2007 Museum Revenue Generation and Fundraising Study

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Introduction

The Urban Institute report *The Nonprofit Sector in Brief: Facts and Figures from the Nonprofit Almanac 2007* states that the nonprofit sector grew steadily between 1994 and 2004; the number of nonprofit organizations increased as did total assets and revenues. In 2004, nearly 71% of public charity revenues came from fees for goods or services while government grants and private contributions had fallen to 23.5% of overall revenue.[1]

Funding is one of the greatest challenges that museums face as nonprofits. For decades, the standards for museum revenue generation consisted of admissions, concessions, retail and memberships, while the vast majority of funding has come from grants, governmental assistance and private donations.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, governmental and private support has been shrinking and inconsistent, forcing museums to seek alternative sources of funding. In spring 2007, Orinda Group began investigating the nature of these alternatives; this white paper is the result of our research.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a snapshot of the current state of museum revenue generation trends, focusing on alternative forms of revenue generation. We hope to explore the efficacy of a variety of revenue generation strategies, as well as introduce museums to new and alternative forms of revenue generation. The paper also will explore the intersection of social media and e-philanthropy, and what lessons museums can learn from the greater nonprofit sector.

Our research began with an investigation of current literature that led to the development of a survey focused on current revenue generation strategies employed by museums. The results of this informal survey—together with our findings from the literature review and comprehensive examination of several specific strategies—form the basis of this paper.

The paper is divided into two sections: specific findings from our nationwide museum revenue generation survey and an examination of broader revenue generation trends. The paper uncovers the challenges and opportunities museums now face regarding new forms of revenue generation. We conclude with our recommended strategies.

The Orinda Group Revenue Generation Survey

Methodology

A review of current literature and museum materials indicates that museums are seeking a number of alternative revenue generation methods. These range from variations on more traditional fundraising methods to entirely new strategies based on emerging technologies.

In order to gauge the prevalence of new strategies, Orinda Group created an online survey that museum professionals could access via multiple, industry-specific listserv postings. The survey intended to capture a snapshot of the status of alternative revenue generating and fundraising strategies employed by museums across the country at a particular moment in time (summer 2007).[2]

While the survey gauged revenue generation options that museums employed, a few questions pertained to future intentions. Assuming that all museums use some combination of an on-site gift shop, admissions, concessions, annual fundraising appeal and/or membership, the survey focused on eight alternative sources of revenue:

- Programs
- Partnering
- Use of collections
- Fundraising activities
- Organizational structure
- Museum-operated businesses
- Museum website
- Third-party websites

Overview

Representatives of 143 museums responded to the online survey. Not all respondents answered all questions. Of the 143 respondents, most institutions had 1 – 10 full-time employees (57%) and/or were located in the Mountain-Plains or Midwest regions (51%).

The top three sources of income reported by respondents were federal/state/county/city funds (54%), grants (48%) and memberships (43%).

Results

All respondents reported using more than one of the eight alternative sources of revenue.

The four most common activities cited by survey participants were:

- Event Rental (52%)
- Fairs/Festivals (29%)
- Auctions (27%)
- Holiday Shopping Events (27%)

Survey participants cited four most popular revenue generators:

- Event rental (79%)
- Auctions (77%)
- Sleepovers (70%)
- Holiday shopping events (61%)

The least common activity was the production of specialty license plates (3%). However, of that small number, 40% reported success with the approach.

The least successful revenue generators cited by survey participants were:

- Car donations (25%)
- Open-house/behind-the-scenes vents (33%)

Thirty-five percent of museums participated in reciprocal membership programs with other museums. Most respondents (72%) reported that 0-5% of their visitors came from this program. However, 16% of respondents did not track this information so it is unclear how successful these programs actually were.

Partnering

Most museums (78%) have partnered in some way with another organization.

The top four reasons cited for partnering were:

- Increased visibility (60%)
- Collaborative programming (57%)
- Cross-marketing purposes (44%)
- Cooperative grants/funding (40%)

The most common types of museum partnering were:

- Exhibitions
- Digitization
- Advertising/marketing
- Programming (such as lectures)

Most respondents described these programs successful; intended goals ranged from raising awareness of the museum to revenue generation. However, respondents reported that establishing and maintaining successful long-term partner relationships can be difficult due to differences in personality or organizational culture. Often one partner felt that their organization carried the "lion's share of the work."

In contrast to the 78% of museums that had partnered with other museums, only 16% had engaged in corporate partnerships.

Corporate partnerships projects included:

- Exhibits (48%)
- TV/DVD/documentaries (35%)
- Museum books (4%)
- Public debate (4%)
- Cooperative programming (4%)

Anecdotally, corporate partnership strategies were very successful; most respondents reported tremendous success, measured by things such as DVD sales as well as increased visibility and grant pledges.

Just three respondents reported disappointing results. One respondent mentioned that after the initial success of a traveling exhibition that it was "mothballed," although it was unclear why. Another reported moderate success, but only because their organization "did all the work," and a third respondent hesitantly replied, "We'll see..."

Use of Collections

Most respondents (72%) did not indicate that their museums used collections to generate revenue. However, twenty respondents (14%) indicated that their museums planned to use collections as a source of revenue generation within the next six months. Only 20% of respondents felt that these strategies were not successful.

Fundraising

Most museums (58%) had some sort of annual fundraising event. While most respondents (67%) called these events cost-effective, most (93%) reported that the events resulted in only 0 to 20% of total annual revenue. Less than half of the respondents (43%) had engaged in smaller-scale and/or more unusual fundraising activities.

The most common activities included:

- Buy-a-(brick, tile, star, etc.) (25%)
- Adopt-a-(shelf, artifact, animal, exhibit, etc.) (23%)
- Cookbooks (15%)
- Calendars (11%)

Anecdotally, these strategies had mixed success: more survey respondents reported greater success from more specific and imaginative events/programs.

Organizational Structure

Many museums (41%) had some type of friends group or related foundation responsible for raising money for the museum. Of these, 66% reported that the museum's friends group generated only 0-10% of annual revenue.

Museum-Owned Businesses

Few museums (12%) reported owning or benefiting from a separate business. The nature of these businesses ranged from team-building obstacle courses to farms to museum-related shops and cafes. Although running a separate enterprise can complicate a museum's tax status, a successful venture may offset tax and other associated costs.

Museum Website Services

The web is a valuable tool for generating revenue for museums. Associated strategies can be divided into two groups: services offered directly on a museum website and external Internet sites designed to help nonprofit organizations locate and procure funding.

Most web strategies can be broken down into e-commerce, e-philanthropy and social media divisions. Museums can employ all of these strategies directly on their websites through offering online retail, admissions and memberships, online donations and resources such as podcasts, videos and downloadable cell phone tours.

Slightly more than half of the responding museums offered some sort of e-commerce or e-philanthropy services. Online memberships were most common (44%).

One quarter of the museums that offered one or more of these services online experienced increase revenues. Roughly 60% of the respondents reported that only 0-5% of their overall sales, donations and admissions came from the Internet. The success rate was higher for online memberships; 70% of respondents reported between 0-10% of total memberships came through the website.

It should be noted, however, that according to a quote from Professor James Austin of the Harvard Business School that appeared the Chronicle of Philanthropy, while only 0.14% of all donations were made online in 2001, by 2010, 33% of all charitable donations will be made online.

"Make no mistake: The e-philanthropy revolution is here to stay, and it will transform charitable giving in as profound a way as technology is changing the commercial world. Charities that have dismissed e-philanthropy as a fad, or run from it in confusion, will, sooner or later, need to become reconciled to it. If they don't, they risk losing touch with donors and imperiling the vitality of their work." [3]

Web 2.0 strategies involve offering online visitors greater flexibility and/or interaction with other visitors and/or design elements. Examples include being able to respond to blog posts, comment on videos, rate events or news items or tag information and images.

Museums can enter the field by producing and offering podcasts, downloadable cell phone tours, blogs, or by inviting the public to "tag" their collections. Most respondents (77%) indicated that their museums did not offer any social media or web 2.0 elements on their museum websites. Of those that did, most offered only podcasts. However, one-third of respondents anticipated their museum adding one or more of these elements to the website within the next six months.

