

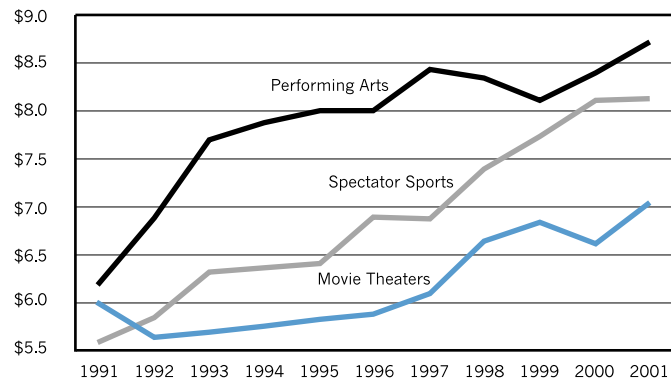
THE ARTS TAKE CENTER STAGE

BY WILLA CONRAD

From music to poetry, painting to dance, it seems obvious that the arts, whether professionally presented or enjoyed as a community expression, are an integral part of American life. This used to be something anecdotally observed, but research in the past 10 years has put hard numbers to the role the arts play, not just in the choice of Americans' pastimes and entertainment but also as a mainstream economic force. Whether encountered in church or the workplace, on a stage or in a museum or school, the arts are becoming an unprecedented part of life in America—and now we have the statistics to show just how surprising this growth has become in the past decade.

Widespread information, now easily available on the Internet as well as in print, indicates that the arts have become a core industry and interface more directly with consumers' imaginations—and pocketbooks—than ever before. For instance, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reported that consumers spent \$10.6 billion, or \$37.20 per person, at performing arts

Consumer Spending on Admissions to Performing Arts, Movies, and Spectator Sports: 1991-2001



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

events in 2001.¹ That was \$1.9 billion more than they spent on movie tickets and \$500 million more than they paid to attend sports events. And between 1991 and 2001, more was spent on the performing arts than on movies or sports—\$6.2 billion in 1991 and \$8.7 billion in 2001.²

Similarly, a National Endowment for the Arts study of public participation found that in 2002, 157 million people—or about 76 percent of American adults—attended, read, or listened to some form of artistic expression.³ While no comparable figures are available for sports viewership, according to the BEA study, admissions to

Percent of U.S. Adults Participating in the Arts at Least Once in the 12 Months Ending August 2002

Shown in Percent	Attended/ Visited/ Read	Watched or Listened to on TV/Radio/Rec. Media/Internet	Personally Performed or Created	Took a Class	All Forms of Participation
Performing Arts	31.7	61.8	12.6	2.7	69.0
Music	18.8	47.9	8.1	1.8	51.9
Plays	22.3	21.0	3.5	.05	33.2
Dance	8.7	13.7	4.3	.08	20.5
Visual Arts	41.9	26.3	28.9	2.2	58.8
Historic Sites	31.6	na	na	na	na
Literature	46.3	18.2	2.0	1.0	50.0
NET TOTAL	65.1	56.0	43.9	4.8	76.3

Source: 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

both spectator sports and cultural events increased significantly from 1991 to 2001—40.3 percent for the arts and 44.6 percent for sports—pitting them as rival growth industries.⁴

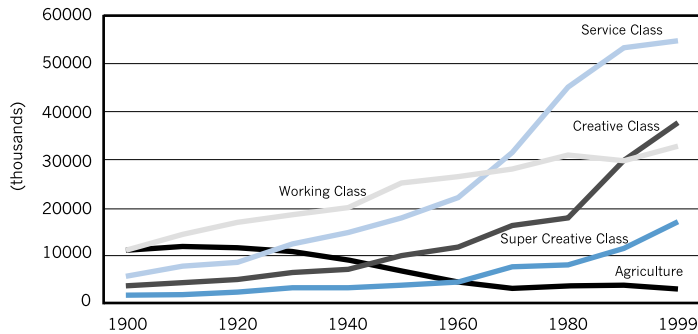
Despite these rosy numbers, from 1998 to 2003, column inches dedicated to the arts remained at best stable at most newspapers, and in some dailies arts coverage has been rapidly declining. Yet during the same period, sport sections have increased their prominence substantially.

