



Grantmakers in the Arts
2004 Conference

DANCING WITH DIFFERENT PARTNERS

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A COMPASS FOR THE NEW WORLD HOW RESEARCH CAN HELP FUNDERS, PRACTITIONERS & POLICYMAKERS

The recent National Performing Arts Convention demonstrated there is a growing appetite for research that will help arts practitioners and policymakers clarify problems, understand issues, and implement solutions more effectively. This session is designed to help foundations become more agile in pursuing research to accomplish a variety of objectives. A panel of experienced funders and researchers will discuss a range of research projects that were commissioned for a variety of purposes. The panelists will highlight what they intended each research project to contribute, how the findings were ultimately used, and in what ways the research did or did not fulfill expectations.

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STONE: Welcome. I'm evaluation officer with the Wallace Foundation, and that means that part of what I do is oversee the research that we commission at Wallace. I'm delighted to see all of you here this morning to discuss a topic that I know is increasingly familiar to arts funders, but it seems like it's always worthy of additional conversation.

I thought it would be nice to frame today's conversation by observing something that we're all dealing with, which is that the philanthropic sector is under pressure to demonstrate socially beneficial results. We're getting that kind of request from multiple sources.

I think we'll hear from our panelists today that research can help funders do just that, whether it's through formulating better questions and getting answers to help some of the internal decision making; or whether it's to help your grantees be more effective in what they do; or it's to contribute to the field more generally by supporting research that provides new knowledge to the field.

We're going to hear today from our panelists who have a number of different perspectives. We have a program officer from a major community foundation; we have the research director of a national service organization; and we have a seasoned researcher who's worked with numerous arts organizations and art funders.

They're going to be drawing from their diversity of experience around the topic of research, and discuss a range of projects that have very different objectives. These projects, while they vary in their objectives and purposes, will be easy to access and then have a discussion around because our panelists are going to address four key questions as they talk about their various projects, which are quite different in nature.

They're going to talk about why the research was commissioned in the first place. What it is that they wanted to learn, what was the goal? Given that goal, what were some key choices they had to make about the form of the research, some choices about the research design?

Who was the intended audience? Or were there multiple audiences? How did that shape their thinking up-front, and how did that also influence the take-up later on?

Most interestingly, since all these projects are ones that have been in the past, we're going to ask them about the impact that the research ended up having. Both the impact that was intended, that tracked with a goal they had, but also impacts

that were unintended because that's a part of this whole enterprise.

We'll spend about half the time with the panelists talking about particular projects with different objectives, to get some examples on the table for them to be able to share some insights.

Then we want to have a broader discussion. We're going to open it up by, first of all, letting the panelists ask questions of each other. I might throw in a few questions as well, but mainly, we're interested in hearing from all of you.

I know there are research projects that many of you have conducted yourselves, where you might be able to share some of your own insights. You may be contemplating some projects that would be interesting to discuss. Or if you have thoughts about the general topic of how funders can incorporate research as one of the activities that they engage in within their whole portfolio, and how you think about how research might interface with your grantmaking activities.

AUDIENCE: Could you clarify the title? Is the aim of this particular panel how to do research or is it how to utilize research?

STONE: That's a great question. I guess it's how you do research in thinking about the questions, just in the broadest sense. Thinking about the questions, thinking about the general form, who's the audience, what your goals are.

We'll be talking more about the impact of the research, and, to some extent, the challenges of making use of it afterwards. A lot of research is conducted with not a lot of thought, or not sufficient thought, about what you intend to do with it after the fact.

So what I'd like to say is this session isn't to discuss particular research findings. It's for those who are contemplating doing research or have done research and want to talk about how you think about different kinds of objectives that you can meet with the research and how you structure the project to meet those objectives.

I'm going to give an introduction for each of our panelists right before they speak. We have Alan Brown who is a researcher and consultant for the arts industry. We have Randy Cohen who is the VP for Research and Information for Americans for the Arts. And Ann McQueen who is the program officer for the Boston Foundation.

We're going to start with Ann, so I'll tell you a little bit more about her. Ann joined the Boston Foundation in 1997, but she had a consulting



relationship with them since 1993. Ann's primary responsibility is the arts and culture grantmaking at the Boston Foundation.

Related to that, she's also been actively involved in commissioning research and in convening partners around topics of interest to the arts sector. She also works with the Foundation's development team, building their endowed art fund. Aside from all this arts and culture work, Ann also has responsibility for the Foundation's environmental sector work.

So with that I'm going to ask Ann to jump into a series of related projects that started a number of years ago. If you could begin by telling us what was the need that you perceived that made you think of doing this work in the first place.

MCQUEEN: I want to start first with talking a little bit about the context of the Boston Foundation and why we support and conduct research. Over the last three or four years it's become an increasing focus for the Foundation. Program officers are still reviewing grants and functioning in that role, but we're taking on larger convening policy roles and overseeing research.

The Foundation sees the research as central to our mission and our strategic goals. We have a call from the board to be a high visibility center of the conversation for our community, and the research certainly supports that.

It is sometimes, of course, exclusively connected to our grantmaking as a way of looking for ways to make investments, investment opportunities, or evaluating investments that we have made.

Sometimes we conduct research simply to deepen our knowledge about the sector or the region. It's not necessarily connected to our grantmaking. Often we don't know where the research will lead; we are in the process of following a question. That's certainly what has happened in the arts.

Paul Grogan came onboard the Boston Foundation about three years ago. He came from the community development sector, not deeply involved in the arts, and set about meeting leaders in the cultural sector. He came back from one of those meetings, and he said, "I keep hearing again and again and again how hard it is to raise money for the arts in Boston. Is that true?"

I said, well, yes, of course, but we had no data to show him. There were little bits and pieces of studies from other cities but nothing coherent, nothing pulled together about what put Boston at the center of this question.

So we began a major research process, basically to quantify and qualify just how difficult it was to raise funds for the arts and culture in Boston. Basically, where does the money come from? Where does the money go to?

Our audience was the leadership of cultural organizations. It was other funders. And it was the community and, explicitly, the press, to get the message out about the Foundation, about this piece of information that the cultural community was struggling with.

We hired consultants for this task, we didn't undertake it in-house. The cost was about \$50,000, exclusive of the publication and the convenings, and exclusive of staff time.