Some of the common responses on the survey to the question, "Why offer online services?" included:

• To provide more resources
• To build awareness
• To "keep up with the Joneses"
• To reach a broader audience
• To provide more content
• To provide a flexible means for audience interaction
• To attract new demographics
• Because it is low cost and low risk
• To get funds

Online offering success rates varied substantially but seem to be increasing. Some survey responses included:

• We are measuring traffic/usage of these technologies. It has been slower to get off the ground than originally thought. Question also of how well we market the capabilities to the visitor.
• Greater buy-in from the community. Overall richer experience. More to choose from
• The availability to register for educational programs online offers a great service to busy parents. Often a registration leads to an online membership purchase because we offer reduced program fees to our members.
• I think that they will be successful in time, but for now, we need to do a better job of training our audience to think of the web as a resource.

Third-Party Websites

For the purposes of this survey, non-museum websites can be divided into two categories: e-philanthropy and social media/social networking.

Some may question why we included social media sites in a study of museum revenue generation trends. "Friend-raising" hardly is a new concept in the museum field. The basic premise is that museum support is built upon relationships. While cultivating these relationships may not result in immediate or direct financial gain for the museum, they can be greatly beneficial to long-term sustainability.

Museum development departments may spend months or even years cultivating a particular donor while social networking sites allow museums to reach out simultaneously to many potential stakeholders. Even more exciting, once a museum establishes a profile on a social networking site, people can seek the museum or find it by using key word searches. Most social media sites provide a free way for museums to contact a broader audience.

Social media sites also allow online visitors to interact with the museum in genuinely new ways. For example, the Tate Modern in London included the general public in its British photography exhibition, *How We Are Now*. The museum established a Flickr group in order for people to submit their own photos of Britain. The group has over 3,000 members and over 6,000 photographs.[4]

The Fresno Metropolitan Museum in California is currently building a new facility. In an effort to keep visitors and members engaged during the temporary closure, the museum posted videos on YouTube of the demolition of their offices. They have had 372 views in 3 months. Additionally, the social media sites Facebook[5][6] and

LinkedIn[7] now offer members opportunities to support—both financially and through advocacy—nonprofits and charitable causes.[8][9][10] Giving has become arguably trendy in the last year, with celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and Bono visibly providing financial support to causes both globally and locally, leading Trendwatching.com to declare that "giving is the new taking."[11]

Peer pressure with regard to giving and person-to-person giving campaigns[12] also has become popular in the past year, with the Parade Magazine and Case Foundation America's Giving Challenge serving as the largest example of this trend. Readers of Parade Magazine, Facebook users and the general public are encouraged to find as many people as possible to support the cause of their choice. The eight causes with the largest number of unique donors will receive $50,000 each.[13]

Nonetheless, despite the benefits of using social media sites, 78% of the museums surveyed did not. Of those that did, the most popular sites included MySpace (6%), YouTube (5%), Flickr (2%) and Yahoo Groups (1.4%). None of the respondents reported using online event announcement sites such as Eventful ("the world's largest collection of events")[14] or Party4APurpose ("the place where anyone can post, promote, invite and RSVP to any social event with purpose in the country"),[15] despite the fact that Eventful often lists over 400 museum activities in just the Los Angeles area alone. However, 14% of the museums surveyed indicate that they plan on using one of these sites within the next six months.

The most common responses to the question, "Why use a social networking site?" included:

- To stay connected with stakeholders
- To attract new demographics
- For more effective/efficient communication
- To "keep up with the Joneses"
- Because it is low cost and low risk
- For better/wider outreach

It is important to note that the two most common responses to the question, "How have social networking sites helped your museum?" were that they have increased awareness of the museum and broadened the museum audience.

Again, 78% of the museums surveyed were not currently using a third-party e-philanthropy site, although 13% indicated that they planned to use one within the next six months. Interestingly, those museums that were using e-philanthropy sites were using sites in which a portion of the proceeds from shopping or from using an Internet

search engine goes to the museum, rather than the sites that allow individuals to donate directly to the museum.

The most commonly reported third-party search and shopping e-philanthropy websites included:

- shopformuseums.com (3.5%)
- goodsearch.com (3%)
- eBay's missionfish.com (1.4%)
- iGive.com (1.4%)
- freepldege.com (0.7%)

Anecdotally, most responses indicated that e-philanthropy was not very useful to museums, although many reported that it still seemed too early to gauge the results with any accuracy. Possibly contributing to these attitudes may be the fact that respondents seemed to think that e-philanthropy is "low-cost and low-risk." While it is true that most e-philanthropy sites are free to use, engaging in an online giving program—whether via a museum website or through a third-party donation site—requires a significant commitment of both time and human resources. It is an unfortunate myth that e-philanthropy takes no effort.

Forms of Revenue Generation

There are three principal ways that museums generate revenue:

- Earned Income;
- Membership and Outreach;
- Fundraising and Philanthropy.

Each of these avenues can consist of traditional and/or alternative strategies. Presently, the majority of alternative strategies—particularly for Fundraising/Philanthropy and Membership/Outreach—are executed via online initiatives.

Earned Income

Admissions, concessions and retail are the most ubiquitous of the traditional forms of earned income for museums. Second tier forms of earned income include:

- Event/site rental;
- Filming/location rentals;
- Programs and events;
- Traveling exhibition programs or blockbuster exhibitions.

The division between traditional and alternative earned income strategies is not always clear; some traditional forms can be occasionally comprised of alternatives. For example, new forms of retail, such as online gift stores and print-on-demand programs, have emerged in recent years. The Metropolitan Museum of Art made a conscious decision not to be at the forefront of print-on-demand services, but rather to wait and evaluate how the technology would be received, how fast it would improve and how quickly particular technologies or applications would become obsolete. Once the museum did enter the print-on-demand field, it did so cautiously. The Met began "low-tech:" a staff member took orders for high-end reproduction photographs and prints. Everything was done in-house, using the Met photography studio to print the orders.

Later, the museum partnered with a vendor to create a kiosk for the main museum store where customers could order lower-resolution reproductions of other artworks. Kiosk orders related to special exhibitions and not the general permanent collection. As a result, images from other museums or collections were available, if included as part of a special exhibition. After several years, the Met print-on-demand program has been successful.[16]

The sale of limited editions is another trend in museum retailing. Initially, "multiples" began as development tools: special gifts for donors and high-level patrons.[17] Now, in many museums, they are available to any museum store patron. Several organizations have employed this strategy successfully, including Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the New Museum in New York City. Artists' editions can serve as a revenue source, involve new and emerging artists with the museum world and involve corporate sponsors with artists.

In the past, the membership/development department or the director's office almost exclusively handled artist's editions. More recently, there has been a shift towards offering multiples as a part of museum retail efforts. One reason for this is costs. The program at the Whitney became prohibitively expensive until it was moved from the Director's Office to the store.[18] The New Museum features a hybrid program that divides responsibilities between retail and development. More unique editions are offered only to mid- and upper-level members. The New Museum program includes posters, prints, books, sculptures and a DVD of commissioned pieces. (While the DVD itself is an unlimited educational tool, they offered the first 200 DVDs with a special limited edition print.) Corporations also are partnering either with museums or artists to create special editions.[19]

While traveling exhibition programs are a more traditional form of earned income generation, they have in some cases become the purview of business departments or a division designed specifically to foster partnerships with other museums.

In recent years, the Natural History Museum in London made a commitment to professionalize the business practices of its commercial ventures. The commercial activities division originally was established to respond to the revenue loss that resulted from the government repeal of admissions a few years earlier. The division consists of several elements that include:

- Wildlife Photographer of the Year program (a juried competition that results in a traveling exhibition)
- Image resources
- Popular publishing
- Customer development (i.e., membership)
- Events
- Retail and catering
- International business development

By consolidating all programs under one department, undertaking a re-branding campaign, establishing key performance indicators and aligning programs with current business standards, the museum increased total revenue and visibility even after losing all admission revenue. Some of the key results of consolidating departments and business units included:

• Collaborations between the licensing department and the science departments resulted in unique and popular products for the gift stores, including a remote control tarantula and bug-catching guns
• A dino-specific shop was established, as well as another shop and an online shop, resulting in 750,000 pounds of income
• Establishment of admission fees for special/temporary exhibitions
• Establishment of a garden shop and restaurant in the summer
• Online ticketing options that have proven to be very successful
• Brand products in the High Street shops
• 14% of total museum income is now earned from trading activities[20]

The goal of the Commercial Strategy Division remains to achieve 10% annual growth while supporting the museum mission.

