

The Platform
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The Platform is published ten times a year by AEA Consulting, a company that specialises in strategic and operational planning for the cultural sector. The Platform serves to promote discussion and understanding of the critical factors affecting the successful management of cultural organisations. Comments or contributions welcomed by The Acting Editor, The Platform, platform@aeaconsulting.com. Back copies available. If you don't wish to receive The Platform again, then just send an e-mail to this address saying 'ENOUGH ALREADY' and you won't.

Article

Tax breaks for charitable giving in the UK

The highlight my March was helping to prepare and run a workshop in New York for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Nonprofit Finance Fund. The participants were board members and senior executives from sixteen non-profit jazz presenting organizations from around America, ranging from art centres to radio station. They were all recipients of challenge funding from the Duke Foundation, the purpose of which is to contribute towards establishing – or in some cases growing - endowments. The income from the endowments is earmarked for costs directly associated with the presentation of jazz (artists fees, marketing, etc. etc.).

The workshop focussed on the issues surrounding the creation and management of endowments – and underlined the dangers of seeing endowments as a 'silver bullet' outside of the context of the overall structure of an organisation's assets and its balance sheet. An endowment is all very well but not so much use if you are so chronically short of working capital you can't see past next week's payroll....

The occasion was a highlight for me for three reasons: first, as a jazz nut, it was great to spend some time with others even more passionate and unequivocally more knowledgeable than I am. Second, the Jazznet initiative is an original and well-directed attempt to provide targeted, long-term

support to an area of cultural life generally neglected by the forces of cultural philanthropy. This means that it is deeply appreciated by the recipients, and so the occasion was a jolly one. Third, the workshop gave me a context for pushing my own thinking forward a bit.

The central role of endowments, usually created through tax deductible contributions, is, of course, one of the critical differences between the more diverse ecology of the American funding system and the European funding model. In the United Kingdom, we look enviously at the autonomy offered to many (but by no means all) American cultural organizations by their endowments. The current economic in the American economy, the growth in foundation assets, the requirement that they disburse at least 5% of those assets value per annum, and the growth in individual giving, together offer significant opportunities for creating and growing endowments. In America, nevertheless, many arts organizations look with reciprocal feelings of envy at the levels of core public funding enjoyed by cultural organisations in Europe. Both communities believe the other has a regime that offers greater prospects of autonomy, the ability to program more adventurously and to cultivate artistic innovation in the absence of a commercially viable market for the fruits of that innovation.

In the United States, the prospect of significantly increased public funding seems fairly remote anyway; and in the United Kingdom, the tax regime, the underdeveloped culture of personal philanthropy, and the planning horizons of most cultural institutions together have made endowments an equally remote proposition.

So both sides tend to be fairly fatalistic about the *status quo*.

The general disposition towards the creation of endowments on the part of the funding community in the UK has, in any case, been distinctly sniffy: they tie up funds for a relatively small annual benefit; their existence provides a context, both at individual organisation and at collective level, for the incremental withdrawal of public funding, and so why bother sweating over their creation; and , it is argued, endowments encourage a lack of accountability and therefore sloth on the part of the beneficiaries.

These arguments against endowments, which have predominated in the UK funding system, seem to me to be, on balance, misguided. The first (ratio of effort to rewards) is short-term. The UK lottery, which might have been used for endowments, has largely gone the way of North Sea oil and gas – into either immediate consumption or into infrastructure

that on balance increases, rather than decreases, reliance on public funding. Non-profit arts organisations are red-ink businesses and if you increase either their physical infrastructure or their programming then, all other things being equal, there will be more red-ink around. One or two 'annuities' have been created, where both capital and income from a quantum of investment is run down over a period of time. But annuities are designed to run out,

The second argument (public sector claw-back) may or may not be true but the price of public funding of the arts, like that of democracy, is eternal vigilance. Clawback is not mechanistic, and endowments are simply one of any number of pretexts for the reduction of public funding. The lottery was and is a far greater one. Clawback is prevented by effective political mobilisation.

The third argument (endowments encourage lassitude; grant in aid encourages accountability) seems simply perverse. Surely the largely unitary public funding system, on balance, that – without constant self-awareness – is equally prone to complacency, lack of imagination and a tendency to infantilise its 'clients'.

On balance, the American grass seems albeit harder work to grow.