The data was focused around the IRS 990 data compiled by the Urban Institute. We also worked with the Foundation Center, but it was the IRS data that was the biggest hunk of what we looked at.

We were looking about where the money came from and where the money went in two different ways. First, by funding source, whether it came from individuals, corporations, foundations, or the public sector.

And then in terms of where it went to, we looked at about 650 cultural organizations by budget size. Those who were under \$500,000, those from \$500,000 - \$1.5 million, \$1.5 million - \$5 million, \$5 million - \$20 million, and then the over \$20 million. So we categorized organizations not by media or art form but by budget size. It has had a significant impact on the way we look at things in Boston. First it called out the bad news and really showed us that, yes, it is a tough town to raise money in, and it showed us why. There was not public funding, there were not a lot of foundations, and so forth.

It also created a lot of new anxieties. As we got closer and closer to the end of the research, we were convening heads of cultural organizations to preview the information to see whether it tested with the reality as they knew it.

The anxiety level kept getting higher and higher and higher. There were many calls for us not to publish this research at all. That, interestingly, came from all parts of the sector and from other funders as well.

I think that that perhaps came from the fact that we didn't explicitly say that this was not connected to our grantmaking. We wanted to know because we wanted to know. I think there was a fear, especially among the larger



organizations who clearly got the bulk of the money, that we would start to ignore them and focus on the small end of the market where there was very little money.

So I think perhaps that was a problem on our side. I'm still not quite sure why the deep anxiety, but it was there.

Also, I noticed an impact because organizations started to look at themselves as part of a whole rather than just as their own. Leaders started to look at the sector and where they fit within the sector and not just as their single organization. So that was new.

We began to see more global thinking, which I think was very important. The Boston market has sometimes been characterized as being very fractured, so this was a good trend to note.

The study is available on our website as a PDF file. We've run out of hard copies and it's out of print.

The study started, especially smaller and mid-size organizations, to have a greater focus on the individual donor as a potential revenue growth area for them. So it pointed them in new directions, which was something that we hadn't anticipated.

It changed the conversation, and it changed in some imperceptible ways the Foundation's relationships with its grantees. We were bringing them together around their central problem. My relationship with individual leaders shifted into a less about the money equation. It was more about the information equation, and how do we change the system, the sector.

In fact, that's where we went to next. Around all the anxiety about whether we would publish or not, they finally turned to us and said, "Okay. So if you are going to do this, even though we don't want you to, please don't let it be something that sits on the shelf. You've told us how bad it is, help us figure out a way out of this problem. Help us identify the answer."

That's how we got into the next iteration, when we released this in February 2003 and simultaneously announced that we were forming a cultural task force to look at the problem and to identify solutions.

I'm going to talk a lot more about the process of that in a roundtable on Wednesday with Julie Fry. Here we're focused on research, and I have to say that what we realized very quickly was that the

question was not a research question, it was a political question. It was an advocacy issue.

However, we also realized that we needed a little bit more information to build the case and to figure it, and to answer what it was we were asking for. How do we address this deficit in financial resources?

So we convened this taskforce of 64 people, put them in five committees looking at different aspects of the question. We gathered a lot of existing research as a baseline and disseminated it broadly to everybody. We gave them links to websites; we gave them bibliographies; we handed out whole studies, so we would form a common information base for our discussions.

These things ranged quite widely. For example, the Museum of Fine Arts had just completed an economic impact study of themselves as an institution, so that was a piece. We looked at a variety of reports on united fundraising campaigns because the question was, is this the answer? Should we have a united fundraising campaign in Boston?

The answer to that question turned out to be no, but we needed to look at the existing research, some of which was national from the Americans for the Arts, some of which was locally commissioned specifically about the Boston context. We also looked at attendance and tourism data, all sorts of articles and information.

We developed three discrete research components on our own. We went back to the IRS data that had grounded the research. The funding report is based in 1999 data and we got up to 2002. We could look at more recent data.

The data costs for two data runs was about \$25,000, so if you can deal with Excel spreadsheets it's relatively inexpensive to look at 990 information. There's a lot of stuff there.

We used that to do a deeper analysis of organizations with budgets less than \$500,000. They were of great concern to a lot of people. The big organizations looked at how many of them they were, and said, they're eating up all our money! *[Laughter]*

The board said, Are there too many? Should we merge everybody? What should we do? So we needed to answer that question a little more concretely and look at disaggregated data.

We also did a mapping and charting exercise. That's one of my favorite pieces of this report. We mapped the cultural organizations in



Massachusetts. When you're making a political case, it's good to know that almost every city and town has cultural assets that need to be supported by the Commonwealth.

This is what greater Boston looks like. We also charted this by city and town, so legislatures could look specifically at total budget size. The other data point we pulled out was salaries. What sort of income are your constituents getting from cultural organizations?

We looked at giving patterns from individual donors. University of Massachusetts has a quarterly survey of registered voters, and for \$7,500 we tagged on 13 additional questions about habits of giving and about perceptions of corporations who give or who do not give. That was also pretty interesting, all this is in the appendix of the book.

The biggest piece of original research we did was a survey by Zoomerang, which is a web-based survey that you design and do yourself, and it kicks back simultaneously a spreadsheet of data.

We collaborated with the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences and Humanities. We sent out the Zoomerang survey link to about 900 organizations asking them about their capital needs and their capital plans for the next five years.

What are your deferred maintenance issues? What are your plans for expansion and renovation? What are your plans for new facilities? We wanted to capture facility needs across the Commonwealth.

Turning broadly to impact, the sector identity and the feeling that we're all in this together, that this is our market, and this is the context within which the organizations operate, that has been really invaluable. It's a very intangible impact but very much needed, because if you're going to go forward with advocacy you need to know that you're in solidarity with people that otherwise you would think you're in competition with.

We reached agreement on the next steps, on the sectors' top three priorities. Now we're moving forward on addressing those issues. The Boston Foundation is looking for funding to continue special initiative work focused on service organizations. Whether or not we go forward with that initiative, it will inform our grantmaking for that part of the sector.

We raised the issue of cultural tourism. I don't think in terms of our grantmaking we're going to take it any further than raising the possibility

of cultural tourism as an earned revenue strategy for certain organizations. It's important too because we got the attention of the tourism sector in a very, very different way. Sometimes just elevating the issue is all you need to do.