The Natural History Museum, London is not the only museum that has established a business program. The Smithsonian, the Exploratorium in San Francisco and the Oakland Museum of California also have business development departments.

The Professional Services department at the Oakland Museum of California began as a contract with the Port of Oakland to develop and install exhibits in airport terminal corridors. From that, an entire department arose to develop and install exhibits for external organizations as well as to provide other museum consulting services.

The Center for Museum Partnerships, a division of the Exploratorium, develops and builds traveling exhibits and exhibition components for sale as part of a larger program that creates and fosters relationships with other museums.

The Smithsonian has a separate for-profit company—Smithsonian Business Ventures (SBV)—that is charged with supporting the museum system through commercial endeavors; in some ways, SBV is the for-profit equivalent of a friends group or private support foundation. SBV includes media and licensing, all Smithsonian magazines and retail and concession operations.

Corporate sponsorship and partnering have been associated with museum exhibitions for decades. However, museums now are beginning to form creative partnerships with entities that include major media companies (such as the SBV partnership with the Showtime cable television channel), game producers and even wineries.

A successful creative partnership exists between the Waddeson Manor, a historic manor in the UK, and the Rothschild vineyards. Rothschild gives Waddesdon a certain number of bottles each year for wine trading purposes. In addition to using wine as an investment tool, Rothschild also allots bottles to Waddesdon to sell under their own label, or to create specialized labels for other businesses. For example, Buckingham Palace has its own label of Rothschild wine that it procures through Waddesdon—and Waddesdon receives all the profits. Essentially, Rothschild subsidizes the historic house through allotments of wine.[21]

While creative partnering can lead to increased income, it is more likely to be a successful outreach and awareness-raising tool, such as Wolfquest, the online educational game developed by Minnesota Zoo and Eduweb.[22] This partnership created several other highly successful online games, such as Zoo Matchmaker[23] and a series of tiger adventure games.[24]

Other partnerships may serve to aid multiple organizations, such as the formation of a tax district or the initiation of a ballot measure. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science substantially benefits from participation in the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District.[25] Another tax-based initiative in Colorado is the 1.5% real estate transfer tax that benefits the Crested Butte Land Trust.[26 27]

In Texas, museums and other nonprofits may petition to receive the proceeds of charitable gaming. The Bell County Museum operates a charitable bingo hall, although museum staff members reportedly have never entered the establishment.[28] Charitable gaming also is available in North Dakota, Virginia, Michigan, Kentucky and Nebraska among other states.[29]

Membership and Outreach

Direct mail, community events and programs, and brochures have been traditional staples of membership drives and museum outreach. These tools have been reshaped and augmented by the advent of online technologies.

Debates rage between fundraisers and membership directors about direct mail versus online acquisition. Fundraising expert Jeff Brooks references an article in FundRaising Success magazine about this issue. [30]

The article makes a series of observations about online fundraising that are worth a look. Here are some of them:

• Direct-mail campaigns generate a higher initial response rate.
• Online acquisition campaigns usually generate higher average gifts.
• Predictive analysis in direct mail is more accurate at this time, so you are able to reduce risk.
• Direct mail-only donors tend to renew at higher rates than online-only donors, but multichannel (those giving online and in the mail) often are your strongest donors.
• It frequently is more difficult to persuade a direct-mail donor to give online than the other way around.
• High average gifts online can lead to an increased long-term (24 months) donor value; however it is important to consider how the average gift is "masking" the lower retention when calculating donor value.
• Emergency or current events-related campaigns improve the performance of both direct-mail and online campaigns, but giving can increase drastically online during such times.
• A higher percentage of direct-mail donors are likely to be institutional donors, i.e., who support your cause, not just a single issue.
• The cost of mail continues to increase, and online campaigns are frequently less expensive.
• Nonprofit giving trends show more and more people likely to give online in the coming years.

Our conclusion at the end of the session was that as Internet fundraising continues to increase, it is important for organizations to consider online acquisition campaigns. At the same time, much like in the commercial world, mail still plays a vital role in the growth and maintenance of your membership file.

To help your organization determine the proper blend, consider your membership acquisition goals. Are you looking to maximize your upfront income? Break out

into new markets? Develop future audiences? Increase retention? Offset increased postage costs?

All these things are true in my experience too. Knowing the differences can save you a ton of trouble. [31]

Muse Award-winning company Amuze Interactive has created a system that simultaneously increases stakeholders and revenue streams via a CD that allows visitors greater access to information about exhibits and collections: as a visitor walks through the exhibits, he or she uses the CD to "capture" any object that the visitor would like to learn about in greater detail via online resources. The CD accomplishes the goals of information dissemination and marketing and tracking purposes. The physical CD also offers opportunities for corporate partnership/sponsorship. Currently, the program is in use only at the Natural History Museum in Stockholm. [32]

Use of Social Media

By joining social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook, museums can reach a broad audience and attract more visitors to their own online offerings. Providing content for social media sites such as Flickr and YouTube also can attract online visitors and enable the museum to increase the amount and variety of content that they share with the public.

The real challenge in this arena is repeat visitation. Tactics include offering fresh podcasts, vodcasts and cellphone tours for download, maintaining a regularly updated blog, allowing online visitors greater interactivity through comments and tagging, and ensuring that the museum website is current and fresh. Offering online donations, admissions, memberships and retail allows visitors to give directly to the museum. While this approach can involve development and employee costs, it can be very cost-efficient.

One could argue that museums should wait to see where these technologies go and which emerge as proven investments of resources. However, Orinda Group recommends that some strategies could be employed safely at this time. While the field of e-philanthropy is still developing, museums that demonstrate real interest and investment in this area possibly stand a better chance of attracting the attention of funders with new technology interests. (For example, the cost of building an e-philanthropy and/or e-commerce-enabled website could be covered by a grant rather than by the museum budget.) Museums that successfully execute these sorts of projects will establish themselves as leaders in the field and increase their visibility.

Other museum professionals might be skeptical of the time required to establish and maintain social media pages or to redevelop an organizational website. We already have mentioned that making effective social media sites/pages requires an investment of time. Also, the museum will need to devote resources to ensure that content on the museum profile(s) remains fresh and engaging.

However, we would argue that these activities are worthwhile investments. With regard to the concept of friend-raising, social networking sites literally offer the opportunity for people to befriend the museum. This may sound like a superficial gesture but it seems to be taken both seriously and literally. "Friends" in online communities may never meet in person but still may have strong ties to one another based on shared interests, experiences and goals. Social networking sites such as MySpace allow museums to connect with people interested in the ideals, values, collections and missions expressed and displayed on museum profiles.

Naturally, there also are some potential hazards to entering social networks at this time. It takes time to develop a consistent blog and/or profile voice, to get into the habit of posting regularly and to determine the kinds of content visitors want to see/hear/experience. However, these obstacles should not deter museums from entering the social network arena. Now is the time to create online social experiences so that when e-philanthropy begins to meet a projected outcome of 33% of all donations, the museum website will be established, professional and attractive to potential donors. Studies conducted to determine if a strong online presence really results in increased revenues concluded that the larger an email list, the more successful online revenue generation strategies will be.[33] A great way to bulk up an email list is through social network "friending" or via services such as Bitmove.[34]

Bitmove is a Dutch company that has developed a video mail system that is highly successful at the Van Gogh Museum, the Rijksmuseum and the Anne Frank House, as well as several non-museum organizations in the Netherlands. Bitmove produces kiosks that visitors use to record video greetings at the museum to send to friends and family via email. When the recipient receives the email, he or she is directed to the museum website in order to retrieve the video greeting. The end product is a fun and popular activity at the museum that raises awareness of the museum and museum website. Additionally, the kiosks compile all entered email addresses into an extensive marketing database. The kiosks also can be used to record visitor reactions to exhibitions and these messages can be deployed on the museum website.