The recent provisions in the budget, however, provide some water that, one hopes, may not be spilled quite as readily as the lottery's largesse. The provisions for tax deductibility trailed by the Chancellor earlier this year were indeed included in the budget. According to Michael Brophy, Chief Executive of the Charities Aid Foundation: "In making the UK the most liberal tax environment for giving in the world, these initiatives have the ability to generate in excess of £1 billion [\$1.6bn] for good causes within two years.¹" This provides the arts, as part of the voluntary sector, with a 'second chance'. Let's plan for it and use it intelligently.

Adrian Ellis

Book Reviews

The New Museum. Selected Writings of John Cotton Dana

Edited by William A Peniston

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http://www.cafonline.org/news/news_frame.cfm?whichStory=156

Published by The American Association of Museums and the Newark Museum 1999
ISBN 0-9321201-64-0

This month, the new Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) takes over as the official body representing the interests of museums in England. Controversy surrounded the Council even as it summoned itself into existence, thanks to a speech made in January by Matthew Evans, its Chairman, in which he expressed the view that many museums today are regressive, isolationist, resistant to change and ignorant of new technologies. Such sentiments seemed to justify the disquiet already voiced by curators about the effects of grouping museums, libraries and archives together in one organisation for collections. For sceptics about the wisdom of combining public policy for books and objects, Evans' own provenance as a publisher (he is Chairman of Faber & Faber), rather than a 'museum person', only adds insult to perceived injury.

Ninety years after his death, we can only speculate as to how the American librarian and museum reformer John Cotton Dana (1856-1929) would have responded to Evans' comments. But this much is certain: Dana would have had strong opinions on the subject, and would have expressed them forcefully. As this new anthology of his writings shows, Dana was a tireless campaigner and polemicist for the need to make museums 'useful' to their constituencies, and of their unrealised potential as agents of social cohesion and personal development. Dana would not have objected to the link now being made in England between libraries and museums for, he believed, the museum had much to learn from the capacity of the library 'to be of practical aid to all of the community that supports it.' Indeed, the Newark Museum Association, founded by Dana in 1909, was premised on the same principles of progressive education and public utility that had underpinned his directorship of the Newark Public Library since 1902. From 1909 to his death in 1929, Dana managed both library and museum in Newark as complementary aspects of a community's resource for life-long learning.

Reading Dana's writings at the start of the 21st century, you have constantly to remind yourself that most of these articles were written eighty years ago. In them, Dana predicts virtually all of the buzz concepts in museums today: access, outreach, social inclusion and community involvement are at the heart of his vision, as are the superior abilities of women as museum directors.... Like Evans, Dana was also overtly critical of many of the museums that he saw around him. In particular, he poured scorn on what he called the 'old museums' that were filled with the imported artefacts of European culture and run by exclusive and unaccountable

boards of wealthy trustees. By contrast, Dana's 'new museum' would start with a 'community exhibit' illustrating the history, geography and creativity of its home-town. Above all, it aimed to replace the civic ritual of visiting the old museum with new forms social engagement based on diverse forms of participation and education. For Dana, the concept of the museum without walls was disarmingly simple: accept all gifts without condition and then lend them to borrowers in the community, just like a library².

With the publication of 'The New Museum', Dana's radical vision is now available to a new generation. Dana's checklist of 'A Few Fundamental Notes' which includes such pithy advice as "encourage the young to help make their museum" and "advertise, advertise, and then advertise again" could be used a crib sheet by any of us. Of course, some of his ideas are outdated and many more invite debate. His notion of community is premised on faith in a degree of social homogeneity that is neither recognisable nor considered desirable today. Nevertheless, the consistent freshness and clarity of his language compensate for the time that has lapsed since Dana first dispensed his invigorating recipes for creating the truly useful museum.

Dr. Helen Rees

Beyond the Prado. Museums and Identity in Democratic Spain.

Selma Reuben Holo

The Smithsonian Institution, 1999

ISBN 1-56098-925-4

This is an enthusiastic, upbeat account of the recent history of Spanish museums. Through eighteen case studies, the book provides a clear picture of the powerful force that museums became in Spanish society over the last quarter of the twentieth century. Reuben Holo has a real gift for vivid descriptions, and her account is well-grounded in historical and social research supplemented by personal interviews. If you have not seen the museums described, *Beyond the Prado* will make you want to go.

