THE EVOLVING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The nonprofit arts, Jane Alexander observed at the American Canvas forum in Salt Lake City, have been hit with a "triple whammy" in recent years, with cutbacks in funding at the federal, state, and local levels. The private sector, meanwhile, faced with increasing demands on its resources, has not been able to compensate for these reductions. Other American Canvas participants pointed to other factors, including the many social problems that the arts have been asked to address, that contribute to the changing cultural landscape of the United States.

Unfortunately, our grasp of these changing conditions is limited by the existing state of cultural statistics, which offer only rudimentary approximations of the data we would ideally have at our disposal. "In attempting to use existing data systems to track critical ongoing transformations in the arts," observe Deborah Kaple and Paul DiMaggio, two scholars who are working to improve our view of the arts infrastructure, "we are like the drunk who looks for his lost wallet under the lamp-post because 'that's where the light is best.'"[1]

[1] Paul DiMaggio and Deborah Kaple, "Information on Arts Organizations," *Grantmakers in the Arts* 7 (Autumn 1996) 13.

If nothing else, though, the existing data on the nonprofit arts suggest the predicament: increases in the number of artists and arts organizations over the past three decades has far outpaced the growth in both public and private support, which rose dramatically in the 60s and 70s before leveling off (and actually declining in the case of federal support) in the 80s and 90s. But even these statistics tend to hide as much as they reveal.

The figures for arts organizations, for example, which show remarkable growth rates in the fields of orchestras, theaters, opera, and dance companies, are limited to the professional, tax-exempt, 501(C)(3) universe of organizations that qualify for support from public and private funders.[2] Fields in which nonprofit incorporation is less common (jazz and chamber music, for example) fall outside of these figures, as do the myriad occasional, amateur, and student aggregations that nevertheless help bring the arts to millions of Americans every year.

Similarly, the definition of "artists in the workforce" (the size of which more than doubled, from 720,000 to 1,671,000, between 1970 and 1990), is that of the Census Bureau.[3] That definition includes radio and television announcers and teachers of art, drama, and music in higher education, but it doesn't account for part-time artists, the bulk of whose income may come from private teaching or other pursuits, but whose contributions to American culture, over the entire span of their careers, can be considerable. Nor is amateur arts activity accounted for, although that may have a greater—if less measurable—impact on our culture than previously imagined. Audience figures for the arts, similarly, are skewed toward the formal definitions of the seven types of arts activities included in the Survey of Public Participation of the Arts—a useful index of Americans' behavior in certain formal areas of the nonprofit arts, but far from a complete inventory of arts participation (which, again, includes extensive hands-on activity in music, photography, and dance, for example, which we've been too quick to dismiss as merely avocational pursuits in the past).

[2] According to figures released by the National Endowment for the Arts' Office of Communications, the number of professional opera companies has grown from 27 to 120 between 1965 and 1994, the number of professional orchestras from 100 to 230, dance companies from 37 to 400, and theater companies from 56 to 425.

[3] Neil O. Alper and Gregory H. Wassall, et al, *Artists in the Workforce: Employment and Earnings, 1970-1990* (Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press) 3.

More accurate, if still fragmentary, are the figures for private support of the arts—in the range of $10 billion every year—in which tax-deductible cash and in-kind contributions are easier to track than other forms of support, particularly from the corporate sector (e.g., non-deductible advertising expenses that benefit the arts, or personnel loaned to arts organizations). More significantly, these figures tell us nothing about the distribution patterns of private sector support. While public expenditures in the arts can be traced down to the smallest organizational or individual recipients, the reporting requirements for private philanthropy are not nearly so rigorous.