For the Van Gogh Museum, Bitmove generated:

- 250,000 unique website visitors
- 22% increase in online sales
- 80,000 testimonials[35]

The Brooklyn Museum is a frontrunner among museums employing social media. With multiple blogs[36] and a MySpace[37] profiles boasting over 10,000 friends, the Brooklyn Museum has done much to cultivate an online audience. In order to test the strength of the connections made through social networking initiatives, the museum held an event that was advertised only via the museum MySpace profile. More than 1,000 people attended. Moreover, by using Flickr and Blip.tv to engage online visitors and to incorporate visitor input into exhibitions, the museum increased its visibility and its audience. [38]

With over 60,000 views of the "It's My Art" series of videos,[39] The Indianapolis Museum of Art is for museums on YouTube what the Brooklyn Museum is for museums on MySpace. IMA also has been lauded throughout the tech and nonprofit communities for the creation of their online "dashboard:"[40] a series of museum statistics that includes the average time a visitor spends looking at their website, the number of artworks on loan, electrical consumption and even financial information. As fundraising expert Jeff Brooks explains, the museum "is telling its public that anyone who cares is an insider." He goes on to say that "the very fact that they're sharing ... makes people respect the museum more. And who knows what info-sated donors might choose to do for an organization they feel trusts and respects them?"[41]

The president of the MacArthur Foundation generated substantial buzz through his announcement to create a SecondLife avatar and host a meeting about the future of philanthropic initiatives in the LindenLab virtual community.[42][43] Despite that event and the presence of a nonprofit commons in SecondLife where real nonprofits are virtually fundraising for real currency,[44] very few museums currently have a presence in the 3D online virtual world.[45] This may be changing, however, although it is still unclear in what ways museums will use SecondLife.[46] Presently, the Tech Museum of Innovation is using it as part of the museum's radical new approach to collaborative exhibition development,[47] but whether or not this could eventually generate revenue remains unclear.

These sorts of scenarios inevitably make museum professionals ask, "What is the true return on investment regarding social media for nonprofits?"[48] Care2 offers an online tool called Frogloop, the Social Network Calculator, to help museums estimate the value of social media involvement. The site explains:

> You can use this tool to calculate an estimate of cost and return on investment for the recruitment and fundraising efforts of your staff in social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace. It works sort of like an online mortgage calculator. Just enter the starting assumptions in the yellow boxes below and the tool calculates results automatically.[49]

Additionally, Frogloop offers benchmarking studies to use as metric guidelines.

However, one might argue that even when returns are relatively low, it is important for nonprofits to invest in social media because it represents a willingness to acknowledge and encourage changes regarding how people organize for social change and form lasting relationships through groups.[50] Others argue that while the sector most likely has not had adequate exposure to social media to understand what kinds of results to expect or how to measure them, the impact and success of social media engagement may be less tangible and quantifiable than one might hope. Examples include the "priceless" feeling a donor might experience "of having a voice in, being heard by, and participating in your favorite cause."[51]

Suggestions for productive experimentation include:

• Start with a smaller project that will require only limited resources. [Invest a little]
• Write down your successes and put them in an important place. [Examine the investment]
• Write down your challenges and put them in that same important place. [Examine the investment]
• Ask the people you want to connect with whether they think your outreach and listening is valuable and keep their answers in the special spot, too. [Examine the investment]
• Watch other nonprofits and copy and remix for your own purposes. [Research other investments]
• Rinse, repeat.[52]

Similarly, social media can be applied to a problem that other methods have not been able to solve: the ability to identify a need or an existing problem with a quantifiable baseline in order to have "a reasonably controlled experiment."[53]

Nina Simon, exhibition developer and author of the blog Museum 2.0, examines the negative perceptions of social media and web 2.0 technologies and looks at how those elements can make use of the technology in an inclusive manner, primarily by discussing resource impact and the sharing of insider information about the technology.[54]

This point underscores the new emphasis on transparency within the nonprofit sector. One loose definition of transparency could be "Here's what we're doing and why and what it amounts to."[55] The need for increased transparency comes as a result of reports of nonprofit mismanagement and in response to the desire of nonprofit stakeholders to become more involved and have a greater understanding of the way organizations function. As one fundraiser has stated, "The days of nonprofit secrecy will soon be over."[56]

Leslie Madsen-Brooks's blog posts have examined the benefits of some of the most popular sites: Flickr, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter. She states that if museums approach these sites "thoughtfully and courageously, museum 'content'—by which I mean such information as construction updates, new exhibition announcements, mash-up applications that draw on museum collections, and more—can circulate through key constituencies on these sites . . . I think, used well and targeted toward niche audiences, many social networking sites will allow museums to meet their goals."[57] She goes on to explain:

> Institutions need to enter these spaces with firm answers to these questions:
>
> • What audience(s) are we trying to reach, and why?
> • What information do we want to convey to these people?
> • What actions do we want them to take?
> • Demographically, where do these constituents congregate online?
> • Do these virtual spaces provide the tools that will allow us to circulate our message?
> • Do the sites then provide ways for users to circulate our message without too much further effort from us--that is, do the sites allow for percolation, or will our message merely appear for a moment and then pass quickly from users' radar?[58]

Madsen-Brooks feels that Facebook and LinkedIn work best on an individual rather than institutional level, with LinkedIn providing possible opportunities for donor prospecting or searching for guest speakers,[59] but says of MySpace:

It's not surprising that MySpace is so popular with museum marketers, as it's not only among the most-trafficked social networking sites, but also may be number six on the list of the world's most popular English-language websites. MySpace also attracts the participation of a young audience that most museums would love to capture as lifelong patrons.[60]

Twitter,[61] a communication tool that allows users to answer the question, "What are you doing?" in 140 characters or less and broadcast it to other users via the Internet or SMS technology, Madsen-Brooks feels is "labor-intensive" in that it requires staff members to post many "tweets" in order to broadcast effectively the museum's message, however

> ...it doesn't take a lot of staff time, and there's no learning curve to speak of. And if you did take the time to plan out a marketing campaign, Twitter would allow for a good deal of creativity--and keep your institution in front of Twitter users. Imagine, for example, the tweets of a charismatic and quirky (or, even better, well-recognized) historical figure. Robert E. Lee posts from Gettysburg. Harriet Tubman from the Underground Railroad. (Who wouldn't add Harriet Tubman as a friend?) The folks at Plimoth Plantation share their daily trials and joys, all in their particular dialect.[62]

Nina Simon recommends automatic updates about exhibitions or broadcasting information about upcoming events as potential uses of Twitter.[63]

Regarding YouTube, Madsen-Brooks notes that it can be a "viral" tool in that it is relatively easy for content to spread between people via video embedding options. Museums can create videos for a number of different purposes, such as highlighting exhibition content or airing academic lectures.[64]

The photo-sharing site, Flickr, is Madsen-Brooks' favorite social media website for museum use.

Unlike Facebook and MySpace, where visitors can leave notes or comments, Flickr allows people to actively create the core content in what Flickr calls a "photostream" or "set...." Some people may feel intimidated by new media terms like blogs, Facebook, and MySpace (as well as our attempts to define them), but "photo sharing" is, in the industrialized world at least, just about universally understandable.[65]

Nina Simon lists five reasons why she feels museums should be using Flickr:

1. It has the most photos from the most people and places...
2. Tagging makes photo search flexible and powerful...
3. Sharing is really easy...
4. Commenting and review functionality...
5. It's (mostly) free.[66]

Google Earth Outreach is a more obscure social media application for nonprofits. This service has proved especially useful for causes such as Save Darfur but could also serve museums.