Why the disparity between audience size—the traditional yardstick editors use to determine coverage—and the amount of newspaper ink? “The intensity of readership of sports pages is great but narrow,” explains Douglas Clifton, editor of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, who notes that

when limited column space is doled out, perceived volume of readership is as important as the behavior of actual readers. “It’s an entire segment of readers who will either buy or not buy a newspaper based on their satisfaction with sports coverage. In other areas—including news and arts—there isn’t this on/off switch.”

It would seem that the press, as well as society as a whole, needs a larger view of how art and artists fit into the global picture. Economist Richard Florida has been studying the field for years. In his influential 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida not only trumpets the importance of culture but also equates the work of artists with that of patent holders, medical researchers and engineers. His argument is clear and persuasive. The creative sector is no longer confined to a few inventive geniuses like Edison and Einstein. Instead, it is filled with a multiplicity of individuals representing a driving force within the American economy.

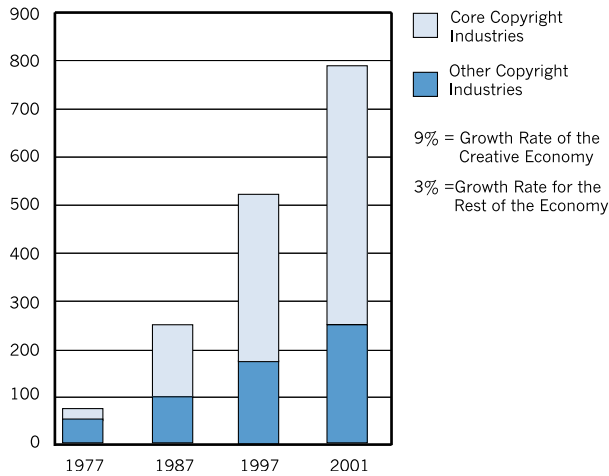
Urban Growth and Development: The Class Structure, 1900-1999



Source: Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books, 2002

For instance, the number of copyright industries—those that rely on legal ownership of intellectual property, including arts and literature—nearly doubled between 1977 and 2001, making up nearly 6 percent of the total work force.⁵ During the same period, the proportion of gross domestic product powered by the so-called “creative economy” has grown from \$100 billion to nearly \$700 billion. According to Steven Tepper, associate director of the Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public

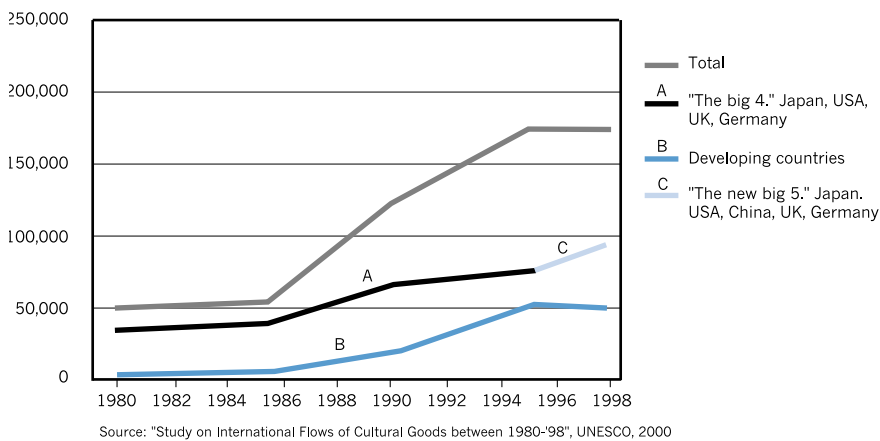
**The Creative Economy:
The Copyright Industries are a Growing Part of GDP**
(in billions of 2001 dollars)



Policy, this is a growth rate three times that of the overall economy.