Nevertheless, scattered reports from the front lines of the nonprofit culture tend to confirm the lamp-post trend lines discussed here. A 1995 survey of 174 member institutions of the Association of Art Museum Directors, for example, revealed expenses that amounted to $30 per museum visitor on average (with an average $1.45 admission fee). Public-sector contributions totaling $281 million, along with $372 million in private-sector contributions, helped make up the deficit, but overall these museums reported an income shortfall of 22 percent.[4] Similarly, Dance/USA's survey of the 65 largest dance companies in the country (out of more than 600 nationally), all with budgets over $1 million, reported total expenses of $257 million and total incomes of $163.7 million, a 36 percent deficit.[5] Opera America's universe is both smaller (112 companies in 41 states) and more diverse (from Amarillo Opera's $174,000 budget to the Metropolitan Opera's $134 million), but nearly half of these companies reported a deficit during the 1994-95 season.[6] Theatre Communications Group's 1995 survey of 215 theaters, finally, offered the brightest picture, but here, too, the financial picture was mixed: just over half of the theaters reported operating fund surpluses, but collectively, the theaters ran a slight deficit ($552,344, or 0.12 percent).[7]

"...AN ANOMALY IN AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE"

These reports from the field illuminate what's going on in the major leagues of the nonprofit culture, certainly, but the arts universe is far larger than the high-profile

[4] Association of Art Museum Directors, "Field at a Glance: Art Museums," press release, n.d. [1996].
[5] Dance/USA, "Field at a Glance: Dance," press release, n.d. [1996].
[6] Opera America, "Field at a Glance: Opera," press release, n.d. [1996].
[7] Theatre Communications Group, "Theatre Facts 1995," American Theater Apr. 1996: 2-3.

institutions alone. And far harder to track. Equally frustrating, especially for anyone attempting to assess some of the qualitative aspects of American culture—who's doing what kind of work, to what end, and how their efforts measure up against earlier generations of artists—is the lack of a reliable analytical system and a forum in which to launch such an undertaking.

A recent study of the current state of cultural data, sponsored by the Arts Endowment and undertaken by Kaple, DiMaggio, and others at Princeton University's Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Statistics (CACPS), recommends the development of a "Unified Data Base" for the nonprofit arts in America to find data that are comparable across different organizational types, distinct disciplines, and over time. Invariably, among the chronically under-represented in such reporting are small, community-based, cross-disciplinary, experimental, ad hoc, and/or "underground" organizations, precisely where much of the most compelling work in the arts today is being undertaken. Nor will "virtual" groups that are now being fashioned online be recognized in standard data-collection sweeps, although such groups may play an increasingly important role on the emerging cultural landscape.

Equally important, those crucial questions about the direction of American culture—the nature of programming, the quality of performances and exhibitions, the vital linkages between and among arts and nonarts organizations, and the many contributions the arts make far beyond the aesthetic—will initially go unanswered. Nevertheless, the kind of coordinated, systematic, open-ended data collection that the CACPS study calls for, drawing on a variety of existing and projected data sources, offers the best chance we have of arriving at something we currently lack: a reliable, comprehensive overview of the nonprofit arts universe. For that unified data base to become a reality, however, there will have to be an even greater change in the way the arts community currently conducts its affairs, with a level of foresight, cooperation, and information sharing that has not always existed in this sector.

"...VITAL TO OUR ... SELF-IMAGE"

In the meantime, economists James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray, in their useful study of the field, *The Economics of Art and Culture: An American Perspective*, offer one of the best vantage points from which to view the nonprofit arts universe. Heilbrun and Gray are very much aware that there is more to the arts economy than the mere exchange of money for aesthetic goods and services. If that's all it

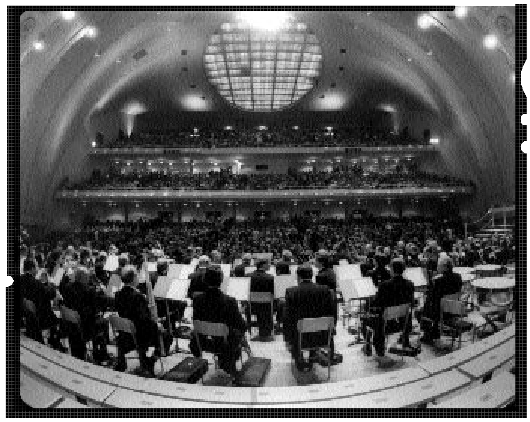

PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSITY MUSIC SOCIETY

The Philadelphia Orchestra performs before an enthusiastic audience in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan.