As a non-profit or public benefit group, you can use Google Earth to capture the work you're doing, the people you're helping, the challenges you face and the change you're helping to enable - all in the visual context of the environment in which these stories take place. By downloading your KML files, anyone, anywhere can fly in Google Earth from where they live to where you do your work. This virtual visit to the projects and people you support gets users engaged and passionate about what you're doing and builds support for your cause.[67]

Nonprofit technology experts Beth Kanter and Rebecca Krause-Hardie have compiled an introduction to social media for arts groups entitled, Mixing Social Media Tools with Marketing Communication for Arts Organizations. Although it primarily focuses on symphonies, operas, theaters and other performance arts groups, the information is germane to the museum field. One important message that they share is that

> It is important to remember that you are not being forced to throw out your traditional communications strategies. They still work! We are talking about blending. Once you have an understanding of the new way the Internet is working, you should begin with some low risk experiments. You define outcomes, some metrics, and put it forth. You improve as you go.[68]

Despite the fact that many museums have yet to make use of social media and Web 2.0 technologies, a recent study conducted by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Center for Marketing Research found that close to one-third of the Forbes 200 largest charities are using Web 2.0 strategies to connect with their constituents.[69] According to the study, online video was most heavily used (41%); blogging and social networking came in second place (34%).[70]

The results of this study indicate that, at least among the larger organizations, the nonprofit sector uses social media more than the business sector.[71] [72]

At the close of 2007, The Chronicle of Philanthropy asked several nonprofit leaders for their thoughts on what might happen in the nonprofit sector in 2008. Not surprisingly, several respondents mentioned the online technologies and social media. Daniel Ben-Horin, founder and co-chief executive officer of TechSoup (formerly CompuMentor) in San Francisco felt that "successful nonprofit players in the new media space will be those who figure out how to interface with the broad platforms like YouTube, Flickr, del.icio.us, Blogger, Miro, SecondLife, Google Maps, or Facebook by implementing campaigns that have both personal and organizational resonance..." but cautioned that "they have to understand the opportunity without being seduced by it." Sean Stannard-Stockton, director of philanthropic services at Ensemble Capital and author of the blog Tactical Philanthropy, listed ten events that "could happen, and just might, with a little bit of luck." Many focused on the Internet, including the predictions that the CEO of a major nonprofit will start a blog that will quickly become the most popular philanthropy blog resulting in an influx of small-level donations and that after "Facebook's Causes application is believed to have played a significant role in the increased voter turnout for the 2008 presidential election among 18- to 24-year-olds, charities recognize the potential of social-media tools and finally get serious about integrated online strategies."[73]

Fundraising and Philanthropy

Traditional forms of fundraising and philanthropy include:

- Capital campaigns;
- Annual campaigns;
- Corporate sponsorships;
- Bequests and planned giving;
- Foundation grants;
- Individual giving;
- Governmental support and grants.

Even though governmental funding has declined in recent years, the results of the Orinda Group Revenue Generation Survey suggest that federal, state and foundation support still tend to be some of the largest sources of museum revenues. (It is important to note, however, that this may be a result of the geography of the respondents; according to a study done by the California Association of Museums, state and federal funding of museums has declined greatly and on average California museums are primarily funded by private sources, largely individual donations.)[74]

Another ubiquitous form of museum fundraising is a large annual event or gala. Recently, some museums have attempted more innovative forms of fundraising activities, such as Adopt-an-Artifact or Name-a-Species programs, but these typically are never as successful as the larger and more systemic forms of philanthropic requests, such as grant-seeking and annual campaigns.

The Rise of e-Philanthropy

The arrival of e-philanthropy has marked the greatest changes in fundraising and philanthropic activities for the entire nonprofit sector in the last decade. While some research indicates that the nonprofit sector has enjoyed general success with online fundraising, the results of the Orinda Group Revenue Generation Survey indicate that this remains a very new strategy for museums. The relative merits and challenges of e-philanthropy are inconclusive despite the fact that those museums that engage in e-philanthropy are optimistic about its future.

However, based on professional literature and the success that e-philanthropy enjoys in the larger nonprofit sector, museums should investigate the nature of this strategy. What approaches and techniques are the most popular and effective? What types of e-philanthropy websites work for museums? What do nonprofit technology experts recommend as best practices?

Although it became a viable reality in the late 1990s, e-philanthropy is still in its infancy. Demonstrated interest from the greater philanthropic world—including major foundations and granting organizations such as the MacArthur Foundation[75] and the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences[76]—indicates that a growing number of organizations are using e-philanthropy, and that the online identification, solicitation and donation of funds will be an important source of funding for nonprofits in the future.

E-philanthropy offers perceived donor benefits that include more flexible giving methods, an increased sense of community as donors create giving circles or identify other donors with similar interests, and greater personalization—the ability to donate to projects or programs that appeal to specific geographic and/or thematic donor interests.

Some perceived nonprofit benefits include lower fundraising costs (compared to direct mail campaigns, for example), the means to reach a larger audience and to connect with prospective donors outside of the immediate area and, ultimately, the potential to increase overall revenue.

While this may sound like a "win-win" situation for both nonprofits and donors, it is important to consider the following concerns. While some have described e-philanthropy as "low-cost, low-risk," it requires continual effort to maximize the effectiveness of e-philanthropy tactics, both on the museum website and on external/third-party websites. Also, associated expenses might include licenses for specialized software that will allow the museum to build an e-philanthropy-enabled website, as well as time and employee resources to maintain internal or external mechanisms.

Third-party e-philanthropy sites are still developing. New ones appear regularly as older sites shift focus. Many have similar or competing missions and it remains unclear which sites ultimately will become the standards.

In the spring of 2007, fundraising consultant Gayle Roberts attended a session at the San Francisco Foundation Center where several philanthropy experts commented on the future of the nonprofit sector. Some of their predictions included:

- Fundraising will leverage technology in ways we can't even imagine today.
- Social entrepreneurs will become the drivers of new philanthropy.
- Corporate giving will disappear, to be replaced by various forms of cause marketing.
- The tin cup style of fundraising will be dead.[77]

These predictions indicate the growing importance of e-philanthropy.

Types of e-Philanthropy Websites

The nine types of e-philanthropy websites include:

- Third-party donation sites;
- Charity evaluation sites;
- Charity-donor matching sites;
- Advocacy sites;
- Shop-to-give sites;
- Search-to-give sites;
- Click-to-give sites;
- Microfinance sites;
- Online-giving-enabled nonprofit websites.

Each type meets a particular need for the nonprofit, the donor or both. Currently, third-party donation, charity evaluation and charity-donor matching websites sites are the most popular.

Third-party donation sites allow donors to give to nonprofits of their choice online. At this time, many nonprofit websites cannot process online donations so the ability to link to a third-party donation site becomes important. The most popular third-party donation site is NetworkforGood.[78]

If nonprofit administrators elect to allow visitors to make donations via the organizational website, they may choose to purchase proprietary software such as e-Tapestry[79] or CharityFinders[80] in order to build web pages that allow donors to give online, purchase tickets to exhibits or events (including fundraising events), become a member or renew a membership. A chart comparing various e-philanthropy software packages is available through Affinity Resources.[81]

Proprietary systems present potential challenges. Often, actual payment processing occurs on the vendor site rather than the museum website. While this relieves the museum of the responsibility of tracking credit cards numbers and personal identification information, many vendor websites are not 100% hacker safe, as Convio[82] and the nonprofits it served learned in fall 2007. Although no sensitive information was stolen, the negative fallout from the security breach resulted in several groups abandoning Convio.[83] [84]

Charity evaluation sites may offer an online giving option or partner with a third-party donation site in order to permit donors to give to highly ranked nonprofits. However, the primary function of these sites is to help donors

to assess and compare respective attributes and values of selected nonprofits. These sites, such as CharityNavigator,[85] remain somewhat controversial as members of the philanthropic community debate the best metrics to be used to evaluate a nonprofit. CharityNavigator relies solely on information listed on nonprofit IRS Form 990 and ranks nonprofits according to how much of their money goes towards programs as opposed to overhead.

Some feel that the financial data from the 990 Form has been used only because it is easy to collect and compare. However, it does not actually relate useful information in terms of the health or effectiveness of a particular nonprofit.[86] Instead, groups such as GiveWell,[87] a boutique charity evaluation site, offer alternatives to gauge the effectiveness of a nonprofit. GiveWell offers grants to nonprofits and uses the application process to learn about the organization. Based on these findings, GiveWell recommends four or five nonprofits in a series of thematic categories, such as global poverty and education improvement. The website is relatively small and specific, listing only those nonprofits that it has evaluated. (Contrarily, CharityNavigator lists every nonprofit that completes a Form 990.) GuideStar[88] similarly evaluates nonprofits. However, this site includes much more information about each organization, attempting to be the best single source for comprehensive nonprofit financial information.