Finally, we are launching a statewide advocacy campaign seeking funding for cultural facilities in collaboration with MASH, our advocacy organization, and Mass Cultural Council. We're at the very, very beginning of that process and are coming up with a case statement, who needs to be with us on that campaign.

We figure this is a long-term process, so we're following the question and seeing where it leads us.

STONE: Thanks, Ann. I just wanted to say a few words about Ann's experience here because for one thing, she works with a geographic community that's very defined. That provided some bounds for what would be looked at, but also some of the opportunity of building that community identity.

Also, in contrast to what we do at the Wallace Foundation, which are very large national projects that often have very large budgets, what I think is really fascinating about Ann's experience that spans a number of years is that the discrete portion of the research, some of them were sizeable chunks, but others were smaller amounts of money.

There are very creative ways to get targeted information. Ann talked about ways of building on what was already done and realizing that we actually need to know a little bit more about this area and then identify a university who has a survey that goes out periodically, and you can purchase a set number of questions to go on that survey. You don't need to create the whole thing yourself.

Ann and her foundation showed a lot of creativity in thinking about very smart ways of getting information.

We're going to hear from Randy Cohen now, who has a national focus. It's going to be interesting to think about some of the differences in the objectives of the work they undertake because of that.

Randy, as I mentioned, is Vice President of Research and Information at Americans for the Arts. He, in that role, has been behind a number of projects that you're probably familiar with. There's a study, "The Arts and Economic Prosperity," which is a national, comprehensive



economic impact study focused on nonprofit arts organizations and their audiences.

He's also the editor of the *Americans for the Arts Monograph* series. He's produced reports on local arts agencies, on arts education, on local and regional funding.

He was also one of the key players in "Coming Up Taller" which was the White House report that focused on programs that serve at-risk youth. In partnership with the NEA and the U.S. Department of Justice, Randy also helped produce the Youth Arts Project, which was the first national study that looked at the impacts on at-risk kids of being in arts programs. That's something that he's going to talk about today.

I just wanted to say that not all of his professional life has been at Americans for the Arts, prior to that he worked at the NEA, he was their Policy and Planning Specialist. Prior to his time in Washington, he was in San Diego where he founded the San Diego Theater for Young Audiences and served as the managing director of that organization for four years.

So Randy let's hear from you. I think you're going to start by at least talking about the Youth Arts Project.

COHEN: Yes, I'll talk about the Youth Arts Project, but as an example of the kinds of questions and processes and things we ask ourselves and constantly grapple with internally when we're dealing with these research studies.

I always like to remind folks, research is your program and your organization's own individual GPS system. What it does is if you want to know where you are, and if it's different from where you've been, or is what you're doing having any kind of impact, research can really be your friend.

I also like to remind people, because we all get scared away when we starting thinking about compliance rates and regression analysis and standard deviations, and is that right? Am I in a normative range?

That's a technician's activity, and I can find somebody in every single one of your communities who can provide you that methodological backup you need to get past that and get to the real question at hand. What is it you want to know? What is it you want to learn? How can you hold up your mission and your goals and your objectives and put those against the test of the evidence? How do you turn that into a series of questions which when answered, are your own little GPS thing. There's a reason

Avis and Hertz puts one of those in every one of their cars. Everybody needs to know where they're at. We're the same way.

Begin with the end in mind. What is it you want to know? Exhaust yourself asking the right questions. Really, half of research is in getting to that point. What is it we really want to learn?

Number two, who are the audiences for your results? Are you developing the right products and tools? Start thinking what's going to happen with this.

Third, do you need a research partner, either for the technical work depending on what you're going to study, or to ensure credibility? If that sounds a lot like strategic planning or cultural planning or planning to plan, that's really the case. It's the same kind of exploring these questions and trying to figure out where we want to go.

Ann mentioned the "Coming Up Taller" report, which we published in the mid-nineties. That was a pretty exhaustive look and in-depth interviews with about 225 arts program from across the county that have programs addressing at-risk youth.

There were interviews, it was a very qualitative research study. I always say qualitative data gets you in the door; quantitative, statistical data, that's what keeps you at the table.

It's a great introduction, it brings attention to a particular issue, but you've got to follow up. You know, where's the beef? Is this stuff really working? It sounds good, everybody says it's working, it feels right.

So after "Coming Up Taller" we embarked on the Youth Arts Project. We only had two goals in that project. One was to measure the efficacy of these arts programs on at-risk youth. I don't want to say at-risk youth, really just about any youth. I mean, they're either bringing a gun and putting it in their locker or you're a kid next to a locker with a gun to it. So we take a pretty broad approach to that.

That's an outcomes kind of evaluation. Our purpose at Americans for the Arts is two-fold: national leadership, local tools. You can do a big national study talking about the outcomes, but can you also do the other work that makes it a tool for folks to use locally, either to advocate or to develop their own programs.

We worked with the Arts Councils in Portland, Oregon, San Antonio, Texas, and Fulton County,



which is Atlanta. We did process evaluation, where we worked with them and built logic models. Two of the three programs were completely new, so we tracked them from their initial inception, all the way through their development, to their implementation over several years.

We looked at just what does it take to develop these programs. What works? What doesn't work? And can you then turn that information into knowledge? Can you turn it into a tool for folks?

We partnered with the U.S. Department of Justice. This is important. Most of you know Americans for the Arts is an advocacy organization. When we come out and say X, Y and Z is good for the arts, everyone says, Duh, of course that's what these guys are gonna say because they're out thumpin' for the arts! That's what we do.

So the partnership is a very important part of what we do for two reasons. One, technical expertise. There's such a range of issues out there, but there's a lot of smart people in this case in the area of studying youth at risk. And two, for credibility purpose.

You've got to always ask yourself the question, if we come out with this research, what's everybody going to say? What are our critics going to say? Does it really, in a sense, need to come from somebody else? In this case, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention. Also for the National Endowment for the Arts and a whole host of private sector funders.

We developed a research study, and we all started thinking about this. Then partners, audiences. One of the things we found is, again, who is the data for? Who are we directing this research study to?

We wanted these findings about the impact of arts programs on youth to be information that is understandable and can be compelling to funders, to policymakers, to elected leaders. One of the reasons we got started on this youth at risk issue, is we work closely with organizations like the U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities. There's a national organization for everything in Washington, DC.