were, they point out, the stakes would be minuscule indeed. The estimated $4.31 billion that Americans spent on admissions to live, nonprofit performing arts events in 1990, for example, may sound like a lot, but it's less than half of what Americans paid for flowers, seeds, and potted plants that year. Even when the operating incomes of art museums are added to the mix, along with all public and private contributions to the arts, the nonprofit arts economy in 1990—conservatively estimated by Heilbrun and Gray to be $7.3 billion—is only slightly more than one-thousandth of the gross domestic product (0.133 percent).[8] The nonprofit arts industry, the two economists concede, "is very small in relation to the U.S. economy. Why, then, do we study it? Obviously we do so because it is vital to our culture, and therefore to our self-image."[9]

[8] James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray, *The Economics of Art and Culture: An American Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 7-9.
[9] Heilbrun and Gray, *Economics* 10.

In addition to putting the nonprofit arts economy into perspective, Heilbrun and Gray also shed light on its relative health as measured by consumer demand for the arts. Lending credence to the often touted "cultural boom" of the years following the creation of the Arts Endowment, Heilbrun and Gray note the growth in consumer spending on the live performing arts: between 1975 and 1990, expenditures grew from 6.8 cents per $100 of disposable personal income (DPI) to 12.3 cents. Viewed from another vantage point, though, such spending was actually higher in 1929 (15.5 cents), before declining irregularly thereafter (attributable initially to the advent of talking pictures and later to television). *The Economics of Art and Culture* is not optimistic about the prospects of the post-1975 "cultural boom" continuing, pointing both to the supply-side factors that are impossible to maintain indefinitely (i.e., the rapid growth in the number of arts organizations, fueled by increased public and private contributions during these years), and an actual downturn in consumer demand in 1991, when "the dollar amount of consumer spending for admissions to the live performing arts fell five percent…, registering its first significant year-to-year decline since 1948."[10] Annual growth of the nonprofit arts sector may have come to an end.

> *Attendance at symphony concerts rose to a peak of 25.4 million in 1986, declined to 22.4 million by 1989, and then leveled off at 22.3 million in 1991. Several orchestras in medium-sized cities collapsed financially in the late 1980s but were brought back to life under new auspices; one—the Oakland Symphony—went down for good. Workweeks under the Actors' Equity contract with the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) reached a level of 62,397 in 1989 and then fell to 58,369 in 1991. The number of ballet companies declined from 331 in 1986 to 281 in 1992. Although attendance at main seasons and festival performances of major opera companies continued to rise through the 1989-90 season…, the amount of touring activity began to fall off.*[11]

More recently, of course, the precipitous decline in federal arts support, accompanied by volatility at the state level, have added to the general state of con-

[10] Heilbrun and Gray, *Economics* 21.
[11] Heilbrun and Gray, *Economics* 20-21.

sternation in the arts community. As former Ohio Governor Richard Celeste observed at the Columbus American Canvas forum, the arts "can no longer expect first-dollar support from the public sector," a reference to the declining role that government agencies—never a majority partner in the arts-support enterprise in any case—would be playing in this regard. "There must be strong community support first," Celeste advised. "A basic part of the arts is independence, a willingness to engender controversy, to challenge the way we think—all factors that may affect the effort to develop community support."

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Conventional wisdom in the arts suggests that the most recent lean times are anomalous, merely a temporary setback. However one demarcates those "lean times"—the leveling off of federal arts funding that began in the early 1980s, or the political squabbles that broke out later in that decade, or the draconian cuts in the Arts Endowment budget that Congress exacted in 1996 and sustained in 1997—better times are surely ahead, or so the argument runs, a moderated Renaissance Lite will one day return.

More recently, however, a growing number of observers have begun to suggest that it was this earlier, "golden" age that may have been anomalous. A combination of related factors—uncharacteristically generous public and private funders, a growing population of under-compensated artists and administrators, and an artificially high birth-rate for nonprofit arts organizations—aligned themselves to produce a uniquely fertile period for the nation's nonprofit culture.

