



Arts Research Monitor

October 2002

Arts Advocacy

The Arts in Public Policy: An Advocacy Agenda

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (www.nasaa-arts.org) – 2002
www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/public_policy.shtml

This issue of *The NASAA Advocate* from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies is a useful summary of the burgeoning body of American research into the impact of the arts on education, youth at risk, business, tourism, and economic development. The paper argues that “the arts give policy makers the tools to address a wide range of civic concerns in creative and cost-effective ways.” Most will probably be familiar with research results showing the strong academic performance of children who study the arts. This paper gives a glimpse of the detailed results of this type of research along with full references for those who want access to the source information.

Arts advocates needing arguments into why the arts stimulate rather than drain the local economy can benefit from “the arts and business” and “the arts and economic development” sections of the paper. The arts and business section argues that “the arts develop the kind of thinker and manager that businesses must have more of if they are to remain competitive in the global marketplace.” The economic development section of the paper notes how cultural development plays a “central role in urban revitalization and community renewal strategies” and how “the arts attract business, visitors and new consumer spending” by encouraging corporate location and job creation in arts-rich communities. Although this paper doesn’t explore new ground in terms of research results, it does give a practical, easy-to-read summary of existing research that can be used to build arts support.

Arts Funding / Arts Organization Finances

Facing the challenge: Performing arts in the 1990s

Statistics Canada (www.statcan.ca) – October 21, 2002

For the free *Daily* release, visit www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/021021/d021021k.htm

For *Focus on Culture* subscription information, visit www.statcan.ca/english/IPS/Data/87-004-XIE.htm

This article in the Statistics Canada publication *Focus on Culture* paints quite a bleak picture of the state of non-profit performing arts organizations in Canada in the 1990s (using the results of six StatsCan surveys from 1991-92 through 1998-99). However, the statistical evidence itself appears to be mixed. On the optimistic side of things, the 1990s saw a significant 22% expansion in the number of not-for-profit performing arts companies in Canada. Even with this strong growth in the number of organizations, revenues per company still rose by 3.9% – greater than the 3.1% increase in expenses. Despite a 13% reduction in government grants (per company), overall revenue grew thanks to a 10% increase in earned revenues and a 30% increase in private sector contributions. On the pessimistic side, the text makes reference to the fact that 75 performing arts organizations permanently or temporarily stopped operations during each year of the survey. This makes the overall growth in the number of companies even more surprising.

Possibly the most sobering note in the article is the fact that in each of the six years of survey results, performing arts organizations reported an overall deficit. However, as the report itself notes, 99% of the reported deficit is accounted for by 34 of the largest non-theatre companies, mainly the 18 largest orchestras. Although disappointing, this result leaves one wondering what a picture of the financial situation of the 591 other organizations reporting in 1998-99 would look like.

Many other interesting facts emerge in the article. For instance, despite the size of the performing arts sector, government expenditures on this sector comprise only 4.4% of all government cultural spending.

A close look at StatsCan's government expenditure surveys shows that broadcasting and libraries take up the lion's share of government spending on culture.

Perennial deficits or strong growth in the sector? This is just one question raised by this important – although inconclusive – contribution to our knowledge of trends in the non-profit performing arts sector in Canada.

Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry

Australia Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (www.dcita.gov.au)

September 2002 – www.dcita.gov.au/Article/0,,0_1-2_1-3_163-4_111224,00.html

After commissioning separate reports into the major performing arts sector and small and medium sized performing arts organizations, the Australian government has now received the report of this major inquiry into the contemporary visual arts and crafts. The inquiry was mandated “to scope the sector, examine its cultural and economic contribution, and make recommendations on key issues impacting on the future sustainability, development and promotion of the sector as a whole.” The inquiry finds challenges in Australia's arts and crafts sector that appear to be quite similar to those in Canada, including the need for fewer “economic uncertainties” for artists, higher status within their communities, more opportunities to sell and exhibit their art, and increased capacity among organizations in the sector. With these issues in mind, the inquiry makes 20 recommendations to the Australian federal government, 12 of which involve increased government funding. In total, the inquiry recommends a \$15 million (or about 40%) increase in funding to the sector by all levels of Australian government. These “strategically directed” financial investments would be complemented by changes in copyright, taxation, and philanthropic contributions, as well as increased availability of equipment and new technology. In addition, the inquiry recommends the implementation of a “resale royalty arrangement”, whereby artists would benefit from the appreciation in value of their works by receiving income from the resale of their art. The inquiry also calls for more collaborative and coordinated arrangements between arts funding agencies at the various levels of government, “including tripartite funding arrangements in respect of their joint support of key infrastructure organisations”. This is another Australian report that gives Canadian readers a lot to consider.

Attendance and Participation / Social and Community Impacts of the Arts

Arts & Culture: Community Connections

Building Arts Participation: New Findings from the Field

The Urban Institute (www.urban.org) – June 2002

From the home page, click on the “Research” tab at the top. Follow the links to “Cities and Metropolitan Regions” and then “Arts and Culture”.

This report summarizes survey research conducted in the fall of 1998 into the community connections of arts attendees and participants in five American communities. The report goes beyond the typical analysis of attendee demographics by examining the social factors involved in arts participation. This research thread reminds practitioners that a cultural experience (defined broadly in this report) is not generally a solo experience. For participants, the experience usually involves social connections “with particular people or acquaintances in their communities; through community organizations that are important to them; or at places that are familiar, friendly and accessible”. The survey found that the most frequent reason given for arts participation is “to get together with friends or family” (59% of respondents) and the second most frequent reason is “to support friends or family” (49%). Other reasons given are “to support an organization or event important to the community” (47%), “to experience the high quality of the art” (42%), and “to learn about another culture” (38%). The Urban Institute's research contributes to a growing body of work that demonstrates the connectedness of arts participants: they attend events, volunteer in their communities, engage in the political process, and are often community activists. Ensuring that these “connector” individuals draw their circle of acquaintances into arts participation could be an important tool in the development of arts audiences. Strategies for turning community connections into arts engagement can be helpful for those wishing to build arts participation and to strengthen their own communities.