarah Quinton, Contemporary Curator and Exhibitions Manager (separate interview)	Virginia Murray, President (separate interview)
Latcham Gallery	Roz Pritchard, Director	Maura Broadhurst, Curator	Margaret Brock, President
Woodland Cultural Centre	Tom Hill, Museum Director and Janis Montour, Cultural Centre Executive Director		Dennis Lewis, President (separate interview)
Thunder Bay Art Gallery	Sharon Godwin, Director	Glenn Allison, Curator	Laurie Hill, President
Art Gallery of Sudbury	Celeste Scopelitis, Director/Curator		Dennis Castellan, Vice-Chair
Art Gallery of Peterborough	Illi-Maria Tamplin, Director/Curator		Glynis Smerhy, President

### *Interview protocol*

The questions posed to gallery representatives included:

- the mission and mandate of the gallery;
- each individual's role in making that mission happen;
- the role and importance of the gallery's collection (if applicable);
- the gallery's relationship to its community and each individual's role in relating to the community;
- key successes and challenges in their role within the gallery;
- priorities and goals for the future; and
- other issues of importance to gallery representatives.

This set of questions was asked during almost all of the interviews, although interviews were allowed to flow in slightly different directions given the interests and comments of interview participants.

Although the interviews varied in length, the interviews lasted an average of approximately one hour.

The interviews were designed as a self-assessment by gallery representatives. Other internal or external views about the galleries and their roles were not solicited for this project. In addition, the questions were not intended to challenge the interviewees about their functions and role but rather to collect information about what they do and how they do it. This report attempts to reflect as accurately as possible the comments of the gallery participants during the 15 interviews.

### *Organization of the report*

The remainder of this report is organized by interview topic. Section 2 summarizes the mandates of the galleries and the interview participants' roles in accomplishing these mandates. Section 3 summarizes the discussions regarding gallery collections. The fourth section examines the galleries' connections in their communities. Sections 5 and 6 highlight the successes and challenges identified by interview participants. Section 7 examines the galleries' plans and priorities for the future. Finally, Section 8 provides a summary of the findings of this report.

## **Section 2: Mandates and Roles**

This section summarizes interviewees' responses to questions regarding their organization's mandate and their own role within the organization.

### *Mandates*

Given that many of the galleries interviewed are municipal galleries, it is not surprising that mandates often stress connection with local communities or regions, including:

- serve the local community as a public art gallery;
- engage people in the community with fine art;
- act as the main repository and institute of record for the region;
- serve the local arts community;
- be the most vital visual arts organization in the community;
- present local, regional and provincial exhibitions;
- represent the contemporary art practice of the city and give a sense of the history of that practice;
- develop and participate in community collaborations; be “plugged in” to the community; and
- present regional artists' work and travelling shows to the local community.

From this local or regional base, many galleries indicated that they emanate outwards by drawing audiences from broader regions or by touring exhibitions that they generate.

In the case of university galleries, service to the university community and the broader educational purpose of the university were also stressed. Some university galleries grapple with their dual connections to the university and the overall local community. They also, in some cases, see themselves as a conduit between “gown and town”.

Some galleries' mandates stress broader connections, including:

- bring art and people together to boldly declare that art matters;
- art is a vital experience;
- teach us about ourselves and the world;
- foster a discourse about art;
- further knowledge of contemporary art (local, regional, national and international);
- stimulate interest in contemporary art and its histories;
- provide learning opportunities; and
- present contemporary First Nations artists from across Canada.

As part of the research goal of interviewing a broad range of organizations, some organizations interviewed have mandates that are specific in some ways and very broad in others:

- The Woodland Museum has a focus on First Nations art but also has a wide range of archaeological and other materials in its collection.
- Mercer Union has a focus on contemporary art in all media, including conceptually-engaged and site-specific work. Part of Mercer Union's goal is to allow space for artists to do riskier work that could not be done in a commercial gallery.
- The Textile Museum explores the continuum of textile work from antiquity to the present through all of its activities, including exhibitions, collections, education programs, research and documentation. The Museum promotes an understanding of human identity through textiles and engages the public by fostering knowledge, creativity and awareness. The Museum attempts to counter a lack of understanding regarding textiles and to provide information about the context within which textiles are created and presented.

As organizational priorities and positions change, mandates also change. A few of the organizations interviewed have recently redefined their mandates or are currently in the process of re-thinking their mandate (usually in conjunction with a strategic planning process). As part of its revitalization project, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery is attempting to understand the background and contexts for its work and, as such, is engaged in more than just a strategic planning exercise. The Art Gallery of Sudbury is also working on repositioning itself within the community, partly through participating in a Creative Clusters Program in conjunction with Toronto Artscape.

During the interviews, gallery representatives indicated that they go well beyond simply providing gallery space in their communities. The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery indicated that it sees itself as a visual arts cultural centre and a potential "destination", in partnership with other local organizations. Others, including Museum London and the Woodland Cultural Centre, combine general museum and art museum functions in a broad mandate.

### *Roles within the galleries*

The following portions of this section summarize the roles of galleries' boards (or advisory committees), directors and curators based on interview participants' comments about their roles during the 15 interviews conducted for this project.

### *Boards of Directors and Advisory Committees*

Most of the galleries included in the interviews have formal boards of directors, but three galleries have advisory committees. In both cases, these bodies are composed of volunteers.

Boards of directors are involved in the overall governance of the organization and are usually charged with policy and oversight functions. Boards attempt to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the organization. Boards usually provide strategic leadership to organizations and help develop plans to move the organization forward. Many boards have a significant role in advocating for the gallery's needs with other stakeholders, such as local politicians.

Fundraising is a major role of most boards, especially during specific building or other campaigns.

Boards provide checks and balances for staff directors and assist them in furthering the mandate of the organization. Board members often bring business backgrounds to the organization, often providing a sounding board and a location for second thought about key business decisions.

Most board members are representatives of the community and thereby provide a key level of community contact for gallery staff. Many board members are active in their communities by attending exhibitions and connecting with the art community.

Some boards are strictly representational, in that they are composed of stakeholders in the organization's activities rather than general community members and those with specific expertise related to the organization's activities. For example, the Woodland Cultural Centre's Board is composed of representatives from four Band Councils (Tyendinaga – Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, Wahta – Kanienkeha-Ka Mohawks, Six Nations, and Mississaugas of the New Credit).

Some boards, especially in smaller organizations, are charged with more hands-on activities. Some volunteers at the Latcham Gallery do "millions of hours of volunteer work", including vacuuming, painting, and helping to set up exhibitions. At Mercer Union, the board members, including artists, designers, educators, writers and creators, is involved in "physical labour" in the centre, especially concerning fundraising and events.

The two university galleries interviewed have an advisory committee structure rather than a board of directors. These advisory committees are less formal than a board structure, and sometimes do not have a strong fundraising or policy role in the organization. They usually function as a representational group, in that committee members provide a two-way conduit of information between the gallery and key stakeholders (e.g., the education system, local government, etc.) Advisory committees often have less involvement in gallery activities than a formal board of directors.

### *Directors*

As "chief of operations", art gallery directors (staff positions) lead and shape the organization in conjunction with the board of directors. They are responsible for the overall management of the gallery and its staff. Directors oversee galleries' acquisition and exhibition programs in order to support the gallery's mandate. Directors help to ensure that professional standards are met within the organization. As one director indicated, she works to ensure that "art remains at the centre of what we do".

An important component of the role of art gallery director is to help find grants, sponsorships and other revenue sources to keep the organization running. This fundraising function is usually shared with a board of directors.

Directors engage in community outreach activities to develop and maintain links between the organization and the community, including funders, community groups and the arts community. One director remarked that he is often "running around with an oil can greasing the wheels" to make sure that the gallery flourishes and its connections in the community remain strong.

Directors are often involved in advocacy work, including advocating for arts funding at the local, provincial and national levels.

Some directors espouse a team approach to gallery activities, allowing for connections between staff members, staff functions and a mix of individual and collective work.

Directors in university settings also help to ensure that students' work and goals are furthered by the organization.

Some directors, especially in smaller galleries and artist-run centres, are actively involved in many aspects of each exhibition, including hanging and maintaining works on display that need particular attention.

In five galleries interviewed for this project, the director holds a dual position of Director/Curator. The Director/Curators interviewed indicated that they spend a large portion of their time on administration and fundraising activities and that it is difficult to find the time for curatorial responsibilities. The reward of this dual role is that Director/Curators can further their own curatorial programs without an intermediary.

Directors noted that growth in their budgets as well as in their collections and exhibitions has created increasing demands on their time.

### *Curators*

A gallery's curator and curatorial team ensure that exhibitions, collections and programming meet the mandate of the organization. They endeavour to present and interpret a rigorous artistic program in the gallery. They collect and acquire work, manage exhibition schedules, and build exhibition and publication activities.