For arts writer John Kreidler, a veteran of both public and private arts funding agencies of over 25 years, a critical moment of post-war American culture was the emergence of the Ford Foundation as a major arts patron, making more than $400 million in arts grants between 1957 and 1976, and helping to launch the nonprofit arts sector that mushroomed during the 1960s and 1970s. "Until the arrival of the Ford Foundation's broad vision of arts funding," Kreidler observes, "virtually all cultural philanthropy had been vested with individuals and generally lacked any strategic intent."[12] The Ford Foundation's "strategic intent" encompassed

[12] John Kreidler, "Leverage Lost: The Nonprofit Arts in the Post-Ford Era," *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* 26 (Summer 1996): 82.

both the revitalization and stabilization of major nonprofit arts institutions, targeting orchestras, theaters, and dance companies in particular, and setting in motion a cultural decentralization campaign that would later figure prominently in the federal government's arts program that began in 1965. "It is highly significant," Kreidler adds,

> *that the Ford Foundation viewed itself as a catalyst for these major developments but not as a perpetual funder. The majority of Ford's grants were limited to less than five years' duration and required matching support two to four times greater than the amount awarded by the Foundation. So, even though Ford was attempting to increase the capacity of arts organizations to manage themselves on a fiscally sound basis and increase program output, the assumption was that other sources of money, both contributed and earned, would support long-term maintenance.*[13]

The impressive growth curves, common across all arts disciplines and reaching into neighborhoods and communities that had little experience with such institutional growth, represented an era of expansion that simply could not be maintained. "The most obvious, though rarely acknowledged, reason that it could not last indefinitely," Kreidler explains, "was that the institutional money supply could not continue to grow."[14]

That money supply alone was not sufficient, in any case, to fuel the nonprofit arts sector's precipitous growth. Kreidler cites a number of other social and economic factors of the period, none more important than the highly discounted wage structure that has long characterized the arts in America. "Although the Ford Foundation and NEA deserve much credit for their early support of the nonprofit arts movement," Kreidler observes, "by far the most significant factor in the movement's origin and rapid build-up was the arrival in the 1960s of a huge generation of artists, technicians, and administrators, driven not by funding or economic gain, but rather by their own desire to produce art."[15] In 1960, the Labor Department's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* cautioned against a career in the arts, "The difficulty of earning a living as a performer, is one of the facts young people should

[13] Kreidler, "Leverage Lost" 83.
[14] Kreidler, "Leverage Lost" 91.
[15] Kreidler, "Leverage Lost" 87.

bear in mind in considering an artistic career…It is important for them to consider the possible advantages of making their art a hobby rather than a field of work."[16]

Available employment and earnings data from the period, in any event, support Kreidler's thesis: between 1970 and 1980, the number of art workers increased by 48 percent, while their earnings during this period decreased by 37 percent.[17] "Abundant cheap labor and institutional funding," Kreidler concludes, "were the defining elements of the Ford era; reversals in these two resources are now defining the post-Ford era. Despite remarkable successes in preserving and advancing American high art under the nonprofit banner, the Ford era could not be sustained."[18]

If the nonprofit arts community is painted into a corner, any number of escape routes from these close quarters have been proposed. Many of these routes will be charted later in this report:

Increased involvement of the arts in community and civic affairs, generating revenues from areas that are not typically engaged in supporting the arts (e.g., youth programs, crime prevention, economic development).

Inclusion of arts education in the basic K-12 curriculum, providing both immediate payoffs, in the form of work for artists and arts organizations in educational activities, and long-term dividends, in the larger audiences that will begin graduating from high schools and colleges in the next century.

Expanded marketing efforts, building audiences by appealing more directly to the general public, generating increased earned income in the process.

Partnerships with the commercial sector, where the conglomerates of the entertainment industry often spend more money in a day than many nonprofits do in a year.

Forays into the electronic frontier, where new digital delivery systems promise to bring a wealth of material (including the arts, presumably) into American homes.