This gives you access to some great networks. If you look at their top five concerns year after year after year, it's jobs, it's the economy, it's youth. That's how we came to the arts and youth question.

If we can show that there's a connection and a benefit to young people who participate in these arts programs, that can lead to more funding for the arts, a better understanding about the impact of the arts, et cetera, et cetera

And can we create a tool for advocates themselves?

The other great thing is where your research partners come into play and bring in the expertise. We went into it thinking if we can show that young people who participate in these programs have improved self-esteem and feel better about themselves and are less involved in criminal activity and it's more of an effective diversionary activity after the school bell, before the dinner bell, then we'll really achieve our mission.

What we found out very early on is language. Sometimes I think we're just translators. It's about language, of what words resonate with our target audiences.

In this case, juvenile justice professionals and social service providers quantify this in terms of risk and protective factors. That is, how do these arts programs limit the risks that young people are exposed to, which might be violence, alcoholism, poverty, et cetera? And how do they strengthen the protective factors, which are that inner resiliency. What gets some kids through a terrible environment and other kids falter?

Right off the bat, through our partnerships, we realized we need to talk about what we're doing differently. There are a lot of examples. Fifteen years ago we did our first economic impact study, everybody wanted to know what the multiplier was. Then a lot of decision makers told us is, We don't trust multipliers, we want to hear specific information about jobs and government revenue.

We did tourism research. We talked about it tells the story of our community and it really benefits our arts organizations. We were making this pitch to the convention and tourism people. And they were like, "Yeah, but..." What we figured out is at the end of the day is they're evaluated on heads and beds. Hotel occupancy rates. So if we can turn around what we do and put it in a language that resonates with our audience, then we're having an impact. So all this affects the research process. Get existential, you've got to jump back and forth through time, and that's why this planning is so important. Also who your partners are and how the research is conducted.

Related to that is, what kind of products? What are the outputs? Again, this is what you need to



think of in advance. I pulled a couple of examples here of different types of things.

I talked about the three communities that we studied. They developed logic models, really detailed planning models for the programs that they developed and implemented.

What we were able to do is come out with a monograph about developing logic models as a way to evaluate your progress and tie it into your planning. That's a tool broadly accessible.

I should start with the credible research findings. The Department of Justice provided a firm, Caliber Associates, which is one of their top evaluation firms. They designed a comprehensive evaluation study of these programs. In the three communities they studied matched groups, which means you study kids in the arts program. In Portland these were kids on probation. In Fulton County, has anyone seen Judge Hatchett on TV? Glenda Hatchett was the Chief Presiding Juvenile Justice for Fulton County, and she's a phenomenal judge, I sat in her courtroom. I definitely wouldn't want to come across her bench. But she gave that up for the lucrative Judge Judy show, I guess. She's very heavily involved in the community, and she's a phenomenal individual. She sentenced kids to the Art at Work Program. She was a local partner on this project.

The third one was in San Antonio, this was an after school gang and dropout prevention program. Teachers, social service providers, educators, law enforcement agencies got together and identified kids at risk of joining a gang or dropping out of school and directed them into this arts program after school.

The only catch was to participate in the arts program, which was very engaging for the kids, they had to show up to school that day. Attendance went way up amongst this group. The principal early on was very dubious of this whole thing, he was like, Well, everybody's on board with this, they want to do it at my school, fine, we'll do it.

That turns into revenue for him because it's, again, cheeks-in-seats in that case. That's how the funding happens. That was one of those unexpected outcomes. He was a good spokesperson for this project.

The evaluation firm evaluated a number of factors with these students. Also with a matched group of students not in the program, just to see what the difference is.

Young people who participated in these programs had improved communication skills with peers, adults; better attendance and academic performance; greater ability to complete tasks from start to finish; less court involvement. I can give you more details on the findings.

There was some very quantitative data that came out of that. That was the outcomes piece. For the process piece, we wanted to create a tool to help communities and arts people and local arts agencies and arts programs develop arts programs of their own for at-risk youth or strengthen existing ones. This is a real tricky thing. You can really easily send people down the wrong road when you're doing this stuff.

I'll jump ahead to unintended outcomes. In general, I think ten years ago we heard a lot about arts-in-prison programs, and said, oh, great, I'm going to get some artists and put them in my local penitentiary. But you've got a bunch of traumatized artists, because they're not prepared. They go home and paint black canvases for the next six years.

There's a lot that goes into these. One of the things we try and do in our message is just being aware of what you're getting into. Handle this responsibly.

One of the things that came out of this was a whole multimedia tool kit, a handbook about program development and training and evaluating your programs, partnerships, talking the language of educators, talking the language of justice professionals. We also produced a couple of videos, a technical assistance how-to video and what we dubbed, because we couldn't come up with a better word, the "inspirational" video. That's what you can play to one of your local funders or potential partners. Most people think, well, boot-camps, right? That's what we need more of. And this really helps people understand that the arts have an impact here, so we got testimonials from all those different audiences I spoke to.

Speaking of boot camps, I just remembered the evaluation firm we used also evaluated the impact of the boot-camps for the Department of Justice. And what they found is, they're not terribly effective.

They looked at boot-camps in Fulton County, remember that was one of the counties that they started the arts programs in. The arts programs were twice as effective for half the cost. That was a very compelling point.



You didn't hear a whole lot about the boot-camp research because local, state and federal governments were so heavily invested they decided to disinvest a little more quietly, but that's how it goes.

Products. We had actual data and findings, we had the tool kit. You need to think about those things in advance.

The economic impact study, which Ann mentioned, is just a nice graphic illustration. A decision-maker, this is how much you can get them to look at. A quick pamphlet, a leave-behind, top-line stuff.

Most of the folks in this room need more than that. They want to talk about it, but they're not ready for this yet. This is the 24-page version. Here's more about what the data are, how we got them, what they mean, how to use them.

For the really hardcore who need to see everything, you need to have a very transparent process. Everybody's got to be able to see what you did, what your decisions are. You put it on paper, and you live with it and hope for the best.

That gets me to one of the other points, limitations of the data. This is one of the questions that you ask yourself. There's no silver bullet out there. There's no ultimate, that's something up there in the universe. Every study's got some limitations. Just be aware of what they are. With the Youth Arts Study, it was small numbers. We studied about 25, 30 kids in Portland and about a couple hundred in San Antonio and a couple dozen in Fulton County. We tracked them over time.