Curators also liaise with local artists through studio visits, advice, reference letters and collecting works. They connect with the community by serving on community boards and advisory committees.

Many curators are involved in the gallery's broader public programs, including school groups, artists' talks and other education activities.

Curators are also involved in gallery promotional work and broader arts advocacy.

### **Section 3: Collections**

Although a specific question about permanent collections was not part of the original interview protocol, it became apparent during the first interview that this was a gap in the protocol. Discussions about galleries' collections – what works they contain, why they are important and how galleries are adding to them – became an important part of the interviews.<sup>2</sup> Challenges related to collections are summarized in Section 6 of this report.

Three main topics are addressed in this section of the report:

- the nature of the galleries' permanent collections;
- why the galleries' collections are important; and
- how galleries are adding to their collections.

#### *Nature of the collections*

The 13 galleries with permanent collections that were interviewed for this project have varied strengths and focuses in their collections. Many galleries were originally established to house a specific collection. The Art Gallery of Peterborough, incorporated in 1974, started with 19 pieces from the historical Canadian collection of the local teachers' college. These pieces were once part of the Ryerson collection. Other galleries that indicated in the interviews that they were established to house a specific collection include the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, the Blackwood Gallery and the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery.

A number of galleries indicated that they have the unique role of collecting and championing local or regional artists' works.

All galleries expressed pride in their collection and indicated that their collection is a strength of their organization. Many of the galleries have distinguished and varied collections:

- most hold primarily Canadian works;
- many hold a combination of historical and contemporary works;
- many have a significant collection of local artists' work;
- some collect works by non-local artists who have a significant connection to the community;
- many have collections that represent various media; and
- some specialize or wish to specialize in certain types of works, such as the Textile Museum (textile-based works) or the Blackwood Gallery (multiples, editions and print-based works).

Some details of specific galleries' collections emerged during the interviews.

- The Agnes Etherington Art Centre has a distinguished collection among university galleries in the country and the fourth largest collection overall in Ontario.

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<sup>2</sup> We wish to thank Melanie Townsend of Museum London for pointing out the absence of a specific question regarding galleries' collections.

- The Art Gallery of Hamilton received a very large addition to its permanent collection thanks to a gift from the Tanenbaum family. After closing its main gallery space for renovations, the gallery re-opened in May 2005 with an exhibition of iconic works from the permanent collection. This exhibition, which has been booked to tour across Canada, will be accompanied by a major research publication.
- The Art Gallery of Ontario received a very large gift of works from Ken Thomson's collection, which it will be featuring in its Frank Gehry re-designed building. The gallery is remaining open during its renovation period.
- The Art Gallery of Peterborough has an eclectic collection of 1,200 works with many Canadian historical and contemporary works, including many by local artists. Many of the gallery's exhibitions are drawn from the permanent collection, and the gallery has a major collection show about once every 18 months.
- Many works in the Art Gallery of Sudbury's collection are owned by Laurentian University, under whose auspices the gallery was initially established.
- The Blackwood Gallery's collection is housed in university offices, the library, the cafeteria, labs, the registrar's office and other locations around campus and, as such, is enjoyed by many faculty and staff at the University of Toronto at Mississauga.
- The Grimsby Public Art Gallery's collection is comprised of about 1,200 works that provide a vision of the creative life of Grimsby over time. The collection includes paintings and sculptures with a connection to Grimsby as well as book art and works on paper from across Canada.
- The Woodland Cultural Centre's 35,000-work collection includes a range of archaeological material as well as almost 200 artworks from well-known and lesser-known First Nations artists.
- Museum London has a broad collection, the bulk of which consists of the work of London artists, with much of the rest being other Canadian works. Museum London was one of two galleries interviewed (along with the Woodland Cultural Centre) that collects more broadly than visual art.
- The Ottawa Art Gallery's collection includes the Firestone Collection, which has a value of about \$11 million and allows for varied and complex programming.
- The Textile Museum's collection includes 13,000 works from 110 distinct cultures from 11 regions of the world.
- The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery was established in 1967 as a result of a major gift from the Thomson family. The gallery is exploring ways of "regionalizing" its activities, and the permanent collection is a component of this potential regionalization project.
- The Thunder Bay Art Gallery's 1,300-piece collection includes mostly First Nations and contemporary work. It represents the largest contemporary First Nations collection in Canada.

### *Why collections are important*

Interview respondents noted that collections are held in trust for the community and as such are public. As was stated in an interview, collections are owned by the community – by the people who experience the work. Collections can be a touchstone for a community and can provide a substantial reference point to Canadian art for people in the gallery’s region. Collections can also “elicit intense experiences from individuals in very specific ways”. If done well, collections can tie a community to an institution and can be a source of pride for the community.

Galleries’ permanent collections provide a visual history of the area by documenting the artistic practice in the community and the region. Collections provide an indication of changes in the community. As was stated in one interview, “50 years from now, when people look back, the collection will show what people were thinking about and what their preoccupations were.” Permanent collections are also a record of the way that galleries have engaged with the larger world over time. Collections also provide a way of imagining how galleries want to be engaged with the larger world.

For some, collections are a “prime function of the organization” and a “pivotal resource” that centres the gallery. Some of the ways in which collections act as fulcrums of galleries’ activities include the fact that:

- exhibitions are often drawn from collections;
- community members often have a strong connection with galleries’ collections or particular works in the collections; and
- acquisitions and donations relate to what is currently in the collection or what is missing from the collection.

Collections stimulate ideas about art interpretation and help galleries develop exhibition ideas. As stated by the Woodland Cultural Centre, the “collection guides us in our programming”.

The fact that galleries hold permanent collections communicates to the public that art has a substantial social and cultural value and that art is not just ephemeral.

Galleries in university settings noted that permanent collections are valuable teaching resources for universities’ fine arts programs. Certain components of collections, such as the Bader Collection at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, are focal points of academic activity. The Agnes Etherington Art Centre’s permanent collection is also an important part of Queen’s University’s Masters Program in arts conservation, a unique program in Canada.

In all collecting galleries, the research function related to collections is very important. Collections are studied for what they might say about the history and relevance of certain works, and publications are based on this research work. Ontario galleries’ collections attract curators and scholars from around the world.

Like all artist-run centres, Mercer Union does not have a mandate to collect works. Neither does the Latcham Gallery. These interview participants were engaged in a conversation about permanent collections. Both indicated that the development and maintenance of a permanent collection would require additional space as well as significant fundraising and registrar activities.

Given the “performative” aspect of much of the work shown at Mercer Union, it sees itself as working with artists, ideas and new works in a more ephemeral way than collecting galleries. Mercer Union attempts to give artists the space to develop something new and unique in their space.

### *How galleries are adding to their collections*

Most galleries are adding to their collections in response to their mandates and their communities. As noted in the quantitative analysis in *A Profile of Art Galleries in Ontario: Phase 1 – Statistics from the 2003 Data Exchange*, over 12,000 works were added to Ontario galleries’ permanent collections in 2002/03. Of this number, 98% were donated. An example of this is the Grimsby Public Art Gallery, which has purchased only one work since 1999. Additions to their permanent collection have come almost exclusively from donations. The Woodland Centre indicated that it purchases about 2 or 3 works per year, while the Ottawa Art Gallery indicated that, with its “small acquisitions budget”, it attempts to purchase about 5-8 works per year.

In this situation, donor cultivation and donor management are essential activities. As one gallery director noted during an interview, the gallery “nurtures relationships with artists and collectors to continue to ensure that the collection is strong and vibrant”.

Some gallery directors indicated that they have a formal acquisitions committee and specific plans for increasing their donations. The Woodland Cultural Centre started formal collections planning in 1982. The Textile Museum recently developed a collections strategy by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their existing collection. The gallery then decided to collect more works in the weaker areas of their collection and to possibly reject gifts that do not fit into their overall plan. Their goal in doing this is to find works that fit best into what they currently have.

## **Section 4: Communities**

For this project, galleries were interviewed from:

- the north: the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Sudbury;
- eastern Ontario: the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, the Ottawa Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Peterborough;
- Toronto: the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Textile Museum and Mercer Union;
- the Greater Toronto Area: Blackwood Gallery (at the University of Toronto-Mississauga) and the Latcham Gallery (Stouffville); and
- southwestern Ontario: Museum London, the Grimsby Public Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, and the Woodland Cultural Centre.