GreatNonprofits is another charity evaluation site. Described as the "Zagat Guide" of nonprofits, it seeks to offer "a place to find, review, and talk about great -- and perhaps not yet great -- nonprofits. You already know that reviews by other people who have gone to a restaurant or tried out a doctor are the best way to find out about the quality of those services. If you have direct experience with a nonprofit, GreatNonprofits makes it easier for you to share your knowledge so that other people can discover the great nonprofits that are out there."[89]

Other nonprofit evaluation sites include the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance,[90] the American Institute of Philanthropy's list of top rated charities (although museums seem to missing from the list),[91] the Just Give Guide, which lists over 1000 nonprofits that meet the particular criteria stipulated by the site[92] and Helpalot, seeking to facilitate finding "charity projects you trust."[93]

Charity-donor matching sites allow donors to match specific interests with particular projects or nonprofit organizations. DonorsChoose[94] permits donors to find specific classroom projects that appeal to their interests (such as purchasing bins in which to store athletic equipment or materials for making math classes more hands-on), to locate schools in need in the donor's area or to locate school programs according to the type of school (charter, public, private) or type of teacher (Teach for America). Also, a combination of these options can be used to ensure that the donor's money goes to a program that bests meets his or his interests. Similar sites focusing on other causes include GlobalGiving (international relief) and iCare,[95] (person-to-person giving in response to natural disasters).

One thing that separates GlobalGiving from other charity-donor matching sites is that it offers "satisfaction guaranteed"[96] through the GlobalGiving Guaranteed program.[97] The premise behind the program is that donors are also consumers and if for any reason their giving experience is not all that they had hoped it would be, they deserve a refund.[98] So far other charity-donor matching sites have yet to follow this example and it is still unclear whether or not the program will be successful, either by attracting and assuring new site users or by fulfilling GlobalGiving's desire for customer satisfaction.

Change.org[99] has been called "social networking + online giving."

Last month, Change.org launched a new service to allow nonprofits to create their own branded social networks on its platform. This month they've teamed up with Network for Good. The partnership will allow nonprofits that receive donations through Network for Good to create a branded social network on Change.org, and nonprofits that receive donations through Change.org to use Network for Good's giving system to track donations, email supporters, and manage donor data.[100]

Grantsfire[101] serves as an aggregator of grant information and subsequently produces a searchable database for nonprofits seeking grants. DoSomething.org is primarily aimed at younger people and actively makes use of Facebook applications in its efforts to help young people find an appropriate cause for which to "do something."[102] Both WiserEarth[103] and BringLight[104] seek to create links between individual donors and the nonprofits they support. However, while WiserEarth features wiki-style user content generation and editing capabilities, the charities listed on BringLight have been pre-approved by the site. BringLight also hosts a group of donors on LinkedIn.

At this time, there are no donor-nonprofit matching websites that specialize in museums and very few even seem to support museums or their causes and goals. Orinda Group intends to address this oversight by creating MuseumFunder,[105] a website that will enable museums and potential funders to find each another.

Advocacy websites, sometimes also referred to as person-to-person (P2P) or "wired fundraising"[106] sites, are social networking sites with a philanthropic or altruistic focus. These sites allow donors or social activists to meet, share causes and encourage one another to participate in philanthropy and social action. Care2[107] may be known mostly as a site that generates e-cards for holidays and special occasions, but the its tagline is "Discover, Share, Take Action!" It serves as a resource for people looking to find ways to make a difference through financial contributions or action, or to find others who are interested in similar causes, such as the environment, green living or animal rights.

Changents,[108] a hybrid of "change" and "agents" aims for a hip look and features videos of young people going into the community and engaging in social action, such as feeding homeless people or reducing pollution. The site's tagline is "Know it. Talk it up. Make it happen." Members of the site are encouraged to post about causes that are important to them, tell what they are doing to help and invite others to participate.

ChipIn[109] focuses on financial giving rather than social action. Members specify the cause that they are supporting, how much money is needed and when the campaign will end. The ChipIn widget is a Flash application that allows people to advertise on websites and/or blogs that they are seeking money for a cause through ChipIn and encouraging people to donate to the cause. An expert in how to create a successful person-to-person ChipIn campaign, nonprofit social media specialist Beth Kanter[110] has developed how-to screencasts that teach people how to use ChipIn and personal connections successfully to raise funds for specific causes.

SixDegrees, originally founded by actor Kevin Bacon and based on the popular "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" game, was one of the first advocacy sites to focus on the small-world theory that if each person prompted everyone that they knew to support a cause, true progress could be made. SixDegrees recently experienced a rebirth when it partnered with third-party online donation site, NetworkforGood.[111] Karma411 ("connect with a cause"),[112] FirstGiving ("the simple and efficient way to raise money online for charity"),[113] SocialActions ("aggregating and inspiring social action")[114] and TakingITGlobal ("an online community that connects youth to find inspiration, access information, get involved, and take action in their local and global communities")[115] all are examples of advocacy sites, each one prompting individuals to start charitable campaigns.

Again, none of the advocacy sites apparently focus on museums.

Beginning in 2007, Facebook started to feature the "Cause App,"[116] an application that allows Facebook members to display on their profiles causes that they support, donate online and encourage others to support those causes. Larger museums, such as the Brooklyn Museum and the Smithsonian, have enjoyed some success and positive exposure using this approach.

A few years ago, people commonly forwarded emails to their friends that encouraged clicking on the Breast Cancer Awareness site once a day to help raise funds for the cause. The idea behind that email, the click-to-give site, has developed into three variants: the search-to-give site, the shop-to-give site and the original click-to-give site. In the summer of 2007, a relatively new click-to-give site, FreeRice,[117] took the Internet by storm, with results that have been very pleasing to its recipient organization, the United Nations World Food Program. All three approaches generate money through the sale of advertising space.

GoodSearch[118] allows visitors to "give to charity just by searching the Internet" using the Yahoo search engine. FreePledge's tagline is, "Every consumer is a philanthropist; every purchase creates a donation."[119] Shopformuseums,[120] like FreePledge, is a shop-to-give site, but it specifically focuses on museums rather than all nonprofits. iGive[121] is another popular shop-to-give site, however, some philanthropy experts have questioned it because anyone can establish a "cause" that will benefit from shopping proceeds; iGive does not require causes to maintain verifiable 501(c)(3) status.

ChangingThePresent differs slightly from other shop-to-give sites by "selling" charitable donations. For example, a $15 Stop Global Warming present will eliminate 6000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions,[122] or a $120 Empower a Girl gift will enroll a young girl in a community empowerment program for 30 months.[123]

BiddingforGood focuses on auction items offered by nonprofits.[124] Similarly, eBay's Missionfish offers bidding-type shopping that benefits nonprofits.[125] Still another variation comes from the popular online market for handmade crafts, Etsy.[126] One Etsy "shop" dedicates all proceeds to charity, with a new beneficiary selected each month.

Shop-to-give websites can be viewed as a product of the "embedded giving"—the "practice of building a philanthropic gift into another, unrelated, financial transaction"[127] —trend that is presently very popular in the greater philanthropic world. The appeal of embedded

giving is that it allows everyday consumers to contribute easily to charities without having to go through the additional steps of finding a recipient organization and physically making the donation; all details are dictated by the product or service attached to the donation. Examples include Newman's Own products from which all of the profits after taxes are donated to educational and charitable purposes,[128] and the credit card and telephone services offered by Working Assets[129] that automatically donate a portion of each bill to charities selected by patrons. Good Magazine's annual subscription offer[130] in which the entire subscription cost of is donated to a selected nonprofit or retail programs such as the Gap's Product(Red) campaign[131] are further examples. Some of the newer corporate programs have fallen under scrutiny[132][133][134][135][136] and soon may be regulated through legislation[137] following the lack of transparency demonstrated by certain retailers, most notably Barney's New York that had not informed intended beneficiaries that Barney's was using their names to promote sales.[138]

Microfinance is a contested form of philanthropy that focuses primarily on the use of small-scale loans to aid individuals in developing nations to alleviate debt, start businesses and become self-sufficient entrepreneurs. The primary point of contention is that microfinance has been used exclusively outside the United States and has not been used to reduce domestic poverty.[139] Also, it is still unclear whether or not those benefiting from microfinance are actually becoming successful or whether they are simply becoming slightly less poor than they were before.[140]

Nonetheless, Kiva.org (letting you "lend to a specific entrepreneur in the developing world--empowering them to left themselves out of poverty")[141] has been praised for its work and had generated over $11 million by 2007, just two years after its launch.[142] Other microfinance groups include Microplace (an eBay company where "you can make investments that reach millions of hard-working poor people worldwide")[143] and the more established Grameen Bank founded by 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus.[144]

What differentiates microfinance from other forms of philanthropy is that there is an actual return on investment (ROI) for the donors; charitable contributions are loans rather than donations. This model can appeal to social entrepreneurs and venture capitalists who wish to support worthy causes but who want to see tangible evidence of the success of their investments.[145]

Microfinance matters to museums. While it is unlikely that a museum ever will receive a microfinance loan, microfi-

nance establishes two trends that will impact museums: the ROI demand from social entrepreneurs and the democratization of giving through smaller-increment donations. GivingTree is a micro-philanthropy site, rather than a micro-lending site, that believes "that small, everyday contributions to help others matter" and that "the next generation of philanthropists" is "you."[146]

This democratization of giving is facilitated largely by current technologies that allow anyone to become a donor, afford donors the opportunity to learn about and to give to organizations, and to permit donors to participate in what they do, how they are operated and even how fundraising campaigns are conducted.