[16] Quoted in U.S. Congress, House, Economic Conditions of the Performing Arts. Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on Education and Labor, 87th Cong. 1st and 2nd Sess. (1961-62) 435.

[17] Richard Harvey Brown, "Art as a Commodity," in *The Modern Muse: The Support and Condition of Artists*, ed. C. Richard Swaim (New York: ACA Books, 1989) 19, 20.

[18] Kreidler, "Leverage Lost" 90.

"The example of Spoleto Festival's success has been an inspiration in our state and throughout America. We have shown that an arts festival can be a catalyst for a magnificent renaissance that transforms a city, its people and economy..."

JOSEPH RILEY, *MAYOR*, CITY OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Despite all of these prospects, the $10 billion annually of private contributions to the arts will remain at the core of the nonprofit arts economy. Especially in comparison to public patrons, private foundations, individual donors and corporate funders continue to hold the key to the health of the nonprofit sector.

Unfortunately, the private sector has not exactly leapt to the rescue of the arts in the face of public-sector cutbacks in the 1990s. Even before the significant budget cuts over the past two years, public arts funding at both the federal and state levels had experienced downturns, with the Arts Endowment budget losing nine percent in real value between 1989 and 1992, and the states collectively losing twice that amount in the same period. Foundation giving to the arts during these years (the latest of four triennial periods studied by the Foundation Center) may have grown 12 percent in constant dollars, but it failed to keep pace with the growth of private philanthropy overall (which rose 14 percent in real value). The share of arts funding, moreover, dropped slightly during that three-year period, from 13.6 percent to 13.3 percent.[19]

More recently (and again, adjusting for inflation), all private support for the arts (including foundations, corporations, and individuals) has declined slightly from an all-time high of $10.23 billion in 1992 to just under $10 billion in 1995, the first triennium of no or negative growth in the 31 years that such statistics

[19] Loren Renz, *Arts Funding Revisited: An Update on Foundation Trends in the 1990s* (New York: The Foundation Center, 1995) 2-3.

have been kept.[20] But the news might not be all bad. Aside from the somewhat unsettling fact that the arts managed only to hold steady in 1995 while the rest of the philanthropic sector grew by nearly eight percent, it might be said that giving to the arts has gradually "matured" into a less volatile field. Between 1965 and 1995, private giving as a whole rose by more than six percent only twice (in 1986 and 1995) and fell by more than three percent only once (1970). The arts, in contrast, had 12 such leaps in the first 22 years of that period, but only one in the past nine.[21]

Arts philanthropy, ultimately, is affected by a number of factors, including competition with other parts of the nonprofit sector (of which public/society benefit and education have shown the most growth in recent years), and, more generally, the impact of the economy on charitable giving as a whole. Given the many social challenges facing American society, it's unlikely that the competition for funding will be any less keen any time soon.

The road of arts philanthropy is likely to be a bumpy one over the next several years, but with fewer sharp peaks and valleys than in the past. The real question, though, is whether the leading arts funders (including the 25 largest foundations that provide 40 percent of all arts funding from that sector) can be persuaded to navigate this terrain in a more open and coordinated manner, less dependent on the strong will of patrons acting independently, more accommodating of the collective wisdom of an arts community that will simply have to pull together if it hopes to flourish in the next century.

Community foundations may lead the way in this regard, adding a much needed element of public policy to a field that has long been dominated by laissez-faire practices. There are now more than 400 community foundations across the country, devoting nearly 17 percent of their funding to the arts (for a total of more than $40 million in 1995). A number of them are working with a national funder, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, whose new $15 million initiative, "Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation," targets the need to increase public participation in the arts. Both in its collaborative aspects, and in its com-

[20] AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 1995* (New York: AAFRC, 1996) 25. Only once before, in 1977-78, has private support for the arts declined in two consecutive years.

[21] AAFRC, *Giving USA* 24-15.

mitment to sharing information with the field, this new program may turn out to be a model private philanthropic effort.

CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY

"The merchant should be a patron of the arts," Judge James Hall told a group of young Cincinnati businessmen in 1846.[22] While it took the business community as a whole over a century to heed that advice, the corporate sector eventually became a major supporter of the arts, making upwards of $750 million available to arts organizations every year. And there may be more where that came from. Only half of all businesses that give to nonprofits support the arts. Among the more disturbing trends in this sector, on the other hand, is the 21 percent decline in the share of corporate philanthropy devoted to the arts in recent years, from 11.8 percent in 1992 to 9.3 percent in 1995.[23]

Corporate support of the arts has historically mirrored the rise in public expenditures. In 1965, for example, the share of the corporate philanthropic dollar devoted to the arts was only 2.8 percent. A decade later, in 1975, it had reached 7.5 percent, breaking the 10 percent barrier five years later. As late as 1969, corporate patron Kenneth Dayton still viewed business support of the arts as a hedge against an expanding public sector. "In the absence of such support," Dayton declared, "government will do the whole job (or at least try to do it) and then will raise corporate and individual taxes to pay the additional costs."[24] True to his word, by 1969 Dayton's department store empire was midway through what would become a 50-year record of donating a full five percent of pre-tax profits to charitable causes.[25]

Nearly three decades later, with government arts support declining and with talk of tax cuts rather than increases now the norm, the Dayton Hudson

[22] Quoted in Freeman Hunt, *Worth and Wealth: A Collection of Maxims, Morals, and Miscellanies for Merchants and Men of Business* (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1856) 220.

[23] Conference Board, *Corporate Contributions in 1995: A Research Report* (New York: Conference Board, 1996).

[24] Quoted in Arnold Gingrich, *Business and the Arts: An Answer to Tomorrow* (New York, P.S. Eriksson, 1969) 42.

[25] "Dayton Hudson Corporation's 5% Philanthropic Tradition Turns 50," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* (11 July 1996). Between 1936 and 1981, companies were permitted to deduct up to five percent of taxable income as contributions. Although this ceiling was raised to ten percent in 1981, historically the average for all companies has been closer to one percent.

Foundation's senior program officer for the arts, Ben Cameron, offered a more confident appraisal of the arts-and-business nexus. As part of his participation at the American Canvas forum in Columbus, Cameron crafted a five-part rationale for Dayton Hudson's strong commitment to the arts, touching on historical precedent, quality-of-life and economic implications, the societal benefits of creativity, and, inevitably, the "enlightened self-interest" that has long been the driving force behind most corporate philanthropy. Far from offering a magic formula, though, Cameron's observations are much closer to an agenda for an arts community that may need to turn increasingly to the business sector for support in the future.

"Historically," Cameron began, "the founding family [of Dayton Hudson] was (and is) keenly committed to the arts. Their guidance led us to a strong role in the arts community, a legacy we find valuable and are reluctant to dismiss." While that commitment remains strong at a large, privately held company like Dayton Hudson, the same cannot necessarily be claimed for other parts of the corporate sector, in which mergers, downsizing, and the entry of a new managerial corps, (the first of a generation whose formal training was more likely to have been focused on specialized business skills than on a broad liberal arts tradition) all play a role. The same concerns that have been raised about audiences for the arts, in other words, whose younger members are less likely to be committed to the arts than their parents, can be applied to the corporate sector.

Second, according to Cameron, getting closer to the heart of cultural programs' attraction for business, "the arts create more livable communities." The potential economic implications of this aspect of corporate giving should not go unnoticed. The recent downturn in the share of business support going to the arts, for example, can be traced at least in part to the increased interest in community affairs, which grew 11 percent between 1993 and 1995 alone.[26]

The third of Cameron's five-point rationale is that "the arts are key components in the economic vitality of any community," a theme that generates more excitement among business and civic leaders alike than any other. Here, finally, are the kind of measurable results—1.3 million workers in the nonprofit arts, generat-

[26] Long tied to the standard philanthropic targets in health, education, and welfare, business giving gradually started to become more variegated in the decade of the sixties. The "civic and culture" category (a mere 5.3 percent percent in 1962) branched into separate entries for each in 1965, and eventually grew to between 9-12 percent each.

ing $37 billion in economic activity, and returning $3.4 billion to the treasury in income taxes—that even non-afficianados can appreciate.[27] Translated to the local level—and business philanthropy, it should be noted, is overwhelmingly local, tied as it is to markets and plant locations—economic impact studies have become a major weapon in the arts fundraiser's arsenal. But however persuasive these bottom-line arguments may be, it must also be acknowledged that they are based on a premise that is ultimately a losing proposition. Simply put, the Juilliard String Quartet will never have the *economic* impact of the Smashing Pumpkins, no more than the Boston Symphony Orchestra will ever serve as many people as the Boston Market restaurant chain.