The 13 municipalities where these galleries are located range in population from 21,000 to 2.5 million (according to 2001 census data):

- Grimsby: 21,297
- Owen Sound: 21,431
- Whitchurch-Stouffville: 22,008
- Brantford: 31,669
- Peterborough: 71,446
- Thunder Bay: 109,016
- Kingston: 114,195
- Sudbury: 155,219
- London: 336,539
- Hamilton: 490,268
- Mississauga: 612,925
- Ottawa: 774,072
- Toronto: 2,481,494

The interview participants were engaged in a conversation about the gallery's community relationships and the participants' individual roles in relating to their community. In most of the interviews, questions about community connections were phrased as follows: "Who is your main community base and how do you see your relationship with your community? From your individual perspective, what is your role in relating to the community?" As might be expected, these questions led to a variety of conversations in the galleries interviewed.

## *Community – Who?*

Most Ontario galleries indicated that they have a number of communities that they attempt to serve, including the local, regional and national arts community, college and university students, local gallery-goers, and the general population.

Many galleries, including the Art Gallery of Peterborough, Museum London, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Woodland Cultural Centre, noted during the interviews that tourists are an important part of their audience base. The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery saw a decrease in US visitors after the SARS outbreak, but American visitors to the Gallery have bounced back to about the same level as before SARS.

Galleries that are co-located with another organization draw some visitors from the partner organization. This is the case in the Grimsby Public Art Gallery, which is co-located with the town's library, and the Latcham Gallery, which is co-located with a thrift store.

University galleries spoke of the need to serve both the university community and the general local population. Both the Blackwood gallery and the Agnes Etherington Art Centre see themselves as an important point of contact between “gown and town”. Key local constituencies for these galleries include university art students and the rest of the university community.

Given the recent attention paid to attracting “creative class” workers, some galleries are actively engaged in creative community projects that aim to attract people to their communities. In some cases, such as London and Sudbury, these local creative community efforts have resulted in significant community or media attention.

The Art Gallery of Sudbury's ongoing planning process asks the basic question of how do the gallery and the Board fit in the community.

Woodland Cultural Centre representatives indicated that the Centre has various audiences depending on its programming. Art exhibitions reach an artistic audience that is different than the audience for museum exhibitions with environmental or veterans' themes. The Centre draws much of its attendance from local reserves, including Six Nations, as well as from Brantford.

For Mercer Union, the main community base is the local geographic community and local artists. The centre is trying to build their audiences by engaging more people in art, with the goal of generating larger *and* more engaged audiences.

The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery sees itself as enriching the artistic aspect of life in Owen Sound and the broad Grey-Bruce area. The area has shown strong support for the gallery, with 150 to 200 people attending openings and the gallery's film festival selling out.

### *Connections strategies and challenges*

Many of the galleries spoke of their current and proposed strategies for connecting with their communities. Some spoke of the challenges in engaging their communities. Conversations on these topics from the 15 interviews are summarized in various categories:

- diverse audiences;
- education activities;
- board members and other volunteers;
- local governments;
- media and marketing;
- signage problems;
- local partnerships;
- the economy and tourism;
- increased profile; and
- other community initiatives.

### *Diverse audiences*

Museum London and the Art Gallery of Hamilton spoke of their attempts to make all welcome by addressing the range of potential audiences. For the Art Gallery of Hamilton, some people visit the gallery looking for a little bit of information, while art specialists are looking for a lot. The gallery attempts to serve the range of community needs. Museum London spoke of attempting to “program for everyone” from a range of education and income groups.

Other approaches to reaching diverse audiences mentioned during the interviews include:

- The Ottawa Art Gallery recognizes that “a lot of communities haven’t had reasons to come in the past”, and the Gallery tries to take an “active approach to diverse programming”. The Gallery attempts to be relevant to diverse individuals’ lives and experiences, as is the case with its “off-grid” program for young people, its integration of street artists into the Gallery, and its presentation of socially-relevant art. These efforts have helped the Gallery create connections with other organizations, such as in the case of an upcoming exhibition dealing with climate change and global warming, where the Sierra Club President is involved.
- Toronto galleries such as the AGO and the Textile Museum spoke of the need to connect with Toronto’s multicultural population. The Art Gallery of Ontario is attempting to connect with specific audiences through new collecting areas and culturally-specific objects (e.g., First Nations art and the Jackman Wing). The Textile Museum’s collection reflects the fabric of cultural diversity in Toronto. In fact, the Museum has a Canadian Tapestry Project that links diverse cultures represented in the collection back to Canadian life.

- The Blackwood Gallery, in conjunction with the Centre for Visual and Media Culture (a partnership between UTM and Sheridan College), is attempting to think of visual culture in a broader way. The Gallery also attempts to ensure that its programming reflects the diverse UTM and Mississauga community.
- The Art Gallery of Hamilton tries to create a bridge with various audiences by integrating art into daily activities: the gallery's "lifestyle programming" has sessions concerning art collecting, gardening, food and wine.
- London is undergoing a decrease in its London-born-and-bred population. Museum London is attempting to engage new Londoners and to be a part of a positive quality of life that might keep new Canadians in London. In this way, the gallery could be perceived as a local necessity even for those who do not visit the gallery themselves.

### *Education activities*

A number of galleries spoke of the challenges of connecting with younger audiences. Some have significant school-related programs that attempt to create connections with students and their parents. The Grimsby Public Art Gallery sees its education programs as connecting young people – and hopefully their parents – to the Gallery. Similarly, the Agnes Etherington Art Centre provides one of few art enrichment opportunities for students in the Kingston area.

The Art Gallery of Peterborough provides tours in French (one of only a few programs in Peterborough for French immersion schools) as well as education programs for special-needs groups in their wheelchair-accessible building. The Gallery's Grade 5 curriculum-based program reaches a large catchment area. In addition, the AGP has developed partnerships with the local post-secondary institutions in a range of programs: computer technology, museum management, leisure and recreation studies, marketing, education, English and Canadian studies.

In Stouffville, the Latham Gallery's curator knows the local teachers in their small community and keeps in touch with them regarding Gallery programs.

The Agnes Etherington Art Centre is working to raise awareness and recruit more members among its university community.

### *Board members and other volunteers*

A board member and a staff member at one gallery spoke of their desire to recruit more community leaders for the organization's board. However, there is significant competition for higher-profile board members, and arts and culture organizations are not always at the top of the volunteer list. Another gallery's board representative spoke of his efforts to help the organization become more transparent, open and communicative.

The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery noted that its Board members have significant connections to the local business and arts community, which helps to multiply the impact of staff efforts.

The Agnes Etherington Art Centre spoke of changes in volunteer expectations, as volunteers now demand a "return on investment" and a strong sense of achievement in return for their time. Previously, the perception of social status was a key motivation. The Centre also noted that there has been a decrease in the community attachment of Kingston-area residents, which may have an impact on local residents' attachment to the gallery.

### *Local governments*

Many galleries have attempted to strengthen their relationships with their local government. The Art Gallery of Peterborough encourages councillors and staffs to tour the facility. The Art Gallery of Sudbury has strengthened its connections with local politicians. However, the AGS and other galleries noted that, in the context of municipal restructurings and government downloading, municipal funds are limited.

### *Media and marketing*

Many galleries are attempting to reach out through membership mailings, newspaper ads, and art magazines. Many noted that they receive significant media attention for their activities and events, which helps attendance. The Woodland Cultural Centre attempts to connect with potential audiences through newsletters and by word of mouth. The Woodland Centre noted that group tours have decreased from previous years and that the Centre needs more proactive marketing to reach new audiences. Funding is a constraint in this regard.

A few of the galleries spoke of expanding their electronic communications to better connect with artists and others interested in the arts.

### *Signage problems*

A few galleries spoke of their signage challenges, including the two university galleries interviewed. The Blackwood Gallery noted that it is difficult to reach Mississauga residents because of the “problem of the suburbs where you see signage for the mall but not for the cultural organizations”. The Gallery initiated a Mississauga gallery-hop to ensure that people can find the different art gallery locations.

### *Local partnerships*

A few galleries spoke of specific local partnerships. The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery indicated that the Owen Sound application for the Cultural Capital designation in 2004 emanated from the gallery’s efforts. The designation has allowed the gallery to implement two new programs and further connect with other local cultural organizations. The Art Gallery of Sudbury indicated that it invites local groups to partner to put on programs.

### *Economy and tourism*

Partly through board and advisory committee efforts, galleries are trying to develop cultural tourism activities. A Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery board member co-chairs the local economic development committee, which helps the gallery be part of the local economic engine (and also helps the gallery be *perceived* as part of the local economic engine).

### *Increased profile*

A number of galleries spoke of improving their profile in their communities, their regions, the country and beyond. Mercer Union spoke of its efforts to increase its international profile, which helps local artists through juxtapositions with international artists' work and by increasing the recognition for artists who exhibit their work there.