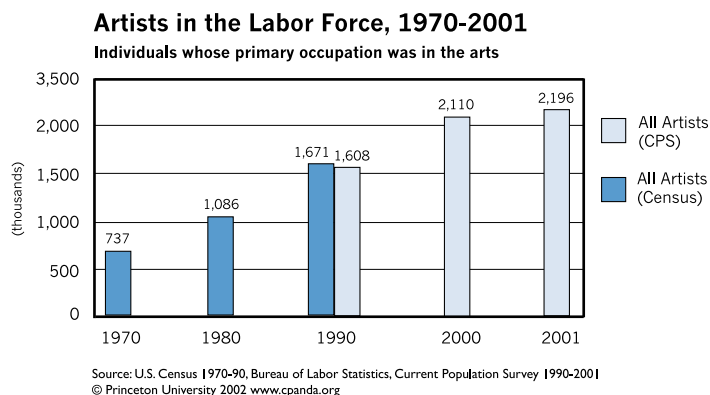
More impressive is what is happening with the dissemination of American ideas. According to a 2002 report, core copyright industries made up a greater volume of U.S. exports than auto manufacturing, electronics or agriculture.⁶ A 2000 study by UNESCO noted that international trade in such cultural “goods” as literature, music, visual arts, cinema, photography and television grew exponentially between 1980 and 1998, rising from \$95 billion to \$387 billion.

World Exports of Cultural Goods, 1980-1998
(in millions of dollars)



Source: "Study on International Flows of Cultural Goods between 1980-98", UNESCO, 2000

Most of that trade was between five countries: the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Japan, though by 1998 China had become the third-largest source of cultural exports.⁷



Throughout the U.S., those in the arts constitute a growing part of the work force. In 1970 the U.S. Census counted 737,000 self-labeled “artists.” By 2001, that number had tripled to 2,196,000. Between 1990 and 2000 all artist occupations had increased by 31.2 percent, compared to only a 13.1-percent increase in the total civilian labor force.⁸

Naturally, the rise in the number of artists has meant growth in the number of artistic organizations. The 2002 Economic Census logged a 26-percent increase since 1997 in cultural organizations with employees,⁹ while the number of museums and historical sites grew 20 percent, a brisk expansion reflected in *Reporting the Arts II*. In several of the cities studied, communities experienced rapid growth until the economic recession of 2001 began chipping away at audience attendance and fundraising. As the economy slowed, budget cuts and layoffs swept newspaper offices, and publications struggled to maintain coverage.

Perhaps another way to look at the relationship between communities, arts, and the media is by examining how deeply cultural activities affect the general population. The NEA’s 2002 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* found that nearly two-thirds of American adults attended cultural events, visited historic sites or read literature during the one-year period ending August 2002. In all, 5 million more people went to an art museum or attended a jazz, classical-

music, opera, theater or ballet performance than were logged in the 1992 NEA report.

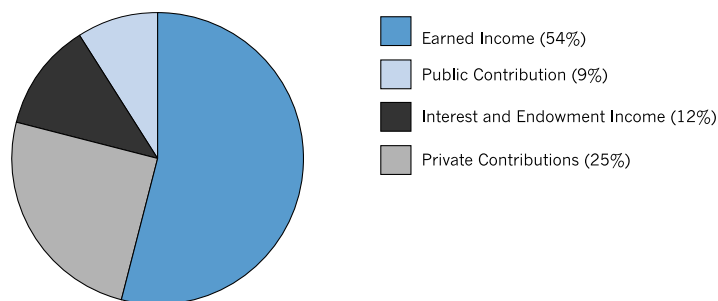
Although American journalists don't typically cover arts activity in religious settings, recent surveys have shown that this is the most common way Americans connect with the arts. A 1999 Princeton University study on the prevalence of arts in religion showed that 85 percent of surveyed places of worship sponsored activities such as an adult choir, a drama, a crafts fair, a liturgical dance performance or a group discussion of art, literature, or poetry.¹⁰