Most of your hardcore researchers and policy people are going to want to see bigger numbers than that. So this sets you on the right direction. We don't apologize for it. It's a first step. This is the way we do it.

STONE: Thanks Randy. I'm hoping we can pick up on one of your topics during the conversation, because I think a lot of funders who sponsor research or even support grantees who are focused on developing something new, always have the idea that what's learned can be shared with others.

You're impacting more than just your grantee, or your research results are interesting to more than just those who were under study.

It would be interesting to hear more about the people who made use of the tool kit. How many people do you think develop programs based on

that? What seemed to work great with them and what didn't? What other resources did they find that they needed? I think it's a concept that all of us on our different scales are interested in.

Now for something completely different! We're going to hear from Alan Brown who is not a commissioner of research, but a researcher. I think he is going to be able to also tell us about individual arts organizations that commission research or have research supported for them by a funder, and what kinds of issues they contend with.

Alan is a noted researcher and consultant in the arts industry, and he currently has his own consulting practice. Prior to that he served as President of Audience Insight and as an Associate Principal of AMS Planning and Research. There he conducted numerous studies on audiences, on visitors, patterns of cultural participation, and those kinds of issues. He did this in almost every market in the U.S.

Alan's work focuses on product testing, on customer segmentation, cooperative marketing, and understanding behavior related to arts participation. From 2000 to 2002, Alan directed the Classical Music Consumer Segmentation Study for the Knight Foundation. Many of you are probably familiar with it. I think you're going to be talking about this tomorrow?

This was the largest private study of classical musical audiences ever undertaken in the U.S. Currently Alan is conducting market research for Disney theatrical productions as well as the Joyce Theater Foundation in New York City and some other clients as well.

Alan, tell us what it's like being the researcher and also working with arts organizations who have their own goals that they need to identify and how they're going to make use of the research and so on.

BROWN: I think the biggest difference between me and the rest of you is I can get fired if the research doesn't work out.

Last week was the National Arts Marketing Conference in Chicago, I don't know if you're familiar with that. But registration was up, there were about five hundred people there, and there was a lot of talk about research. Throughout all the sessions, people were referring to work that they had done. There were research consultants running around, a dime a dozen, which was wonderful to see the support structure.



This morning's roundtable on research was really incredible. So much work is being done investing in new knowledge for our industry, it's breathtaking what's happening. That's a good thing, any way you look at it.

My perspective's a little different. My telephone tends to ring when people's ticket sales are down and they don't know what to do. Of course, then it's a little late to start learning about audiences.

Frequently I hear, "We got a grant, so we're going to do research." It happens when there's special funding. That's why I think it's so important for us to have this conversation, because you all as funders cause an enormous level in learning in our industry.

I'd like to address each of Ann's questions briefly and then leave plenty of time for discussion. The first question was, What was the goal of the research you commissioned? I often ask clients the same question at the end of research projects. It's such an important question, and both Ann and Randy spoke to this.

On the most basic tactical level, a lot of folks are doing research just to count who's there. So many institutions in our business really don't know who they're serving. They have an intuitive sense, and they see them come and go, but they're not able to talk about it demonstrably.

I just finished a year-long survey for Disney Theatricals in their three Broadway houses for "Beauty and the Beast," "Lion King" and "Aida" with people sitting in the seats actually filling out surveys. Who are you, where are you from, how did you buy your ticket, who is with you, were you involved in the decision to come. Real brass-tacks stuff.

They had never done that. They had no idea and were startled at some of the results.

Another reason was to make better tactical decisions. What radio station should we advertise on, what is consumption media, particularly for young people, and all that's changing.

Slowly, more and more cultural institutions are getting interested in doing performance measurement through research work. The sound bite from the conference last week, you can't win the game if you don't know the score! Are you taking interest in customer satisfaction levels? What was your experience at our ticket office? Are you in agreement with our artistic vision?

That's one of those question you have to be careful, don't ask questions you don't want the answers to. I run into that all the time.

Also more and more attitudinal indicators of loyalty. Do you believe in our organization? Do you think our management is competent? Would you recommend us to a friend? Consumer stuff.

A lot of research happens around solving a specific problem or to build consensus around a solution. Just the last couple of weeks, several orchestras, interestingly in the same market, called me – independently I assume – and said, "We're worried that our ticket prices are too high. How do consumers feel about our ticket prices? Could we raise our ticket prices? What would happen if we did?"

So there's a lot of wondering. That's a really tough research subject we don't have time to get into, because nobody's every going to tell you they're willing to pay more.

New product development is an emerging area of research in our industry, and particularly product concept testing. For example, the Atlanta Symphony did some work, they felt they needed to energize their holiday programs. We sat around a table with their programming people, and invented a dozen new programs and meshed them in with existing ones and worked up some images and copy and went and tested them with consumers, and they got feedback. Strangely enough, some of the fictional programs tested better than their existing ones. It maybe strengthened their resolve a little bit to take that next step. *[Laughter]* So that's an emerging area. Then there's a lot of research we heard about this morning around policy decisions, guiding policy, research that informs facility decision, feasibility questions.

Everyone asks me to try to predict demand. How much theater should our market support? How many dance performances should we offer? There's a lot of questioning around that, and that's a tough assignment because you can't really ask consumers if they would go, because their behaviors and their attitudes are so different.

The second question was, Given the goals how did you decide what research to take? I'm trying to synthesize across a couple hundred projects here.

RFPs arrive and consultants are invited to respond to them. Sometimes those RFPs are not negotiable, this is the work we want, bid on it. Sometimes it's clear to me that this isn't the best methodological approach to addressing your problems or your questions.



Depending on the situation, sometimes I can push back, and sometimes I can't. So I'm concerned when RFPs arrive where the methodology is a foregone conclusion, because it doesn't allow me to have a conversation with the client to do the diagnostic work in the first place, which is what's your first, best investment in research, given where you are?

So there's a dynamic there. As funders, I would encourage you all to create the space for your constituent groups to have that conversation because self-diagnosis is not always the best diagnosis.