### *Other community initiatives*

Other community-related initiatives in the galleries include:

- Extended opening hours: Two of the galleries noted that they are currently open longer hours or are planning to shift their opening hours to increase their attendance and serve their communities.
- Increased number of circulating exhibitions: The Blackwood Gallery has increased its circulating exhibitions, while the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery noted that “almost every show in the last year has travelled”.
- Increased publishing: Some of the galleries noted that their publishing programs have increased.

## **Section 5: Successes**

During the interviews, gallery representatives were asked: “From each of your individual perspectives, what are the key successes in your role within the gallery?”

### *Most common successes*

Because discussions of successes were free-flowing and no attempt was made to come to a singular list of galleries’ successes, an exact count of successes in various areas is not possible. However, based on the researcher’s notes and classifications, successes in six general areas were discussed most frequently:

- community relationships and local collaborations;
- exhibitions;
- finances;
- education and other programming;
- human resources; and
- gallery profile.

In fact, community-related successes were mentioned in each of the 15 interview sessions.

Some of these areas – finances, human resources and profile – are also on the list of most-mentioned challenges.

### *Community relationships and local collaborations*

Various aspects of galleries’ community relationships were pointed out as successes. Some galleries indicated that they “add value to the community”, “provide so much to the fibre of the community”, or “are more and more becoming the type of organization that the community wants”. For some galleries, this has been achieved by “changing perceptions in the community”, by ensuring “community ownership and recognition of need”, and by having a “good track record of responsiveness to community issues”. One gallery representative noted that community use of the gallery, including weddings and other special events, spins off into a positive feeling about the organization. A few board representatives noted that their gallery director is a strong member of the local arts community.

A success (and an ongoing challenge) noted by one organization is ensuring that the community feels a sense of ownership of the gallery and recognizes the need for the gallery in the community. One gallery spoke of its high approval rating in the community, while another pointed to its awareness of the local cultural landscape and where they fit in. This organization also indicated that its presence has helped turn a struggling neighbourhood into one that is more artistic and flourishing.

Some galleries indicated that their relationship with the local government, university faculty and students are successes. A few spoke of successful collaborations with other local organizations or other galleries (provincially, nationally and internationally).

### *Exhibitions*

The area of exhibitions was one of the most-mentioned successes. Some galleries pointed to specific exhibitions, such as the AGO's Turner-Whistler-Monet and Modigliani exhibitions. These successes have given them "credibility and momentum" and the opportunity to work with major museums around the world. The Woodland Cultural Centre pointed to its Snowsnake and Planet Indigenous shows as successes.

Other exhibition-related comments include:

- "every exhibit is a success, because of its uniqueness, people are drawn into the centre";
- our "artistically stunning shows" by "artists with incredible profile ... have captured national attention";
- we receive "positive responses, even to contemporary work";
- "even our worst shows would be interesting failures";
- our "interesting, exciting and circulating exhibitions" have been a success;
- our success of "keeping a balance and variety of exhibitions" is also an ongoing challenge; and
- we have been "successful in giving artists opportunities to experiment".

### *Finances*

A number of galleries have been successful in increasing their revenues. For the 21 galleries reporting financial data to the 1993 and 2003 OAAG Data Exchange projects:

- total revenues increased by 71% over the 10-year period;
- private sector revenues increased nearly fivefold;
- earned revenues increased nearly fourfold; and
- government revenues increased by 27%.

The above figures have not been adjusted for the 20% inflation in Canada between 1993 and 2003. Nine of the galleries interviewed for this project are among the 21 galleries that reported full financial data in both 1993 and 2003.

During the interviews, a number of art gallery representatives highlighted the growth in overall, fundraising, earned and government revenues. Comments regarding overall revenues include:

- "we have increased our revenues by 45% over the past five years" through a variety of sources, including the gallery shop, a gala event, other fundraising events, a film festival, gallery night, sponsorships, and government agencies; and
- "the Executive Director has done a great job in increasing our funding capabilities and our outreach".

Regarding fundraising, two galleries noted that they have strengthened their gallery's development function. One of these galleries had no development function three years ago. Other comments regarding private-sector funding include:

- “our Board has been very successful in fundraising, but it is an ongoing grind”; and
- “we have had modest success in corporate awareness and financial support”.

A number of galleries indicated that they have successfully increased their earned revenues. Many gallery representatives pointed to their gift shops as a successful revenue-generator. One gallery noted that its catering and café partnership is a success.

Regarding government support, one gallery noted that it has been highly ranked by both the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council and has received additional funding. For a smaller gallery, receiving “project funding for almost every programming project” was noted as a success.

### *Education and other programming*

In the 2003 Data Exchange, 31 public art galleries reported providing 6,100 arts education activities or programs that were produced for, by or with 330,000 young people (under 18). These activities involved the participation of over 500 artists.

During the interviews, many galleries noted that their education programs are new, enduring and/or fully subscribed. Some galleries in smaller communities spoke of providing art-enrichment opportunities that are not available elsewhere in their communities.

One university gallery pointed to its success in ensuring that students see the profession of curating as a career option for them.

Other galleries noted a range of other programming highlights:

- conferences that attract a broad range of participants;
- increased programs and participation (and repeat participants);
- public lecture series; and
- “vital and innovative programming”.

### *Human resources*

During the interviews, a number of Board representatives indicated that hiring and keeping their Director (or Director/Curator) was a particular success. One Board President stated that “our community is fortunate to have someone of [the Director's] abilities”.

Other gallery representatives pointed to their success in hiring or keeping another staff member, often a full-time Curator or, in one case, an installation person. One gallery noted that attracting and retaining its “young and forward-looking staff” was a success. Other galleries indicated that volunteers, board and staff were all good people who were working hard for the betterment of the organization.

Some specific human resource-related comments include:

- “all of the Director/Curators have grown the gallery in terms of its community connections, exhibitions, programs and relationships with political levels”; and
- we have “remarkably committed staff members who are very invested and well-respected in the larger community”.

A number of galleries commented on the quality of their volunteers, although, as Section 6 shows, volunteer recruitment is a challenge for many galleries. One gallery in a small community noted that, because of the community size, gallery staff know their volunteers well and can adapt to their needs. Another gallery noted that the fact that their volunteers “keep coming back” to the organization is a success.

### *Profile*

Many of the galleries interviewed, both large and small, indicated that they have been successful in increasing their profile, through means such as the OAAG awards, increased media reviews and coverage, and better international positioning. One gallery representative indicated that “it helps you in Canada if you are well-regarded elsewhere”. Other representatives noted that an increase in their organization’s profile also improves the profile and recognition of artists who exhibit in their galleries.

### *Other areas of success*

Other successes mentioned during the interviews relate to:

- survival and general successes;
- collections and publications;
- governance;
- attendance;
- facilities; and
- planning.

### *Survival and general successes*

The Woodland Cultural Centre spoke of its success in providing a First Nations-directed and designed museum. Similarly, an interview participant from the Thunder Bay Art Gallery noted that the Gallery has championed two generations of First Nations artists.

Some galleries spoke of their survival as a success. In fact, survival was a success that was noted by various-sized galleries, not just the smallest organizations interviewed. Some of the interview participants’ comments were:

- “the organization is still alive and sometimes thriving”;
- “we’re still there”;
- “we’re 30 years old this year”;

- we've "kept the place open and hired incredible staff";
- "we're not scrambling as much anymore";
- "sometimes our successes and challenges have been the same thing: our ability to land on our feet leads to a perception that we might not need more support"; and
- "our internal stability has improved".

The bilingualism of the Ottawa Art Gallery was noted as both a success and a challenge, in that it represents both a significant activity for the gallery and a significant expenditure.

Other gallery representatives made comments that:

- we are "constantly building on successes but always with new energy";
- "there's a vibe, a pulse" around gallery activities;
- "we have a solid structure now in place" to move forward;
- we "always want more" out of ourselves and our programs; and
- "we're very connected with artists across the country and with other galleries"

#### *Collections and publications*

Based on statistics from the 2003 Data Exchange, galleries' collections grew by 29% between 1993 and 2003. During the interviews, a few gallery representatives noted that their collections have increased. Some spoke of specific additions to their collections:

- the Tanenbaum gift of over 200 works to the Art Gallery of Hamilton may have a long-term impact on the gallery's programming and international profile;
- the Agnes Etherington Art Centre received the donation of a Rembrandt work; and
- the recent Ken Thomson gift is a major addition to the Art Gallery of Ontario's collection and may increase the gallery's profile on the local, national and international stages.

The Textile Museum spoke of its ambitious project to digitize a significant portion of its collection.

Other galleries indicated that their "high-quality publications", their "publications and exhibitions record" or their "significant publications and research program" were successes.

#### *Governance*

A range of galleries spoke of having an "active Board", an "active Advisory Committee", or "a strong and committed [Board] group". One organization specified that its "Board is consistently strong and maintains a healthy level of turnover".