So a large part of America is regularly exposed to the arts, either through places of worship, individual creative activities, or attending performances and exhibits. But in arguing for media coverage, the easiest case to make is also the oldest. Study after study has shown that arts consumers—as well as the organizations that produce art—regularly spend money on travel, hotels and restaurants, a direct translation of aesthetics into hardcore economic impact. A 2002 report by Americans for the Arts showed that nonprofit organizations generate \$134 billion a year in ancillary economic activity, including \$24.4 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues.¹¹

While cultural activity is an increasingly powerful generator of wealth and jobs, it still can't be viewed in the same way as other parts of the economy, argues Shalini Venturelli, an associate professor at American University's School of International Service, in a recent treatise on shifting policy trends. "Unlike automobiles, toothpaste, appliances or textiles, information products are not consumed one unit at a time.

Sources of Cultural Support, 1998

General Revenue Sources for Arts-and-Cultural Organizations



Source: National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support, 2002 (National Survey)
(Philadelphia, PA The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2002)
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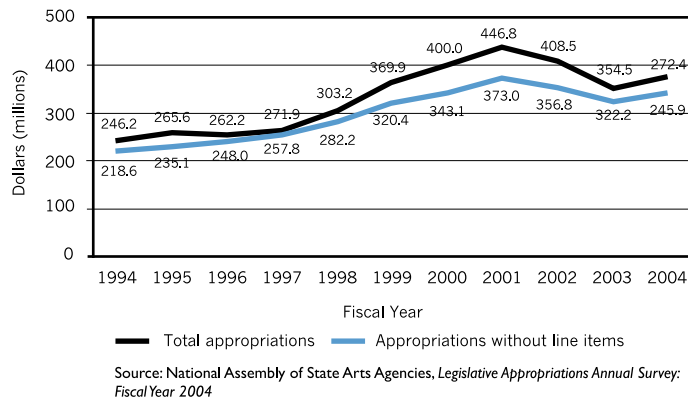
Rather, each product unit is designed to be utilized repeatedly by many, thus becoming more valuable with use.¹²

Nonprofit arts organizations also uniquely depend on government funding. For many groups, this reliance has made for a precarious existence. Throughout the late 1990s, federal funding for the arts decreased while local and state support increased. Then the post-September 11 recession resulted in three consecutive years of reduced state appropriations.¹³ As a result, for the first time since 1996, national per capita spending of state dollars dropped below the \$1 mark to 93¢,¹⁴ a trend strongly reflected in this study, which found several arts communities reeling from declines in state funding.

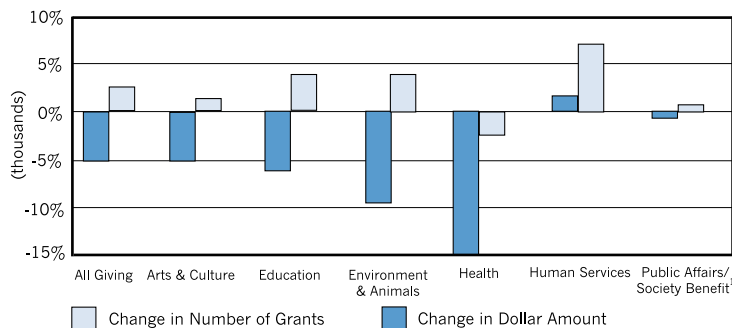
According to the Americans for the Arts 2002 study *National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support*, in 1998 nonprofit organizations also took 25 percent of their income from the private sector, 12 percent from investments and 9 percent from public funding.¹⁵ Yet while arts groups suffered from reduced public revenues, private philanthropic foundations have—at least until the recent recession—maintained a commitment to funding despite diminishing endowments. Estimated cultural contributions by all U.S. foundations doubled to \$3.7 billion between 1996 and 2000.¹⁶ Since the recession, foundation giving to other sectors has dropped precipitously,¹⁷ but the arts receive only 5 percent less than they did before.