There are many examples I could give of approaches that were headed one way that went another way with much less money. I mean last week the phone rang, and it was an orchestra saying, "Our board wants to do a general population telephone survey to find out why more people aren't coming to our concerts." I said okay, that's a good instinct. But what you really need to do is read the report that another orchestra just did about that same subject in a market just like yours. There's this sense that we have to do it all again. Part of that instinct is right, I think, in that the learning is really a participatory process and you have to go through it even if you know what the answer's going to be, in order to own the results.

But there's a lot of work that can be done that could save a lot of money if we could build in these introductory pieces of the diagnostic work where people could learn what's out there, and maybe get a sense that they don't have to relearn it, if there's some knowledge out there.

I'm trying to build into my projects an on-site day at the very front of any process where I just come and share what I think might help them with what they want to know. Then they can understand better what their options are.

My favorite story on how important it is to identify constituencies for information and to manage expectations about what research is and isn't, was when I did a customer data file analysis for Lincoln Center, mapping and data append with Prism, and so a very, very tactical kind of analysis, the purpose of which is to inform direct mail.

We went in to do the presentation and in walks Nat Leventhal and Beverly Sills. They're the Chairwoman of the Board and the President of the Board. I didn't know they were coming. What was a very tactical conversation got strategic very quickly.

But it was a mess because I didn't do my job in explaining that this is really a tactical analysis that marketing staff would really benefit from. It illustrated to me that there was a hunger in that organization for outside objective data.

Identifying constituencies, and constituencies we never thought about! For the Knight Foundation's study on classical music, I never imagined critics might be a constituency for that information. In several cities I was able to have lunch and sit down with critics, and Philadelphia was one. It obviously didn't do any good. *[Laughter]* Also students, and students in arts administration programs.

Unfortunately, probably the one constituency for that study that never got it, were music directors. A million dollars worth of market research, and I never had access to music directors, with one exception, which was not connected to my study, but for the Berkeley Symphony, Kent Nagano actually invited me to sit down and talk. There is such a wall that goes up, of fear I think, and just not understanding why an artistic director might benefit from understanding what's happening on the other side of the stage.

Once you can chip away at that wall and get some trust and explain that, I'm not here to make your artistic decisions, I'm just here to be a resource so that you can understand how consumers use your programs and benefit from them in different ways. Then the wall comes tumbling down and it's a happy conversation.

Consequences, intended and unintended. My friends, I see more blank stares than you could ever imagine. At the end of a research project, typically the project ends with a presentation, and it's like a tomato hitting the wall and sliding down. I'm just learning, after doing this for fifteen years, that that's when the learning begins! The value of research is not at all in this or this. It's in the conversations that happen after that, where people actually negotiate their points of view and they might change a little. I don't know how to structure that absorption because it's not just dissemination, but it's seeping in and reflecting on it. Letting it breathe somehow, and then maybe asking more questions, because that is what research does, fortunately, if you're a researcher, is it poses more questions. That is most often the unintended benefit of research. It clarifies people's points of view and it causes them to reframe their own thinking about issues.

Sure we solve problems. There are some answers in research data, occasionally. But more than that, it's the heightened sensitivity to issues and the



conversation that happens around that. Ideally, this commitment to learning as a continuous process in a healthy organization.

Seldom do we really get there, but sometimes I'll hear a CEO say, "I really want a culture of inquiry in my organization. I want us to question ourselves and invite constructive criticism of my viewpoint."

That sort of openness is the door through which research can go and actually change institutions. I think I'll stop right there.

STONE: I want to start with a question based on what you just said. I would imagine many of your projects are structured in terms of the time and the budget, so when you deliver the report you're gone. I can see how you might not in some cases see how the research might or might not be used afterwards.

But for cases where you had an ongoing relationship with an organization, can you give us an example of where you saw the research actually be incorporated into their thinking and planning and activities, so they actually made use of it.

And maybe another example where you could identify what it is that prevented them, on a specific level, from doing what you think should have been so obvious for them to do based on the research.

BROWN: You might have to remind me about the second half of your question. But I'd like to answer the first.

I've been a quantitative guy for most of my career, and I'm just really beginning to understand the value of qualitative data. I had an experience with the Connecticut Commission on the Arts through their Start Project funded by Wallace, where we designed a statewide study of arts participation around individual depth interviewing, with teams of board members and staff members actually doing the interviewing. I was just observer and coach.

They just did five interviews with a cross section of people in their audience. But the quality of those conversations was so amazing! The learning that happened, that stuck! It was just five conversations, what can you learn from five conversations?

When you're really listening, and it's not me doing the learning and trying to spit it back, it's actually them hearing it for themselves. They're filtering what they hear against their whole

experience as an arts administrator and their knowledge of the art form.

An idea will come out, people will spend \$50,000 on research, and the nugget that actually changes something will be a verbatim comment from an open-ended question.

It will just hit somebody, and they'll say, I've been thinking about that for twenty years, but I never thought of it that way. Or, You're right, we really need to improve our lobby refreshments. .

This is the report on the Connecticut study, it's just out. I don't have enough copies for everyone, but I'd be delighted to mail anyone a copy if they would leave their card.

Participatory research where the client is actually doing the data-gathering, is a potentially huge area for the industry. You think of it, all these arts groups, you have visitors coming in constantly, you have people coming to performances constantly, you have people through your doors you could stop and talk to. You could hold them afterwards for half an hour and do research at no cost, little cost.

My favorite anecdote from the values study is someone during an interview heard someone talking about how much they value the art hanging on the walls in their home. This was a museum. They heard someone talk about how much they enjoy interior design and creating an attractive space to live in. It hit them that this is where so much of the meaning is in terms of art in people's lives, is at home! Meanwhile we're trying to get everyone down to our museum.

So it caused them to really think hard about how to be relevant to their constituents in their homes, and that led to some new programmatic offerings. That was just an idea that came out of a conversation. So that's the first point. Now the second question?

STONE: The second part is the flip side. Where have you seen certain blockages or certain things that if they could have just done this, or where they haven't been able to make use of the research?

I think one of the things that in an earlier conversation prior to today, you had mentioned this planning to make use of the research results. What is it that an organization can do to set that up, even if you're not going to be there with them?

BROWN: It's very difficult to contemplate potential outcomes from a research project



and anticipate what you might do if you learn something. I like to go in at the beginning and say, okay, let's pretend you found out that answer. What would you do?