Others pointed to their Board governance model as a success:

- our Board is "policy-driven yet active and involved";
- our Board has undergone a significant change in its functioning to become a governance board that provides strategic direction; and

- our Board is “much more strategic and much less involved in day-to-day management issues”.

Other galleries have gone through specific Board challenges and have pulled through with a cohesive board – a success in itself. One gallery noted that its Board is “working together better than in the past”.

### *Attendance*

Attendance successes were noted by a few galleries, some in general terms (“attendance is up” and “people come from everywhere” to the gallery) and some much more specifically. One gallery noted that they have increased their attendance fourfold in recent years, but that they now plan to double this again. As the gallery director noted, “you have to engage people” in order to succeed in doing this.

### *Facilities*

Some galleries have improved their physical space, although Section 6 shows that facilities are a significant challenge for many galleries. The Grimsby Public Art Gallery recently moved into its new space, which is shared with the local library. This move was a success for the Gallery in many respects, in particular that the library board, the town and the art gallery board all agreed on the building. The move has led to “lots of energy and support”. In addition, the Gallery was only closed for less than one month during the move.

Another gallery noted that moving back to its original space was a success, given the constraints of its previous location. Although the AGO faces many challenges in completing its redesign, by many standards it has been successful in engaging world-renowned architect Frank Gehry to renovate its space. This is an opportunity that very few galleries could even imagine. To date, the Gallery has been successful in generating balanced funding for the redesign project through major donors, government and the public.

### *Planning*

A few galleries spoke of producing a strategic plan or other planning initiative that advanced the cause of the gallery, such as the Thunder Bay Art Gallery’s revitalization project. Other comments include:

- our “focus now is on our performance related to five strategic goals – our sustainable growth objectives”; and
- the Board has done “really great work in putting together a vision for where they want to go”.

## **Section 6: Challenges**

During the interviews, gallery representatives were asked: “From each of your individual perspectives, what are the key challenges in your role within the gallery?”

From the interviews, it was apparent that art galleries in Ontario are struggling to balance mission-driven and financially-driven activities. Some galleries noted that they “want to do more and offer more”, that they “have so many good ideas but too little time”, and that their “larger ambitions are not met by increased government funding”. One gallery representative stated that “we need finances that match the strength of the organization”.

Many galleries spoke of increased expectations of public service that have not been matched by increased funding levels or support for key gallery activities. Statistics from the 2003 OAAG Data Exchange show that overall gallery revenues increased by 71% between 1993 and 2003. Leading the increase were private sector revenues (which increased nearly fivefold during this timeframe) and earned revenues (which increased nearly fourfold). In contrast, government revenues increased by 27%, much less than other gallery revenues and only slightly higher than the 20% inflation between 1993 and 2003.

In addition, some gallery representatives perceive that funders’ attention, measurables and outcomes are not on the core work of galleries, including permanent collections and human resources.

Two of the smaller galleries interviewed indicated that they find it “a struggle to keep going” or to “sustain our operations”. On a more positive note, some galleries spoke of the challenges of “sustaining the current level of success and keeping the momentum going”, ensuring that the gallery remains appealing in the community, or diversifying their revenue sources (such as shops, tours, sponsors and rentals) to ensure their financial stability.

### *Most common challenges*

Financial challenges were mentioned in each of the 15 interview sessions. Other areas presenting challenges for a large number of galleries include:

- facilities;
- collections and research;
- governance;
- human resources; and
- gallery profile.

### *Financial challenges*

During the interviews, art gallery representatives highlighted challenges regarding overall, fundraising, earned and government revenues. One large gallery noted that it is a challenge to raise almost two-thirds of their revenues every year, while another gallery stated that they need to “close the operating income gap by finding a \$50,000 shortfall every year” between existing funding sources and their spending needs.

Other comments regarding overall revenues include:

- “funding is always an issue; we’re living on the edge all the time”;
- “money and fundraising take up a lot of our time and effort”;
- “so much time and energy is spent raising money”;
- “our difficult recent funding situation” has meant that “building maintenance and staff training have suffered”; and
- we are “doing more with less and less money, staff accept less pay and the gallery is crumbling a bit”.

Many galleries commented on their fundraising abilities and challenges. A number spoke generally of their “intense fundraising goals” given the scale of their operations. Others spoke of the challenges of attracting private-sector support, including foundations that have goals that coincide with the gallery’s mission. For some galleries, human resource challenges constrain their fundraising abilities.

Many galleries noted that their fundraising initiatives are in competition with hospital, university and other higher-profile funding drives.

One gallery representative spoke of the need to examine federal and provincial tax laws to determine how the tax system can be used to benefit the arts.

Concerning earned revenues, some galleries spoke of the challenges of integrating new business streams into their operations and generally building their self-generated revenues.

Many galleries commented on their government support. A common refrain was the need for sustainable long-term operating funding instead of shorter-term project funding. A number of galleries also indicated that they see a need for government funders to fund core activities and strengths of the galleries.

Some galleries indicated that, because of the competition for government funding, they have received less funding recently.

A few galleries spoke of the costs of gallery operations. One northern gallery indicated that it is often less expensive to bring in a travelling exhibition than to generate one of their own. Another gallery spoke of the difficulty of fulfilling the increasing demands on their programming and projects.

### *Facilities*

An important issue at many Ontario galleries is a lack of space for exhibitions, collections storage, and public programming. Among the galleries visited:

- the Latham Gallery is a one-room gallery with a small office space and off-site public programming space;
- the Woodland Cultural Centre’s building requires a significant renovation “almost every year”;

- the Thunder Bay Art Gallery has one small meeting room that is used for all meetings, education programs and other activities;
- the lease on Mercer Union's current space is up for renewal soon, and the organization is considering a potential move (given their expectation of increased rent); and
- some representatives of university galleries are hopeful that the recent Bob Rae report on universities may help them with some facilities challenges.

Many galleries are constrained by their physical space, which is not surprising given the 29% growth in Ontario galleries' collections in the past 10 years (a figure taken from *A Profile of Art Galleries in Ontario: Phase 1 – Statistics from the 2003 OAAG Data Exchange*). Some galleries are simply running out of storage space for their collections. The Ottawa Art Gallery has developed a business case for a new facility, partly to respond to their need for storage space. The Thunder Bay Art Gallery also indicated that they are running out of storage space but that they need to continue in their unique collecting role, including a focus on regional artists' works.

Many galleries are only able to display a small portion of their collections because of a lack of exhibition space. In fact, there were no works on display from the Thunder Bay Art Gallery's permanent collection at the time of the researcher's visit. The Art Gallery of Peterborough displayed works from its collection in the hallways between the main exhibition space and the education room.

As one gallery director noted, there is "no benefit in collecting stuff that is going to sit in storage". In this situation, galleries attempt to rotate works into their exhibitions wherever possible. A number of galleries are in the process of assessing their space needs with an eye to increasing the space available to show their permanent collection works.

For a few galleries, proper storage and climate control are major obstacles in developing their collections. Galleries that do not have A-grade status in facilities, like the Blackwood Gallery, are limited in their exhibition activities and cannot give 100% tax receipts for donations.

### *Collections and research*

It was clear from the interviews that many galleries believe that stewardship of their collections, including conserving works, developing collections and related publishing efforts, is not adequately supported by government funding. A number of interview participants noted that there is "no appropriate funding structure to support collecting" or that collections "are not supported in core funding". Financial and human resource issues related to collections mean that many galleries that have increased collections have a limited ability to manage, care for, safeguard and digitize their collections.

Other collections-related challenges noted by many galleries include the finances and time to conduct research and to make new connections and meanings based on works contained in their collections: "the intellectual and physical nurturing of the collection" is an essential component of art museums' activities. Many galleries indicated that they do not have enough staff time to work with the collection. As one gallery director noted, there is a "need to fund people to think about the work, including curatorial positions, art magazines, university curators and researchers". A number of gallery representatives noted that there is a direct link between rigorous research and high-quality publications.

Those gallery directors in a combined Director/Curator position find it particularly difficult to find adequate time to fulfill the curatorial portion of their position, given the constant demands of fundraising and administrative activities. A few gallery representatives expressed a desire to explore the possibility of hiring a full-time curator.

### *Governance*

Many board and staff members at the 15 galleries noted that board recruitment is a challenge for their organization. For many galleries, it is increasingly difficult to find board volunteers who have the required time, expertise and commitment, given the aging of the population, the prevalence of two-income families and the perception that arts boards are not as “high impact” as health care or other non-profit boards.

A number of gallery representatives spoke of the challenge of ensuring that their boards are very active in fundraising.