The essential elements of the 'Spanish miracle' are professionalism, attention to multiculturalism, and a conviction that the museum is one of the most

effective means of providing informal educating for a wide cross section of the population. Above all Spain benefits from the leadership of the museum community that is committed to developing institutions that respect and represent its many cultures and traditions.

The reader is led from the *Prado* – the most well-known face of Spain's historical and artistic centre – by way of the *Guggenheim Museum Bilbao* – the stunning symbol of the flamboyant Basque rejection of the centre – the *Reina Sofia* – the national museum of modern and contemporary art – the *Army Museum* – a long time bastion of ultraconservative values – *ARCO* – Madrid's giant international art fair and annual "ephemeral" museum – and the stylish *Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum*, to the *Sephardic Museum*, the institution that reminds all visitors to Toledo that Spain can confidently absorb the "other" into its national identity. Holo describes vividly how these museums were effected by cultural and political changes after Franco's death and the part they have played in those changes. They have proved central to post-Franco nation-building.

This is not only a history of success. State, regional and municipal government bodies were all infused with funds with which to promote their traditional and contemporary patrimonies, both internally and externally. But some institutions were left to struggle when they did not suit the prevailing political atmosphere (for example, the relative poverty of the Prado and relative wealth of the Reina Sofia during socialist years); some are still striving to define their 'new' identity; and directors have often been fired when not 'on message'. Tomas Llorens (founder of the IVAM in Valencia, subsequently director of the Reina Sofia and finally chief curator of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum) and Carmen Guimenz (first director of exhibitions at the Reina Sofia) were both casualties, despite their central role in the shaping of contemporary Spain's cultural life.

Spanish museums seem to be places born (or re-born) to make visitors feel welcome when entering and informed when leaving – and as such, they are far ahead of many European neighbours. Definitely a book worth reading: the lessons useful to all working in the field of cultural heritage.

Maria de Peverelli

² For a dose of *plus ca change* see: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/UK/This_Britain/2000-03/art190300.shtml

Site Reviews

e-Philanthropy, Volunteerism, and Social Changemaking: A New Landscape of Resources, Issues, and Opportunities

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
2000

www.wkkf.org

This report, downloadable from the Kellogg site, describes nearly 140 Internet sites that facilitate the three items in their title. The report is taxonomic and descriptive rather analytical. A collaborative effort led by consultant Stephanie J. Clohesy and WKKF's Director of Venture Philanthropy Thomas K. Reis, it is based on a series of quasi-focus groups with investors/developers and content providers. The classifications range from (1) e-Commerce Shopping/Profit Sharing through (4) Knowledge and Capacity Building to (8) Portals/Full Spectrum Services. It is an excellent 62-page snapshot of a field that is expanding exponentially.

e-Philanthropy

e-Philanthropy is probably the most significant phenomenon covered in the report. The non-profit sector represents 10% of the US economy – and received some \$857 billion in donations in 1998. The Web is an increasingly significant route by which philanthropic dollars find their way into the sector. The Red Cross raised \$2.5m online last year. The Web is a route to philanthropic giving that also has an impact on the character of giving itself. It offers people a chance to express their philanthropic interests very directly, to get comprehensive answers quickly, and to share their interests and passions. The current transformation of traditional philanthropy to e-philanthropy is remarkable in a number of ways.

First, the Internet economy is altering the definitions of non-profits, challenging assumptions about the maturity, sustainability, and longevity of the sector. Charities are not expected to be either paternalistic or altruistic *per se*. Rather they are increasingly expected to create vehicles that turn donors' aspirations into concrete results. There is an increasing trend towards performance rating and the development of indices by rating agencies. e-Philanthropy acts as a form of disintermediation – cutting out the middleman. With the ability to give time, skills, and dollars, donors can communicate with the people who need assistance and develop direct relationships. www.virtualfoundation.org for example, links donors to sustainable development projects. www.duo.org can notify you when disasters strike and allows selective donations to disaster relief. These developments are changing the

terms of giving and fund-raising, relying much more on accountability and quantifiable outcomes to encourage giving. The availability of and access to information, new mechanisms for donating, and the speed of transaction creates a fundamental challenge for non-profits – compete or die. Numerous corporations, for example, are now offering on-line encyclopaedias of opportunities for the donor/volunteer. A non-profit that does not list with one of the many corporations that offers direct donations, connections to corporate sponsorship, or profit sharing through merchant partners puts itself at a very real competitive disadvantage.