People scratch their heads. That's hard. For the Knight Foundation study I had to present the results to boards and staffs of fifteen orchestras. I'll tell you the difference between Wichita and Philadelphia was a huge difference just in the capacity to absorb! And to understand what this information could mean.

It's a skill issue, partly, and also a resources issue in that the natural outcome of research is a desire to try something new. There aren't resources planned that might complement a research effort that would actually allow an institution the room to do a little R&D.

AUDIENCE: This is a practical question for Ann. Did you use that?

MCQUEEN: It worked very well. We worked first with the local press, and we released the first as an exclusive to *The Globe* and the second to all the press equally, because we decided we needed to do that.

In all cases the information has been picked up nationally. In large part, because the first study compares Boston to nine other cities across the country. I did field calls from, oddly, Philadelphia when the funding was in danger, and from Texas.

It's out there. It's now kind of the baseline for the local press in terms of looking at where we're going. The question about corporate sponsorship, for instance, when Bank of America took over Fleet, they would go back and quote parts of these studies.

AUDIENCE: So they picked it up. Did you have to nurture them to pick it up?

MCQUEEN: They were very interested. Honestly, the Foundation has changed significantly and we are very engaged with the press in almost everything we do now, and so that's a baseline relationship that we have. It's an important relationship, and it works.

AUDIENCE: I'm interested in finding out a little bit more about how mid-sized arts organizations can gather together some of this research that the larger organizations can obtain for their particular organization. I'm not talking about mid-sized amateur, I'm talking about the mid-sized professional ballet companies for a small community, choruses, et cetera What do you see happening?

BROWN: Enormous economies are possible. Randy gave a marvelous example here of economies of scale in his at-risk youth research effort. But there are others in the room who could address this far better than I, but arts groups aren't often naturally inclined to collaborate.

Research is one of those areas where learning can happen, and it's almost better done as a collaborative because they can teach each other things that a researcher can't. Funders can set that table and be the convener and bring people together.

Short of getting into the mechanics of how that happens, I think there's enormous potential there.

FRY: Hi, I'm Julie Fry with the San Diego Foundation. Firstly we'd like to thank Ann and the Boston Foundation twofold. First, she's been my sort of transcontinental arts research guru. I just want to you thank publicly for that.

I'd like to also thank the Boston Foundation for the initiative because I've been using that as a sales tool in my own region. I've become semi-fluent in what you've done in your research findings and have been sharing that a lot in our community.

My question is around one of the points you made about the common voice. That one of the possible byproducts of the research you did was bringing the arts community around to speak with that common voice. The San Diego region is a big geographic county, we've got a perceived or real north, south, east, west, geographical divide. There's, again, a perceived or real gulf between the large institutions and the small- and mid-sized.

Did you do something specific as part of your process to help them with that common voice?

MCQUEEN: It was in the act of bringing everybody together. With the first report, we previewed the findings a couple of times with an existing leadership group that consisted of the heads of organizations with budgets over \$1 million. Because we wanted to capture the smaller, we added a couple of other people to that group. That was about 25 folks that we worked with for the first report. The second report, we expanded the group to 65 people including many who were not arts people. We probably had two-thirds arts people and a third others: academics, political types, business types, tourist types. That was really important.



We also had listening sessions, so that came in the process of getting everybody into the same room, making them behave. Also, we prodded. They looked at themselves. It's the GPS. They could pinpoint themselves in this vast spectrum of budget sizes, geographic ranges and so forth.

They could find themselves in relationship to others in a different way. It wasn't just my donor versus your donor, you're stealing my audience, you have too many theaters. They could look at the question in a different manner, so the data array really helped with that.

SMOKE: I'm Joe Smoke of the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. I have a follow-up question. At any point in your research, Ann, did you compare the geographic region to another geographic region and come out with the outcome that things were poorer there, that there were fewer dollars than necessary? What was your geographic comparison?

MCQUEEN: We did that in the funding report. We compared ourselves to Dallas, Minneapolis-St. Paul, New York, Chicago, Cleveland, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Charlotte, and Seattle. And all the metropolitan statistical areas said they were comparable data points.

We did that in a range of average contributed income versus earned income, foundation funding versus a range of other things. There were 50 or so graphs, they drove the design person nuts with this report, they're everywhere. We compared everything.

AUDIENCE: So you came out last?

MCQUEEN: Not always. Actually, we came out first in the number of organizations per capita, which was a real surprise. That's a fabulous statement about the richness of the cultural sector. Everybody else was going, Oh, my God there's too many! *[Laughter]* That's the problem. So you know there's always the other side.

We also found that we had the least number of foundations. Most of the foundation money that came into our market came from out of state, which was not true for any other of these cities, most of them, it was their in-state foundations that were supporting them. But for us it was not true.

In part I think that's because we've got national organizations like WGBH and the Museum of Fine Arts. But in part it was because in 1999 we had seven foundations giving more than \$500,000 to the arts compared with Pittsburgh's seventeen. I don't remember the Cleveland figures, but...

SMOKE: My follow-up question is just that. You led right to my other question. I know you were studying a geographic set of groups, but how do you count sources that came from outside?

MCQUEEN: I'm going to have to think about that one. I'm not quite sure.

SMOKE: Any geographic region has borders, and patrons cross that border, either just driving to pay a theater ticket, as well as huge philanthropic national stuff, and I thought to myself, that's the part of the research that I just can't imagine gathering, how you would find out who's importing and exporting services and donations to the institutions.

MCQUEEN: A lot of that was in the 990 data. We also looked at the Foundation Center data, so it might have come from that.

AUDIENCE: I'm not sure if it's fair to ask for advice from other granters in the room. I would love to hear your thoughts on maybe a methodological approach. I think it's something actually that's pertinent not just to L.A. but to other cities around the area. A couple weeks ago, Ann Markuson from the Humphrey Institute was in Los Angeles and did a presentation on arts in which New York and Los Angeles were listed as our super cities. When she broke out the data and we were looking at what they had done, we learned that they looked at IRS data on the self-employed, people who are not employed by a company but draw their income as writers and designers and dancers and so on. When you look at that data, the presumption being that this is what represents the nonprofit sector. And yet, it's not. It's the data that represents the folks who are working independently as contractors for Warner Brothers and so on.