For some galleries, the mandate and function of the governing body (whether a board of directors or an advisory committee) is a challenge. In some cases, there is a perception that governing body members are not the best well-rounded individuals to serve the general interests of the organization. In other cases, the governing body’s relationship to a related body (the university board or city department) is unclear or an obstacle to the gallery’s development.

Organizations with multiple or split mandates find fully supporting all aspects of their mandates to be an ongoing challenge.

### *Human resources*

A number of recent reports have highlighted the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified personnel in non-profit organizations, particularly in the arts.<sup>3</sup> One gallery director noted that “human resources are our number one priority. We need to get great people to work in the organization, people who are qualified and imaginative.” However, many galleries lack the capacity to be competitive in their local job market: higher salaries, better benefits and greater advancement opportunities can often be found elsewhere.

In this context, many galleries spoke of insufficient staffing levels, of staff members being “stretched to the limit” and logging “months of unpaid overtime”. One organization spoke of the challenges of succession planning when there are so few staff members.

A few galleries noted that they would like to add people with specific expertise to their team, including curatorial, marketing and education staff.

As noted above, the recruitment of board volunteers is a challenge for many galleries. Recruitment and retention of other volunteers is also a challenge, in a context of aging of the volunteer base. In addition, a few galleries spoke of the changing preferences of volunteers, who now tend to prefer shorter, event-based time commitments. For some galleries, getting consistent dedication from their volunteers is a challenge.

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<sup>3</sup> See the Arts Research Monitor (Vol. 2 No. 7 - Jan. 2004) for a discussion of some recent reports on human resources in the cultural sector and other non-profit organizations. The Arts Research Monitor is available at [www.hillstrategies.com](http://www.hillstrategies.com).

## *Profile*

From confronting public misconceptions about art and art galleries to the signage allowed in a shared building or on a university campus, Ontario's art galleries are struggling to improve their profile in their communities and beyond. A number of galleries spoke of the challenge of increasing their local profile, given the myriad other ways that people could spend their leisure time and money. One organization spoke of the "disconnect in public perception and municipal funding", where the arts are perceived as a frill unlike other local leisure services such as libraries or hockey rinks. Charges of elitism and exclusivity in the arts continue to be a challenge. Another organization noted that it is a challenge to get local residents to realize the value of what the gallery has and does. Other organizations have a more international focus, where "positioning on the world stage" is very important and is seen to have an impact on the local arts community as well.

## *Other gallery challenges*

Other challenges relate to:

- community relationships, audiences and attendance;
- challenges of the north; and
- other miscellaneous challenges.

## *Community relationships, audiences and attendance*

Galleries in smaller and northern communities indicated that population growth has been slow or non-existent, which leads to challenges for the growth of the gallery. In many small communities, other local issues often take precedence, including farming, schools and hospitals. In addition, many organizations are competing for same group of artistic-minded people. In larger cities, it is often a challenge to have an impact on public awareness, given many competing options.

Galleries in many cities continue to experience the "ripple effects" of municipal amalgamations. Local government finances are tight, leading to funding challenges. For some galleries, their relationship to the municipal government is a challenge. In at least one community, the local government's recognition of the organization as the municipal gallery is an issue.

A few galleries spoke of the challenges of reaching diverse audiences. One noted that they wish to have "relationships with different cultural groups that are not just tokenism". Another spoke of their attempts to make "connections and inroads into first generation communities".

One gallery director noted that "we had enormous problems with the perception of the gallery in the community, so it was my job" to demonstrate the gallery's importance in the community. A challenge in this situation is offering enough for the community to want to come to exhibitions, openings and education programs. For many galleries, reaching outlying areas, not just the downtown core, is a challenge.

Galleries affiliated with universities indicated that there are myriad practical challenges on campus: the "university wheels turn slowly". Even though some university galleries are autonomous organizations, they cannot "do [their] own thing" without university approval.

Regarding attendance, one gallery representative spoke of the continual challenge of breaking out of the gallery's current community base (their "comfort zone") in order to connect with new and broader audiences. Another gallery representative spoke of the challenge of drawing in residents of communities just outside of their municipality, especially given very limited marketing funds.

### *Challenges of the north*

The northernmost galleries interviewed (Thunder Bay and Sudbury) indicated that they have specific challenges. Art Gallery of Sudbury representatives noted that a basic reality of the north is different: northern communities are all experiencing zero or negative growth in their communities.

The Thunder Bay Art Gallery, the only public gallery between Sault Ste. Marie and Winnipeg, indicated that it would like to do more community development and outreach work, such as having a presence in Kenora, a "neighbouring" town that is actually a six-hour drive away. The Gallery is trying to enhance the "portability" of its offerings through new, small and encapsulated events.

In addition, northern galleries experience higher costs for travel and cartage. It is also more difficult to network with other organizations when distances are large. Similarly, it can be a challenge to attract both staff and artists to northern communities.

### *Other challenges*

Other challenges noted during the interviews include:

- parking;
- distribution;
- the fact that Canada is culturally young;
- technology – the "human and financial issues related to electronic media";
- planning well enough ahead of time yet remaining flexible to respond to current issues; and
- lack of time in a small gallery to undertake a strategic planning exercise.

## **Section 7: Future plans**

Representatives from the 15 participating galleries discussed their plans for the future in response to questions about their strategic plans and any goals or strategies that they have established in moving the organization forward. All but the smallest galleries indicated that they have formal strategic plans in place or in progress, covering three or five-year timeframes. Those galleries without a strategic plan currently in place were asked where they would like the organization to be in three to five years.

There are many similarities in the future plans of the 15 galleries, including a focus on financial sustainability, collections, and increased profile. However, galleries across Ontario have plans and goals that are aimed at building on their individual successes and tackling their organization's specific challenges.

- Museum London is at the end of a planning session for a new three-year strategic plan. Although the basic components of the plan are together, the measurements have not been finalized. The Museum's goals relate to four key areas: programs, marketing, funding, and organizational development. Increased community awareness of the Museum is seen as an important factor in achieving many of the organization's goals.
- The Grimsby Public Art Gallery indicated that a specific challenge for them is the focus of young Grimsby families on Toronto or elsewhere. The Gallery aims to reach these young families through education programs for their children.
- The Agnes Etherington Art Centre recently completed its five-year strategic plan. An Action Plan was developed, including specific measurables such as increased attendance.
- The Ottawa Art Gallery completed its strategic plan in December 2003. The Gallery is developing communications strategies based on what it has learned from its audiences and is shifting its program to connect with the community in a measurable way. The Gallery's goals include increasing its exhibitions, reflecting diversity and social changes in the community, increasing its budget and staff, and improving its facilities.
- The Art Gallery of Hamilton will develop a new strategic plan in the fall of 2005. At the time of the previous strategic plan (1998), the organization's budget was less than half of the current level. In fact, the Gallery was in a very difficult financial position at the time. The AGH's new building is expected to provide the Gallery with significant forward momentum.
- Mercer Union completed a five-year strategic plan in the spring of 2003, with fundraising and board development targets that have largely been met by the organization. The centre has also focused on increasing its profile and budget. In this way, the centre can increase its ability to support interesting new work.
- The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery's strategic plan, completed in 2002, identified goals related to five areas: 1) financial development and sustainability; 2) excellence in exhibitions; 3) collections; 4) human resource skill sets of the Board, staff and volunteers; and 5) outreach to make the gallery a regional cultural centre. The Gallery is looking to achieve a sense of sustainability over time.

- The Blackwood Gallery, although it does not have a formal strategic plan, intends to focus its attention on its facilities, permanent collection, education and outreach programs. The Gallery wants to build its research, publishing, relationships with academic activity, openness, relevance to contemporary culture, interdisciplinarity and collaborations.
- The Art Gallery of Ontario is currently developing a five-year strategic plan. The Gallery aims to be a generator of new ideas about art, artists and the role of museums. The Gallery wants to build on its international connections and provide leadership in demonstrating the importance of Canadian artists on the world stage. A renewed Gallery could help Toronto attract “the best and the brightest” to the city.
- The Textile Museum’s 2003/04 strategic plan identified 10 centres of activity: collections, exhibitions, fundraising, marketing, audience development, earned revenues, volunteers, Board, administration, and facilities. Even though there is a “symbiotic” relationship between the centres of activity, goals have been defined for each centre over the plan’s three-year timeframe. The strategic planning process helped develop staff members’ sense of collective responsibility and “buy-in” to the overall goals of the organization. In five years from now, Museum representatives would like to have fewer budget challenges and a high profile.
- The Latcham Gallery, in 5 years, would like to still be open and have a whole building to itself, acting as a public art gallery and a cultural information centre. The Gallery would also like to have adequate exhibition, programming, storage and office space as well as a strong town partnership founded on recognition and respect. In terms of finances, the Gallery would like to receive operating funding.
- The Woodland Cultural Centre’s strategic plan is currently in progress. Over the next few years, the Centre would like to increase its revenues, keep its audience, improve its facilities, digitize its collection, have sufficient space for workshops and classes, and have a formal marketing plan and increased marketing efforts. Increased resources for the Centre could mean more exhibitions, more First Nations art shows, and greater connection with local artists.
- The Thunder Bay Art Gallery, in the next few years, would like to be in a stable position with enough money to accomplish their goals in Thunder Bay. The Gallery will need to consider and make a decision on a possible expansion of its facilities. The new stable organization will be recognized as highly engaged, extremely effective and a necessity, not a frill, in the community.
- The Art Gallery of Sudbury will have to make decisions about how to adjust its programs, development and physical plan in the near future. In three years, the gallery would like to be well-balanced with a solid foundation, including a budget consistent with what the gallery feels it delivers to the community. A rich arts experience will draw in both local and visiting audiences.