Entirely enough to spin one's head.

Knowledge and capacity building

The middle sections of the Kellogg report provides an overview of the burgeoning array of US-based organizations, associations and groups dedicated to developing the capacity of the non-profit and philanthropic sectors. Their strengths and weaknesses are perhaps best illustrated by looking at three sites. The first site is The Alliance, the second CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and the third the Support Center for Non-profit Management.

All three organizations are related to the former Support Centres of America – there used to be a network of support centres across the US that provided services aimed at building skills and capacity in the non-profit sector. The Alliance is the membership organization that resulted from the merger of Support Centers of America and the Nonprofit Management Association. CompassPoint and the Support Centre for Nonprofit Management are both former support centres that continue to offer a broadly comparable range of services and support resources.

The Alliance acts as a forum and support network for consultants and other organizations providing management assistance to nonprofits. Their web site, www.allianceonline.org, provides basic promotional information but also contains some useful resources, in particular the Alliance Resource Center. This searchable database holds a good range of information on web-based nonprofit resources, as well books, newsletters, organizations and educational programs. The couple of searches we ran produced relevant results – something that cannot always be said of search engines.

CompassPoint is based in San Francisco and San Jose and provides a range of consulting and training services. The site, www.compasspoint.org, projects a very positive image of the organization as a practical and proactive resource for clients, the Bay Area non-profit community and those generally interested in the management of the sector. The site

provides access to a range of commentary and advice published by CompassPoint and connects visitors to relevant external resources. There are two newsletters produced by CompassPoint that may be of interest to readers of *The Platform: Board Café*, which provides opinion, news and resources relevant to those serving as board members, and *Food for Thought*, which covers activity in the non-profit community in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Both can be subscribed to through e-mail.

Less engaging is www.supportctr.org the site for the Support Center for Nonprofit Management based in New York City, which exists to “strengthen the leadership and management capacity of non-profit and public interest organizations to fulfil their missions and revitalise their communities.” The Center offers management training sessions as well as consultancy services and both cover a fairly staple set of topics aimed at the most common organizational issues faced by small to medium sized nonprofits. Unlike the CompassPoint site, which provides information on the organisation’s business but could also act as a research tool in and of itself, the Support Centre site is mainly a promotional tool for the Centre’s fee-charging services and additional resources (for example, a page of links to other management resources) are fairly static and narrow defined.

While there are no earth-shattering conclusions to be drawn from comparisons between the sites, it is interesting to see how three organisations with a common history can present quite distinct impressions of their ethos, character and ability through their web sites. If there is any lesson to learn, it is probably this: if you are going to try to make your site more than a story-telling promotional tool, do it well or don’t do it at all.

The links page on the Support Center’s site is limited in scope but includes some significant support organizations that are, again, picked up in the Kellogg report. The National Center for Nonprofit Boards www.ncnb.org is best known for its range of booklets and publications on non-profit governance and also provides consulting services and workshops – all focused on effective and appropriate board functioning. The Council on Foundations www.cof.org fulfils a similar mandate for foundation-based philanthropy by “promoting knowledge, growth and action in philanthropy”. The Council is a membership organization and seeks to act as a leader and advocate for the foundation sector. The web site provides a range of information on the Council’s activities and membership and details on various resources commonly accessed by foundations. The Foundation Center, www.fdncenter.org is focused on those seeking funding, as well as those providing it. The Center provides the most widely used database on

foundations and grantmaking organizations in the US (The Foundation Directory) and generates a range of publications and tools related to funding research.

That’s enough web sites – Ed.

Mimi Liu
Catherine McDonald

Conference Review

Conference Review

The Long Run: Long-Term Developments in the Arts and Cultural Industries
Rotterdam, Erasmus University of Rotterdam,
23-25 February 2000

This conference was held to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Department of Arts and Culture [not cultural] Studies, www.eur.nl.fnkw. The department decided to hold an academic conference for the occasion, inviting key note speakers from around the world, calling for papers that were subsequently screened for presentation, and so on. There were over eighty presentations, with participants coming from Europe, North America, Australia and a few from Japan and Taiwan. Many of the papers were interesting, and I found myself torn between concurrent sessions, an experience that I rarely have in attending academic conferences.