It seems to me that there would be enormous strength for our arts community if you could better demonstrate or quantify the symbiotic relationship. That in fact those creative cities that this report focuses on benefit from and it can only sustain by having what our nonprofit artists provide. I'm not quite sure how to go at breaking this down.

COHEN: Well, that's one of the fifty dollar questions on the table right now. But one way we've just begun to undertake this is our creative industries research. I mentioned the economic impact study briefly. That was nonprofit. Out of that came the question, what about the for-profit industry which is so much larger, and how do we begin to capture that?



We designed a research process where we identified the creative industries using standard industrial classification codes. We stayed with art-centered businesses, nonprofit theaters, ballet companies, symphonies, but also for-profit architecture, design, film companies. We didn't include medical research or computer programmers, both creative but not arts-focused.

Then we downloaded the relevant Dun & Bradstreet data. Dun & Bradstreet is one of the most comprehensive and reliable databases of U.S. businesses. It doesn't really get to the individuals for the most part.

They have a database of 12.8 million active U.S. businesses. We found that 548,000 of them are these arts-centered companies involved in the creation or the distribution of the arts. We can do what's called geo-economic analysis, which is just an incredible polysyllabic way for saying we could study the data by city, by county, by political jurisdiction as well.

We can look in any city, and we've just begun doing this now. We look at states, here's how many arts businesses there are and how many people they employ. Then we can map these. You can then make some comparison of the creative industries that way.

Now one thing we found – remember I talked about the caveat of limitations of data – there's a real under-representation of nonprofit arts organizations in the Dun & Bradstreet database, which is something we've noticed. Now that is going to change, because starting this year to apply for an NEA grant you have to have a D&B as part of overall federal policy.

We've started a "Sign Up, Be Counted" campaign. It costs nothing to get a Dun & Bradstreet number; it takes you three minutes. So we're really trying to get the nonprofits better represented there.

That's one approach we're trying to get at. It's very new. There's potential for demographic overlays in income and that kind of thing. But we've got to start there. We've still got to try and capture the individual artists with it because a lot of them aren't included in the corporate setting. I can talk to you more about that afterwards.

AUDIENCE: I just wanted to follow up on what Randy said. I'm the Director of a State Arts Agency, and we are starting to ask applicants to have a D&B number.

AUDIENCE: I have a question. A couple of you have mentioned that what oftentimes the client

needs is access to other reports similar to theirs that have already been commissioned. I'm wondering if there are any good sources or clearinghouses for references to these kinds of reports. A lot of organizations in Portland, Oregon, are starting to talk about counting the artists that are contributing.

We've made a couple of calls to people saying, "How would find an artist in order to count them?" Just in these calls to the NEA and Americans for the Arts, there didn't seem to be one answer to that. If another community had counted its artists in a way that was well received or productive to what they were trying to answer, we'd be interested in replicating that definition and that report to some extent. Is there a clearinghouse for this kind of information?

COHEN: There isn't a good answer to that question yet. There's a lot of ways to get at it and work around it. We have a National Arts Policy database, which is an online, fully searchable database, and it's composed of one-page summaries of about 7,200 arts policy and research studies conducted since 1960.

You can read about those, and if you want to know more, at least where possible, we can direct you to how to access those data. So that's one quick way.

AUDIENCE: I have a follow up. There is a resource that is designed specifically to help people, www.cpanda.org, Cultural Policy in the Arts National Data Archive. It's a joint initiative of Pew Charitable Trusts and Princeton University Library.

They don't have a vast collection of studies online, but they do have not only compiled archived data sets, but also indices of the questions that were asked for a lot of national surveys of the arts. The NEA arts participation surveys are indexed there. A lot of the work that Randy had done out in the various communities across the country is indexed there. That's another tool to look at how some of the questions have been designed. There are very useful links there back to the source material that can give you a little bit more methodological insight as well. It's worth checking out if you're at the front end of a research project.

AUDIENCE: That's a good start.

AUDIENCE: I have another question for Randy. Since your research we've got a quick canvas of elected officials, I'm assuming that one of the results you wanted from the research was to get more people who are attending the U.S.



Conference of Mayors to invest in arts programs for youth. And I'm wondering if you can cite any successes there, if the mayors have turned around and said, Oh, I need to do that.

Alan brought up the issue of questions that beget more questions. My question coming off the data is, have we proven yet that arts programs for youth are better than sports programs for youth in building their self-esteem, that it's a better investment compared to your investment in more rewards? It seems to me like we need to go that route if we're going to ask people for more funding.

COHEN: Working backwards, the proven word, when you talk to researchers, gets them a little nervous. What this showed is a really strong and positive response. But definitely more research continues to be needed.

As far as the outcomes of the research, the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution unanimously lauding the work, talking about the benefits of arts programs for at-risk youth, and encouraging them to consider adopting and funding these projects.

Every year we plan the opening plenary luncheon for the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In this particular case, Mayor Daly from Chicago got up and for an hour talked to his fellow mayors, 600 mayors in the room, about the problem of youth employment. He and Maggie got together to develop Gallery 37 and this research.

Has it had that impact? Congressionally, the Congressional Arts Caucus sent a Dear Colleague letter around, and it was justification for increasing or maintaining the support for the arts that year. I can't remember which way the indicator was going that year.

But that's also right back why we created this tool kit. Because if every mayor comes home from the U.S. Conference of Mayors conference and calls up your local foundation or local arts council and says, "Oh, man, I want an arts program for youth, and I want it Tuesday!" If we haven't done any of this advance work, we've basically just sabotaged the field and left people hanging.

That's why both of the outcomes, both affecting policy but also building capacity to maintain this work and continue studying this work, is important.

STONE: I'll just put in a commercial for a session on Wednesday where a research study that the Wallace Foundation supported is going to have

a presentation. That is one where we asked the RAND Corporation, which was the contractor, to bring together and assess and synthesize the range of information that exists about the effects of the arts on individuals and communities.

To try to give, among other things, a sense of do the arts have a comparative advantage in some areas, and what are those? How do we think about it when arts may be one of several different options that can have a beneficial result come from it.

The report itself is going to be called "Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts."

COHEN: This is all on our website as well now, americansforthearts.org. You can get the whole tool kit, all our publications, everything's available for free. You're welcome to use it.

STONE: We're at the close of our session. I want to thank everyone for coming, and if people have additional questions or comments, feel free to come up. Thanks to everyone.

END