In his fourth point, Cameron stated "that the arts advance creativity, which has resonance far beyond the arts themselves. Especially as our society begins to address formidable social problems, the value of creative thinking is key to our collective success." A number of other American Canvas participants shared this view, urging artists and arts organizations "to bring their processes as well as their products to the table," in their efforts to integrate arts activities into civic and community affairs.

"Giving back is, quite simply, the right thing to do," Cameron concluded. "Obviously, corporate giving has a dimension of self-interest: more livable communities attract better workers, and greater economic vitality means customers capable of higher spending." But there is an increasing danger of the arts gradually sliding further and further down the list of priorities for the ever-more-competitive philanthropic dollar, as corporate mergers and takeovers alter the character of a company's leadership, and as a generation emerges lacking both the educational background and thinking and perceptual skills that make them less capable of receiving and appreciating our nation's cultural legacy. "And more and more of this critical issue," Cameron added, "is borne out by our surveys where the allegiance to the arts tends to decline the younger the generation."

Dayton Hudson's approach to corporate philanthropy, both in its generosity and in its sophisticated grasp of the needs of the arts nationally, stands as a model for others in the field. The overall trend, however, appears to favor a more rationalized approach, as multinational operations, facing an ever-more-competitive global marketplace, feel compelled to stress profits over personality. "The last sever-

[27] National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies. *Economic Impact of the Arts* (1994).

al years," Nina Kressner Cobb points out in *Looking Ahead*, a report on private philanthropy commissioned by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, "have witnessed a major shift in corporate giving to the arts. In the late 80s, responsibility for setting policy for giving to the arts began to move from corporate-giving departments to marketing, advertising, public relations, and human resources department and become much more market-driven."[28]

It's too early to tell how that kind of shift will affect corporate philanthropy, perhaps, although Robert Fitzpatrick, for one, expects the worst. "Corporate giving, which began as a CEO's gesture of good citizenship and whose only payback was community good will," the former president of California Institute for the Arts and director of the Los Angeles Olympics Arts Festival suggests, "is now increasingly determined by directors of marketing and sales. Cause-related marketing is the most recent perversion of philanthropy: I expect the next American Express ad to say: 'Charge your Christmas shopping at Tiffany's and we will contribute a dime to a starving artist.' America has moved from frequent flyer miles to feel-good points."[29]

That jaundiced view of corporate philanthropy has long been common in the nonprofit sector, and as such it sheds little light on the arts-and-business nexus But the giving-as-advertising trend does bear watching. "Corporate support is not uninterested dollars," observes Ruby Lerner, executive director of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers. "It's extremely, specifically, interested dollars…" The danger, she adds, is that ours will soon become a "corporatized culture," in which only those organizations that conform to corporate marketing profiles— "generally the larger institutions," Lerner notes, "…and some of the younger, more entrepreneurial organizations that frankly aren't even bothering to become nonprofits because the situation is so grim"—will be well supported.

With total business giving to the arts representing roughly nine times the budget of the Arts' Endowment, corporate patronage warrants as much scrutiny as that federal agency has had to endure in recent years. There should be room in the

[28] Nina Kressner Cobb, *Looking Ahead: Private Sector Giving to the Arts and the Humanities* (Washington, DC: President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1995) 14.