Unlike the Rockefellers, Carnegies and other early foundation founders who created entities that mirrored existing institutions, the structured philanthropic vehicles of the 21st century will create a tradition similar to the emerging Web 2.0 companies. Rather than concentrated pools of money which imitate existing institutional structures, the new philanthropists will be smaller, widely distributed agents of change who co-create the social sector that they support.[147]

At the heart of the democratization of philanthropy is the premise that

> ... no one person or entity has all the answers and instead leads to a virtuous cycle of information feedback. The philanthropists of the 21st century will be smaller in size, but much larger in numbers than the philanthropists of the last century.[148]

In fact, in today's philanthropic world, charitable support is even becoming popular among children.[149] This is an important trend for museums to notice, particularly as the primary audiences of many museums are school-aged children. As Bill Clinton has said on his e-philanthropy site, MyCommitment:

> Anyone—regardless of age, income, education or where you live—can do something that has a lasting impact and makes a difference in the lives of others, both down the street and around the world.[150]

The popular media encourages and enables members of the general public to support causes. CNN Impact urges readers and viewers to "take action on the news you consume!" by using a CNN portal to donate to causes that are "some of the highest-rated charities by CharityNavigator.org" and "vetted by CNN journalists for credibility."[151] This has raised some questions among philanthropy experts, including what will happen if journalists have to

act as philanthropy analysts,[152] but CNN Impact demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of both online giving and the democratization of philanthropy.

Through the Google Finance page, Internet search engine giant Google also has provided, possibly inadvertently, a nonprofit portal[153] that gives visitors access to a variety of financial and leadership information, as well as blog posts and discussions about nonprofits.[154] While only information about large nonprofits such as the Red Cross[155] or the Metropolitan Museum of Art[156] is currently available, Google is such a popular tool that museums should be aware of this new nonprofit portal.

How and When e-Philanthropy is Most Effective

While evidence supports that e-philanthropy is a successful tool in the greater nonprofit community, many museums currently struggle with the concept. It is possible, although unlikely, that there is some fundamental difference between museum supporters and other nonprofit donors that makes museum donors less likely to participate in online giving. However, it is more likely that the majority of museums simply have not figured out how to apply the technique.

For example, as of 2007, most museums have a website, even if it is just a one-page "brochure" featuring basic visitor information. Transforming this type of website into an effective e-philanthropy site requires far more time, effort and money than simply placing a "Donate Now" button on the homepage.

Research indicates two important things about online giving: it will not completely replace other forms of giving in the foreseeable future, and there is often very little overlap between those who give online and those who give by other means. These two facts are what make e-philanthropy an alternative form of revenue generation—it will not replace traditional capital or direct-mail campaigns, but it can supplement them.

This means that in order to have a successful e-philanthropy strategy, a museum must have constituents who are comfortable making online purchases. To a certain extent, this is another way in which involvement with social media can help: people who are familiar with the museum from a social networking site will be more comfortable giving to the museum online. This means that if a museum is established on a social networking site, there is a greater chance that its attempts at e-philanthropy will be successful.

Additionally, the American Heart Association found that

when it solicited input from donors regarding how to improve the AHA website for online donation purposes, the implemented changes increased online donations from 12% to 70%.

> They started by analyzing their site's traffic statistics. Then they asked users what they wanted via an online survey. Finally, when they started to design improvements, they made sure it worked with Web usability testing...Discipline. They based what they did on donor behavior, not on somebody's opinion of what things ought to be like...Christian A. Caldwell, who oversaw the changes, said, "It had a lot to do with changing the perspective from our financial department wanting to know how much the donation is to 'What is it you're here to do? Who is it you're here to honor?' ... Everybody came with their own ideas about why donors were going away. Instead of getting into that argument about what the donors' intentions were, I said, 'Let's just take it right to the donors, and try to get them to tell us.'"...That's how you do good work in fundraising: Pay attention to donors.[157]

However, the larger question remains: does online engagement lead to more money for nonprofits? Discussions throughout the nonprofit sector indicate mixed reactions; some reports indicate that active involvement with donors both online and through other media is required for best results.[158] Others state that while online engagement may lead to more online donations, it will not impact the overall number of donations or the total amount of money donated each year.[159] The Chronicle of Philanthropy, however, has reported increased online giving since 2003.[160][161] In 2005, the Chronicle reported that

> Fund-raising experts say that year-to-year percentage increases in online contributions that far outstrip gains in other types of fund raising have won over many of the lingering nay-sayers.

But then countered that statement with this:

> To be sure, not everyone agrees on how important a source of revenue online fund raising will eventually become for charities. Internet contributions still account for a small percentage of charities' overall fund raising. Online gifts made up less than 1 percent of total revenue for 117 of the 141 charities that provided their 2004 fund-raising totals.[162]

By the end of 2005, however, the Chronicle reported that approximately 20% of Internet users had made online donations.

A survey in October 2001 found that 10 percent of

Internet users, or about 11 million people, had made online donations to a charity. In January 2005, shortly after the South Asian tsunamis hit, that number rose to 13 percent, or 17 million Americans. The number of online donors has increased 53 percent since then, the new survey shows.[163]

In 2006, online giving reached a milestone when third-party online donation site NetworkforGood hit the $100 million mark in its fifth full year of operation.[164] Nonetheless, in the second quarter of 2007 the Chronicle reported that despite continued growth, online giving was still in an "awkward adolescence."

Online giving represented less than 1 percent of total contributions for 103 of the 147 organizations that reported both the amount of money they raised online and their total contributions in 2006.

One of the main causes for this awkwardness seemed to be that fundraisers were still unsure how much time and effort to devote to online campaigns.

But figuring out exactly how much money to invest in online fund raising is tricky, says Vivianne Potter, a top fund raiser at Amnesty International USA, in New York.

"With direct mail, we all know the formula," says Ms. Potter. "You put this much money in, you get this many donors out."

Fund raisers even have a pretty good idea of how much money those mail donors will give over the course of their relationship with the charity. But with online fund raising, she says, everyone is still feeling their way.[165]

This is an important point; perhaps one of the greatest things stopping museums from developing online giving programs is that fundraising staff members believe that they cannot accurately estimate the resources required to build and maintain a successful program.