- The Art Gallery of Peterborough held a strategic planning session of its board the Saturday preceding the researcher's visit, at which time it was clear that the Gallery will have to decide among many priorities. In five years, the Gallery would like to have more staff (a full-time curator) and to begin some of its expansion plans, including space for education activities and the permanent collection.

## **Section 8: Summary**

This report summarizes the results of interviews with directors, curators and board representatives of 15 art galleries across Ontario. Gallery representatives were asked about their mandate, collection, community, successes, challenges, and plans for the future. Gallery participants were asked to answer the questions based on their experience in their role at the gallery.

The project was undertaken for the Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) by Hill Strategies Research and funded by the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). Respondents were assured that nothing they said during the interviews would count for or against them in terms of provincial funding but that the OAC intended to translate and publish the report so that galleries could compare themselves and identify similarities and differences in their operations.

The interviews were designed as a self-assessment by gallery representatives. Other internal or external views about the galleries and their roles were not solicited for this project. In addition, the questions were not intended to challenge the interviewees about their functions and role but rather to collect information about what they do and how they do it. This report attempts to reflect as accurately as possible the comments of the gallery participants during the 15 interviews.

A broad spectrum of galleries participated in the interviews. In terms of revenue size, the galleries ranged from the Latcham Gallery in Stouffville to the Art Gallery of Ontario. Geographically speaking, the galleries are located across the province, including representation from the north (Thunder Bay Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Sudbury), eastern Ontario (Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Ottawa Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Peterborough), Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario, Textile Museum and Mercer Union artist-run centre), the Greater Toronto Area (Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto-Mississauga and Latcham Gallery in Stouffville), and southwestern Ontario (Museum London, Grimsby Public Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, and the Woodland Cultural Centre).

The 13 municipalities where these galleries are located range in population from 21,000 to 2.5 million (according to 2001 census data).

### ***Mandates***

Given that many of the galleries interviewed are municipal galleries, it is not surprising that mandates often stress connection with local communities or regions. From this local or regional base, many galleries indicated that they emanate outwards by drawing audiences from broader regions or by touring exhibitions that they generate. In the case of university galleries, service to the university community and the broader educational purpose of the university were also stressed.

As organizational priorities and positions change, mandates also change. A few of the organizations interviewed have recently redefined their mandates or are currently in the process of re-thinking their mandate (usually in conjunction with a strategic planning process). As part of its revitalization project, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery is attempting to understand the background and contexts for its work and, as such, is engaged in more than just a strategic planning exercise. The Art Gallery of Sudbury is also working on repositioning itself within the community, partly through participating in a Creative Clusters Program in conjunction with Toronto Artscape.

During the interviews, gallery representatives indicated that they go well beyond simply providing gallery space in their communities. The Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery indicated that it sees itself as a visual arts cultural centre and a potential “destination”, in partnership with other local organizations. Others, including Museum London and the Woodland Cultural Centre, combine general museum and art museum functions in a broad mandate.

The board representatives, directors and curators who participated in this project also spoke of their individual role within the gallery. The full report summarizes these discussions.

### *Collections*

Gallery representatives were engaged in a discussion about their collections, including what works they contain, why they are important and how galleries are adding to them.

The 13 galleries with permanent collections that were interviewed for this project have varied strengths and focuses in their collections. Many galleries were originally established to house a specific collection. A number of galleries indicated that they have the unique role of collecting and championing local or regional artists’ works.

All galleries expressed pride in their collection and indicated that their collection is a strength of their organization. Many of the galleries have distinguished and varied collections:

- most hold primarily Canadian works;
- many hold a combination of historical and contemporary works;
- many have a significant collection of local artists’ work;
- some collect works by non-local artists who have a significant connection to the community;
- many have collections that represent various media; and
- some specialize or wish to specialize in certain types of works, such as the Textile Museum (textile-based works) or the Blackwood Gallery (multiples, editions and print-based works).

For some, collections are a “prime function of the organization” and a “pivotal resource” that centres the gallery. Some of the ways in which collections act as fulcrums of galleries’ activities include:

- exhibitions are often drawn from collections;
- community members often have a strong connection with galleries’ collections or particular works in the collections; and
- acquisitions and donations relate to what is currently in the collection or what is missing from the collection.

Interview respondents noted that collections are held in trust for the community and as such are public. Collections can be a touchstone for a community and can provide a substantial reference point to Canadian art for people in the gallery’s region. If done well, collections can tie a community to an institution and can be a source of pride for the community.

Galleries' permanent collections provide a visual history of the area by documenting the artistic practice in the community and the region. Collections provide an indication of changes in the community. Permanent collections are also a record of the way that galleries have engaged with the larger world over time.

The fact that galleries hold permanent collections communicates to the public that art has a substantial social and cultural value and that art is not just ephemeral. Collections also stimulate ideas about art interpretation and help galleries develop exhibition ideas.

Galleries in university settings noted that permanent collections are valuable teaching resources for universities' fine arts programs. Certain components of collections, such as the Bader Collection at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, are focal points of academic activity.

In all collecting galleries, the research function related to collections is very important. Collections are studied for what they might say about the history and relevance of certain works, and publications are based on this research work. Ontario galleries' collections attract curators and scholars from around the world.

Most galleries are adding to their collections in response to their mandates and their communities. As noted in the quantitative analysis in *A Profile of Art Galleries in Ontario: Phase I – Statistics from the 2003 Data Exchange*, over 12,000 works were added to Ontario galleries' permanent collections in 2002/03. Of this number, 98% were donated. Galleries' acquisitions budgets are small, and additions to most galleries' collections have come almost exclusively from donations.

In this situation, donor cultivation and donor management are essential activities. As one gallery director noted during an interview, the gallery “nurtures relationships with artists and collectors to continue to ensure that the collection is strong and vibrant”. Some gallery directors indicated that they have a formal acquisitions committee and specific plans for increasing their donations.

### *Communities served*

Most Ontario galleries indicated that they have a number of communities that they attempt to serve, including the local, regional and national arts community, college and university students, local gallery-goers, and the general population. Many galleries noted that tourists are an important part of their audience base. University galleries spoke of the need to serve both the university community (“gown”) and the general local population (“town”).

Given the recent attention paid to attracting “creative class” workers, some galleries are actively engaged in creative community projects that aim to attract people to their communities.

Galleries that are co-located with another organization draw some visitors from the neighbouring organization. This is the case in the Grimsby Public Art Gallery, which is co-located with the town's library, and the Latcham Gallery, which is co-located with a thrift store.

Some museums with broad mandates, such as the Woodland Cultural Centre, have various audiences depending on their programming. Art exhibitions reach an artistic audience that is different than the audience for museum exhibitions with environmental or veterans' themes.

## *Successes*

Based on the researcher's notes and classifications, successes in six general areas were discussed most frequently:

- community relationships and local collaborations;
- exhibitions;
- finances;
- education and other programming;
- human resources; and
- gallery profile.

Some of these areas – finances, human resources and profile – are also on the list of most-mentioned challenges.

Community-related successes were mentioned in each of the 15 interview sessions. Some galleries indicated that they “add value to the community”, “provide so much to the fibre of the community”, or “are more and more becoming the type of organization that the community wants”. A success (and an ongoing challenge) for many galleries is ensuring that the community feels a sense of ownership and recognizes the need for the gallery in their community.

Many galleries noted that specific exhibitions were a success for them. Some commented that about “artistically stunning shows” that “have captured national attention”. Others spoke of their exhibitions that have traveled across Ontario and beyond.

Regarding their finances, a number of galleries have been successful in increasing their revenues. During the interviews, a number of art gallery representatives highlighted the ways in which they have increased their fundraising, earned or government revenues.

Many galleries noted that their education programs are new, enduring and/or fully subscribed. Some galleries in smaller communities spoke of providing art-enrichment opportunities that are not available elsewhere in their communities. Other galleries noted conferences and public lectures as successful programming initiatives.