[29] Robert Fitzpatrick, "Apocalypse Now and Then," keynote address, International Society of Performing Arts conference, New York, Dec. 18, 1996. A transcript of Fitzpatrick's remarks are available on ISPA's Web site (http://www.ispa-online.org/ispaconf/key-fitzpatrick.html).

corporate sector for the kind of merit-based funding that has more to do with rewarding arts organizations for a job well done, and less with how many new customers can be attracted through that kind of beneficence. New technology-based corporations, which benefit from the creative content of the arts, would be wise as well to invest in the nonprofit arts.

INDIVIDUALS: GIVING AND GETTING

Often overlooked in discussions of the arts infrastructure, which generally describe the transfer of funds from one institution (a foundation or corporation) to another (a museum or orchestra, for example), are the individuals who play key roles on both sides of that equation. In the arts as in all nonprofit fields, individuals collectively represent the single largest source of contributed income—over 80 percent of all charitable giving (and approaching 90 percent when individual bequests are added). No less important to the health of the field: the millions of hours of volunteer service that Americans contribute every year.

The picture of individual giving is a mixed one. Although five percent fewer households reported making contributions in 1995 than in 1993, the average contribution for all households (including non-contributors), after inflation, rose two percent, reversing a downward trend in such contributions that began in 1989. (For the 68.5 percent of households that reported contributions in 1995, moreover, the average contribution increased nearly 10 percent from 1993, after inflation, reversing a four-year slide.) Volunteering, similarly, has experienced a slight upturn, from the 48 percent of adults who volunteered in 1993 to 49 percent in 1995, but it was still down from the 54 percent who volunteered in 1989. The amount and value of this free labor, in any case, some 20.3 billion hours valued at $201 billion in 1995, remain highly significant.

If the importance of individual patrons often gets lost in the shuffle of institutional statistics, the importance of individual artists threatens to disappear altogether. Thanks to the analysis of census data over the past 20 years, we now know much more about the employment and earnings of artists, some 1.67 million of them, than ever before. We can speak with some confidence, for example, of average yearly earnings (authors led the way in 1989, at $23,335), of median ages (painters/craftspersons were the oldest, at 40 for males and 39 for females), and under-employment (dancers were the least likely to work a full year, with the median number of weeks worked in that field reaching only 39).[30]

Yet in other, crucial respects, particularly with regard to the context of bringing artist and audience together, we know comparatively little. How, for example, does the poet find a publisher, and how, in turn, does the literary magazine or the "small press" find an audience for that work? How does the composer find an ensemble to perform a new composition, and how does that ensemble, in turn, find a performance space or a record label to make that work more widely available? What happens to all of the independent films and videos that are made every year, some of which may find outlets on public television, but the vast majority of which are consigned to occasional screenings at media arts centers and museums?

In the popular marketplace, of course, it is hardly necessary to ask these questions, and the answers, in any case, are as close as the nearest Waldenbooks, Tower Records, or Blockbuster Video. The nonprofit sector, in contrast, offers up a treasure hunt for which few Americans are equipped with maps. Largely unaware of the cultural treasures that the existing production and distribution systems have managed to hide so effectively, the majority of Americans are not even likely to look very hard.

Most of the maps of the cultural terrain that we do have, moreover, are much more effective at charting the institutional landscape, although a handful of American Canvas participants urged the consideration of individual voices as well. Roberto Bedoya, executive director of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (representing some 350 artist-run organizations across the country), used his position as a member of the American Canvas Steering Committee both to underscore the importance of the individual artist to American culture, and to advise against losing sight of the artist's needs in our preoccupation with institutional growth. "America is experiencing a boom in the development of large cultural facilities—new libraries, museums, and concert halls," Bedoya observed. "Concurrently, significant capital improvement of existing cultural facilities is also occurring. In the face of all these millions being spent on arts institutions, artists are being told that there is less or no money for them."

[30] *Artists in the Workforce: Employment and Earnings, 1970-1990.*

Bedoya traces this curious dichotomy to our preference for "cultural illustrations over cultural inquiries…The importance of art in our society cannot be reduced to mean, 'If I have a museum I have art,' and in that process erase artists and their needs. All the talk about supporting our cultural infrastructure is worthless if we fail to support the essence of creativity—artists, their explorations, and inquiries."