It was a tremendous success, not only in terms of conference organisation, but also in the sense that everybody attending seemed very happy to be there. This was one of the few occasions where researchers from different academic disciplines got together and examined arts and culture in their economic, organisational and social context – as opposed to their aesthetic content. The first International Conference on Cultural Policy in Bergen, Norway www.uib.no/kul/ICCP, last September, was also interdisciplinary and interesting. But usually, similar conferences, such as the ones for Cultural Economics and Arts Management, to which many of the participants including myself pay regular visits, are less successful. Cultural researchers of my ilk tend to feel slightly out of place and often find conference themes and approaches too narrow. In our home institutions, almost for sure, we do not discuss

our research with the colleagues except at a purely methodology level. Therefore the Rotterdam conference was valuable for people from a very wide range of academic disciplines -- just to get together and discuss the ways in which recorded culture is produced, distributed and consumed.

Perhaps the success of the conference is attributable to the focus of the host department. I have always found the Dutch approach to studying this area interesting. The Boekman Foundation in Amsterdam is a major European centre for cultural policy, where research conducted elsewhere is stored in database for others' use. *Poetics*³ a slightly peculiar journal of 'empirical research on culture, the media and the arts' is edited by a Dutch academic from Tilburg. The Dutch are superb linguists and open to different research territories: researchers liberally draw on materials from the US, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and the Nordic countries. Such open-mindedness is harder to find in other countries. Americans, especially, tend to make the mistake of assuming the universality of what is shared in their own countries.

Sessions were held around the following themes: Public, non-profit and for-profit futures of the arts; Artistic work and artistic careers; Media, criticism and the arts; Urban culture: the role of museums and other cultural institutions; The dynamics of transnational cultural exchange; Perspectives on cultural industries; and Cultural organizations and their audiences.

The conference highlighted a major research theme in the sub-field of sociology known as the 'production of culture' perspective. For those unfamiliar with this approach, it includes research into the production, distribution and consumption of culture examined at individual, organisational, institutional and societal levels⁴. The founding father of this branch of sociology, Richard Peterson from Vanderbilt University, gave a stimulating keynote speech on the

³ Unfortunately this journal is hard to find even at good university libraries See <http://www.elsevier.nl/locate/poetic> for more information.

⁴ See Peterson's literature review in Diana Crane [ed], *The Production of Culture*, Blackwell, 1994

change of cultural taste among the elite over the last few decades. He argued that today's elites are distinguished more by being 'omnivorous' than by consuming 'high' culture only. This was not the case some decades ago, at least in the US. The socio-economically higher strata of the population now need to be familiar to many different kinds of cultural and art forms and consume rock and pop music, for example, as well as opera depending upon the context⁵. In contrast, lower social strata tend to consume a very narrow range of cultural forms. There were some people in the audience who commented what they knew (theatre in Britain for example) did not fit in with his theory. But I found this argument very powerful and convincing.

The conference was a one-off, with nothing similar coming up in the near future. Although the cultural policy conference is now reasonably firmly established, it would be good to have a follow up to this particular format and focus. And there does not seem to be a good name that represents neatly the theme of the Rotterdam conference (and the research field), not to mention the awkwardly named host department. Any good ideas?

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⁵ For a full paper, see the chapter by Peterson and Simkkus in Lamont, M and Fournier, M (eds), *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, The University of Chicago Press, 1992. This volume has a number of interesting papers on arts audiences and social stratification.

Beginnings and Ending

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Commissioned in February

- For National Arts Stabilization, Baltimore, and the Cleveland Foundation, technical assistance to five cultural organisations in Cleveland, Ohio.
- For Rich Mix, London, the development of an outline business plan for a cultural centre in East London, integrating a wide range of commercial and artistic activity as part of a London Tower Hamlets urban regeneration initiative.
- For the Hackney Exploratory, an organisational audit of the Exploratory concept to examine how this could be replicated elsewhere in the UK.
- For the Cleveland College of Art and Design, a feasibility study examining the rationalisation of the CCAD's three outlying Middlesbrough sites to a central town site alongside the proposed new Art Gallery.
- For the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, a strategic stocktake on development plans for Linley Sambourne House.

Completed in February

- For Canterbury City Council, a review of plans for a concert hall.
- For Middlesbrough City Council, a feasibility study for a new Art Gallery & Craft Centre for Middlesbrough Council.

⁶ i.e. regurgitation – attribution = calumny