Although human resources are a significant challenge for many galleries, a number of interview participants noted specific human resource successes, such as some Board representatives who indicated that hiring and keeping their Director (or Director/Curator) was a particular success. Other gallery representatives pointed to their success in hiring or keeping another staff member, often a full-time Curator or, in one case, an installation person. One general comment concerned one gallery's “remarkably committed staff members who are very invested and well-respected in the larger community”. A number of galleries commented on the quality of their volunteers, although volunteer recruitment is also a challenge for many galleries.

Many of the galleries interviewed, both large and small, indicated that they have been successful in increasing their profile, through means such as the OAAG awards, increased media reviews and coverage, and better international positioning. Some gallery representatives noted that an increase in their organization's profile also improves the profile and recognition of artists who exhibit in their galleries.

Other successes mentioned during the interviews relate to:

- survival and general successes;
- collections and publications;
- governance;
- planning;
- attendance; and
- facilities.

### *Challenges*

From the interviews, it was apparent that art galleries in Ontario are struggling to balance mission-driven activities and financially-driven activities. Some galleries noted that they “want to do more and offer more”, that they “have so many good ideas but too little time”, and that their “larger ambitions are not met by increased government funding”. One gallery representative stated that “we need finances that match the strength of the organization”.

In fact, financial challenges were mentioned in each of the 15 interview sessions. Many galleries spoke of increased expectations of public service that have not been matched by increased funding levels or support for key gallery activities. Statistics from the 2003 OAAG Data Exchange show that overall gallery revenues increased by 71% between 1993 and 2003. Leading the increase were private sector revenues (which increased nearly fivefold during this timeframe) and earned revenues (which increased nearly fourfold). In contrast, government revenues increased by 27%, much less than other gallery revenues and only slightly higher than the 20% inflation between 1993 and 2003.

In addition, some gallery representatives perceive that funders’ attention, measurables and outcomes are not on the core work of galleries, including permanent collections and human resources. Two of the smaller galleries interviewed indicated that they find it “a struggle to keep going” or to “sustain our operations”.

Some general comments regarding revenues include:

- “funding is always an issue; we’re living on the edge all the time”;
- “money and fundraising take up a lot of our time and effort”;
- “so much time and energy is spent raising money”;
- “our difficult recent funding situation” has meant that “building maintenance and staff training have suffered”; and
- we are “doing more with less and less money, staff accept less pay and the gallery is crumbling a bit”.

Art gallery representatives also highlighted specific challenges regarding fundraising, earned and government revenues. The full report summarizes these discussions.

Other areas presenting challenges for a large number of galleries include:

- facilities;
- governance;
- collections and research;
- human resources; and
- gallery profile.

An important issue for many Ontario galleries is a lack of space for exhibitions, collections storage, and public programming. Because of these facilities challenges, many of the galleries visited are undertaking or considering expansions.

It was clear from the interviews that many galleries believe that stewardship of their collections, including conserving works, developing collections and related publishing efforts, is not adequately supported by government funding. Financial and human resource issues related to collections mean that many galleries that have increased collections have a limited ability to manage, care for, safeguard and digitize their collections.

Other collections-related challenges noted by many galleries include the finances and time to conduct research and to make new connections and meanings based on works contained in their collections: “the intellectual and physical nurturing of the collection” is an essential component of art museums’ activities.

Regarding gallery governance, many board and staff members at the 15 galleries noted that board recruitment is a challenge for their organization. For many galleries, it is increasingly difficult to find board volunteers who have the required time, expertise and commitment, given the aging of the population, the prevalence of two-income families and the perception that arts boards are not as “high impact” as health care or other non-profit boards.

A number of gallery representatives spoke of the challenge of ensuring that their boards are very active in fundraising. For some galleries, the mandate and function of the governing body (whether a board of directors or an advisory committee) is a challenge. In some cases, there is a perception that governing body members are not the best well-rounded individuals to serve the general interests of the organization. In other cases, the governing body’s relationship to a related body (the university board or city department) is unclear or an obstacle to the gallery’s development. Organizations with multiple or split mandates find fully supporting all aspects of their mandates to be an ongoing challenge.

A number of recent reports have highlighted the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified personnel in non-profit organizations, particularly in the arts.<sup>4</sup> Many galleries lack the capacity to be competitive in their local job market: higher salaries, better benefits and greater advancement opportunities can often be found elsewhere.

In this context, many galleries spoke of insufficient staffing levels, of staff members being “stretched to the limit” and logging “months of unpaid overtime”. One organization spoke of the challenges of succession planning when there are so few staff members.

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<sup>4</sup> See the Arts Research Monitor (Vol. 2 No. 7 - Jan. 2004) for a discussion of some recent reports on human resources in the cultural sector and other non-profit organizations. The Arts Research Monitor is available at [www.hillstrategies.com](http://www.hillstrategies.com).

From confronting public misconceptions about art and art galleries to the signage allowed in a shared building or on a university campus, Ontario's art galleries are struggling to improve their profile in their communities and beyond. A number of galleries spoke of the challenge of increasing their local profile, given the myriad other ways that people could spend their leisure time and money. One organization spoke of the "disconnect in public perception and municipal funding", where the arts are perceived as a frill unlike other local leisure services such as libraries or hockey rinks. Charges of elitism and exclusivity in the arts continue to be a challenge. Another organization noted that it is a challenge to get local residents to realize the value of what the gallery has and does. Other organizations have a more international focus, where "positioning on the world stage" is very important and is seen to have an impact on the local arts community as well.

Other challenges highlighted in the full report include:

- community relationships, audiences and attendance;
- challenges of the north; and
- other challenges.

### *Future plans*

Public art galleries in Ontario are planning for the future. All but the smallest galleries indicated during the interviews that they have formal strategic plans in place or in progress.

There are many similarities in the future plans of the 15 galleries, including a focus on financial sustainability, collections, and increased gallery profile. However, galleries across Ontario have plans and goals that are aimed at building on their individual successes and tackling their specific challenges.

### *Conclusion – Researcher's analysis*

The other portions of this report contain, as accurately as possible, the views of art gallery representatives interviewed for this project. These concluding observations provide a more personal analysis from Kelly Hill, the project researcher.

From the outside, art galleries are often thought of as "institutions", with implications of stability and security. The internal perception, on the other hand, is far from one of institutional stability and security. For art galleries in Ontario in 2005, "funding is always an issue; we're living on the edge all the time". Seen from the inside, survival itself is a success. In this respect, art galleries have much in common with other artistic endeavours, from contemporary dancers to documentary film companies.

Like many other organizations, art galleries would like to do more, but galleries are engaged in a delicate balancing act between mission-driven and finance-driven initiatives. There are many demands on art galleries' time and money. In a situation where significant fundraising is needed to support core activities – collections, research, exhibitions and education – galleries are struggling to maintain or increase their activities.

From the inside, art gallery successes and challenges are often the same thing: “our ability to land on our feet leads to a perception that we might not need more support”.

What is being done? In some cases, things that can get put off – gallery upgrades or expansions, staff training, collection digitization, salary increases – are being put off. In the long run, of course, this can amount to a mortgage on the future. But the books have to be balanced today.

Diversification of revenues has occurred in Ontario galleries. A visible aspect of this was the fact that the shops in the galleries visited were almost all strong and appealing. Financial results from the 2003 Data Exchange clearly demonstrate the diversification of galleries’ revenues. Overall revenues increased by 71% between 1993 and 2003. Leading the way were private sector fundraising (nearly a fivefold increase) and earned revenues (nearly a fourfold increase). Government revenues increased by 27%, much less than other gallery revenues and only slightly higher than the 20% inflation between 1993 and 2003.

Where might things go from here? Gallery representatives made it clear that increased, sustainable operating funding – with attention paid to their core activities – is a high priority. Funding for collections and capital upgrades is also of primary importance.

On a broader level, art galleries could work with other organizations to examine how federal and provincial tax laws could be used to benefit arts and other non-profit organizations.

There is also a cross-cutting need to increase the profile of the arts. This type of collaborative effort could help all arts organizations, including galleries, compete with other non-profits for donors and volunteers. And it could help them compete with other entertainment options for people’s time. Concepts of creative communities and creative class appear to be helping galleries connect with some groups in their communities. Further research and advocacy work is needed to counter the continued perception of elitism in the arts.

Other substantial collaborations could also be pursued. As noted above, art galleries have much in common with other arts endeavours. Research also shows that arts-goers are largely “polygamous” – they visit galleries, attend performing arts events, read books, attend sporting events, and so on. The various non-profit and for-profit organizations involved in providing these experiences could attempt to work together to fulfill these needs.