So with all the money and jobs generated by the arts, why is the press often a no-show? The newspapers studied in this report tended to exhibit a “hold tight” approach toward allotment of space. Interestingly, most editors perceive

State Arts Agency Legislative Appropriations Fiscal Years 1994-2004



Changes in Foundation Grant Dollars Between 2001 and 2002*



Source: The Foundation Center, *Foundation Giving Trends, 2004* Based on a sample of 1,005 larger foundations.
 *Includes subject areas accounting for at least 6 percent of grant dollars or grants.
 †Includes Civil Rights and Social Action, community Improvement and Development, Philanthropy and Voluntarism, and Public Affairs.

their arts coverage as a given. “There is a hierarchy of what newspapers cover, and I think the arts have moved up that hierarchy,” says Clifton of *The Plain Dealer*. “The real struggle is over the amount of space and tension in resources you devote to the fine arts vs. popular arts.”

Meanwhile, statistical evidence continues to

build that the arts are no longer considered a fringe, elitist form of entertainment, but a vibrant economic part of mainstream America. The next big leap for American arts journalism would be a full embrace of that reality, and a commensurate change in the lens through which the media views our culture’s creativity.

NOTES

¹Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Consumer Spending on Admissions to Performing Arts, Movies and Spectator Sports: 1991-2001*, July 2003, www.bea.gov.

²The BEA defines “admissions” as ticket purchases and performing-arts events as legitimate theater, opera and nonprofit entertainments, but also includes rock concerts. Consumer spending on spectator sports includes admissions to professional and amateur athletic events and racetracks.

³*2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts*, released July 2003, www.arts.gov/pub/Research.html.

⁴See Note 1.

⁵Steven Tepper, associate director of the Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy, lecture on the Creative Economy, 2003.

⁶Source: Stephen Siwek, *Copyright Industries in the US Economy: the 2002 Report*, Washington, D.C.: Economists Incorporated and the International Intellectual Property Alliance, 2002.

⁷*Study on International Flows of Cultural Goods*, 1980-98, Paris, UNESCO, 2000; cited on UNESCO’s Web site under “Culture, trade and globalization.”

⁸Source: U.S. Census (1970-1990); Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (1990-2001); Princeton University’s Cultural Policy and the Arts National Data Archives.

⁹*Advance Comparative Statistics for the U.S.*, 2002 Economic Census, U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov).

¹⁰Wuthnow, Robert. *1999 Arts and Religion Survey*, (computer file). Princeton, N.J.: Gallup Organization (producer).

¹¹*Arts & Economic Prosperity: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts Organizations and Their Audiences*, 2002, Americans for the Arts.

¹²*From the Information Economy to the Creative Economy: Moving Culture to the Center of International Public Policy*, Shalini Venturrelli, Associate Professor of International Communication Policy, School of International Service, American University. Center for Arts and Culture, Cultural Comment Series, www.culturalpolicy.org.

¹³National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Legislative Appropriations Annual Survey: Fiscal Year 2004.

¹⁴*ibid*.

¹⁵*2002 National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support* study, Philadelphia, Pew Charitable Trusts.

¹⁶Lawrence, Steven, Dia Ganguly. 2002. *Foundation Yearbook*, 2002. New York, NY: The Foundation Center, p. 2; Renz, Loren. 2002. Arts Funding Update, 2002. New York, NY: The Foundation Center.

¹⁷The Foundation Center, *Foundation Giving Trends*, 2004, based on sample of 1,005 larger foundations.