Challenges and Opportunities

In the face of nonprofit governance scandals,[166][167][168] the IRS has revamped the 990 Form[169][170] used by nonprofits to report revenue. There has been a great deal of discussion about metrics for measuring the effectiveness and health of nonprofit organizations.[171][172] In recent years, social entrepreneurs[173] have entered the world of philanthropy,[174][175] seeking returns of their investments and prompting the concept of social stock exchanges.[176]

A few e-philanthropy sites have been designed with the needs and concerns of these social investors in mind, aiming to "achieve real impact" rather than just donate money.[177] BolderGiving encourages social entrepreneurs to give away as much money as possible,[178] SocialEdge, a product of the Skoll Foundation,[179] serves as more of a social networking site that is "by social entrepreneurs, for social entrepreneurs,"[180] Social Markets prompts donors not just to donate but to "invest in the change you want to see,"[181] while Resource Generation focuses on teaching the next generation of major donors how to align their interests with their donations.[182] While national economic conditions have always impacted nonprofits, other markets—such as the social capital market—have emerged to influence giving.[183][184]

Larger numbers of philanthropic social entrepreneurs have amplified and redefined involvement with nonprofit organizations. Now, it is not enough for some donors only to give money; they want to feel that they have an intimate understanding of the organizations they support and that they are directly responsible for impacting those organizations. Jeff Gray, director of business and community affairs, City of Refuge (Atlanta) feels that this trend of "deeper involvement" could mean that "donors will give in a more focused way and won't spread their support around among many organizations."[185]

The desire to understand how nonprofits work will benefit from the trend towards transparency in which organizations clearly state, "Here's what we're doing and why and what it amounts to."[186]

As foundations begin to examine themselves,[187] philanthropy experts highlight stagnating governance and program policies.[188][189] Prize-based philanthropic awards have served to encourage innovation, ingenuity and progress within certain causes, particularly in science, medicine and technology.[190][191][192][193][194]

Fundraisers and philanthropists continue to debate questions of scale: Is it preferable to have many small donors or one major donor?[195] What are the pros and cons of microfinance.[196][197][198][199][200] Perhaps the only conclusion is that "giving takes many paths."[201]

What does this mean for museums and their potential to generate revenue? Transparency, such as that displayed by the Indianapolis Museum of Art online dashboard, will serve as an indicator of success as well as reassure the public that they understand how museums function and what museums actually provide. Increased participation from community members through social media or through collaborative programming can strengthen relationships with stakeholders. A re-examination of venture philanthropy for museums[202][203] may indicate that venture philanthropists are interested in museums and that museums are in a position to benefit greatly from such investment. Participation in both social media and e-philanthropy will be necessary to demonstrate to the public and to funders that museums are relevant in a quickly changing world.

Fortunately, there are ample resources and funding sources to help museums to prepare for major institutional change. The Institute for Museum and Library Services supports many digital initiatives,[204] as does the MacArthur Foundation.[205] NetSquared[206] and the Nonprofit Technology Network[207] both offer free articles and other resources to nonprofits exploring social media and other Internet technologies. Third-party online donation site Network for Good now offers a resource site to help "overworked fundraisers."[208] Additionally, the fact that philanthropy has entered the realm of social media could mean that the youth of today are being primed for a lifetime of social action and giving. The presence of a cause-based philanthropic application on Facebook, the advent of websites such as Changents and MTV's cause-based social networking site, Think MTV,[209][210] coupled with the fact that millennials are proving to be socially-aware and civic-minded,[211][212][213] means that engagement in social media will help to secure museums in the minds of next-generation donors and philanthropists.

Despite the radical shifts and changes in earned income and fundraising in the nonprofit sector, the opportunities for museums far outweigh the challenges and threats.

The future of museum revenues seems to rest in innovation, community involvement, creative partnering and online opportunities.

Recommendations

The challenges and opportunities presented by current philanthropic markets, coupled with the trends identified in the Orinda Group Revenue Generation Survey, point to possible strategies that museums can employ to increase and stabilize sustainable revenue streams. While not all strategies will work for every museum, the results of the Orinda Group survey and literature review suggest that the following programs and activities could increase museum annual revenue.

Engage in Social Media

Museums should offer social media on organizational websites and engage in third party social media and social networking activities in order to maximize audience engagement and cultivate new audiences. Maintaining a museum blog—either on the museum website, through a free blogging host such as Blogspot or via the blog function on MySpace—is an effective way to keep stakeholders abreast of museum events through an informal channel. Creating a Flickr pool for museum visitors to share photos with the museum (and each other) can effectively generate feelings of ownership and involvement. Active membership on MySpace allows people who might not know about the museum to learn about it and to become a museum supporter. Participation as a "Cause" on FaceBook allows friends of the museum to make contributions and encourage others to do the same through the FaceBook platform. Providing downloadable podcasts, cell phone tours and videos about the museum and its programs increases visibility and accessibility.

Enable Online Retail, Admissions, Giving and Membership Opportunities through the Museum Website

Amazon.com and similar retailers permanently have changed the way the world engages in commerce. Similarly, increased online banking capacities continue to alter financial procedures. With an increasing number of people preferring the ease and convenience of online financial transactions, museums risk losing potential revenue if they ignore these trends. For larger museums with dedicated, professional IT staff, creating an e-commerce- and e-philanthropy-enabled museum website may be a possibility. For smaller museums without IT staff, third-party e-philanthropy software companies such as Convio and eTapestry offer good alternatives.

Participate on E-philanthropy Websites

Currently, the most effective and important e-philanthropy websites for museums are third-party donation and shop-to-give sites. By participating on NetworkforGood, museums access a wide range of philanthropic individuals. Joining shopformuseums.com will mean that museum visitors can support a museum while shopping online. In order to reap the greatest benefits, museums should advertise on the homepage that the museum participates on these sites and provide direct links for visitors.

Don't Abandon Direct Mail

Direct mail is not dead. The availability of online giving means that donors and members now have options regarding how they want to be contacted by museums—but they may still prefer direct mail campaigns to email campaigns. In order to maximize results, museums should employ both approaches.

Consolidate, Professionalize and Streamline Business Units

Establishing a single business department to oversee all business and commercial enterprises can help to reduce costs and increase revenues through greater efficiency. Museums should encourage communication between business and curatorial departments to identify effective retail tie-ins to upcoming exhibits and staff research. Museums administrators should include business department representatives in senior staff meetings, helping to promote the museum's mission while generating revenue.

Explore New Retail Opportunities

A successful retail program links products to the museum mission and collection. Merchandise licensing, rights and reproductions, on-demand printing of images from the collections, coffee table books based on the collections and downloadable assets such as cell phone wallpaper based on museum images are all viable methods for connecting retail success to the museum's holdings. Multiples and limited edition works by artists are another possible way to transform the mission of a museum into retail success. Museums should position the museum store as a gift-giving resource with special holiday shopping events. Non-collections art rental and sales also can be a cost-effective way for museums to generate income while still following their missions.

Pursue Creative Strategic Partnerships

Museums can partner with local organizations or museums with complimentary missions to increase visibility and share collaborative programming costs. Museums might join with corporations to produce traveling exhibitions, books, DVDs, games and other revenue-generating products.

Devise Targeted "Creative" Fundraisers that are Unique to the Institution, Community, Audience and/or Program

Many museums hold "Adopt-A-(_____)" and "Buy-A-(_____)" fundraisers, but often enjoy limited success because their events are too generic. When developing a new fundraising idea, museums should think about target communities: What are the concerns and needs of the community? How will the museum use the proceeds? How will the funds ultimately meet the needs and interests of the community? What could surprise people, catch them off-guard or make them laugh? The more the museum can unite the fundraising activity, the mission and the community, the greater the potential success.

Restructure Museum Support

Government-operated museums may have budget constraints that relate directly to the fiscal concerns of the governing agency. In some cases, museums can establish a separate nonprofit foundation as a fundraising agency. In other governance situations, "friends" groups can help the museum to raise general operating funds or money for specific collections or programs. A friends group can serve as a specialized membership category, while museum foundations serve as separate entities that support the museum.

Consider Unrelated Businesses

Although owning or leasing property to an unrelated business could result in an unrelated business tax, the resulting revenue can more than compensate for it. Museums should investigate state charitable gaming laws to determine if the museum is eligible to benefit from a bingo hall, keno game or other charitable gaming franchise. An unrelated business can benefit a museum foundation or friends group even if the museum additional incurs.

Step up to the Auction Block

Museums can generate substantial revenue via auctions in two ways. The first is to accept donations specifically to sell at auction. The second way is by deaccessioning items from the collections. When accepting donations for auction, museums may sell items through an auction house such as Christie's, Bonhams or Sotheby's, or the museum may hold a gala auction event where members and patrons may bid directly to raise money for the museum. Museums must retain the services of an auction house to handle the sale of collections objects; resulting revenue may only be used to purchase new acquisitions or care for existing collections. Museums should exercise caution when deaccessioning as the practice is watched carefully and regulated by the American Association of Museums and museums may be subject to sanctions if the process is handled incorrectly.

Host Traveling Exhibitions

Traveling exhibitions come in all shapes and sizes. "Blockbuster" exhibitions tend to generate maximum revenue for a museum, but even smaller traveling exhibitions can save costs and provide fresh content. Likewise, larger museums may consider building and renting out traveling exhibitions as a source of revenue.

Open up the Museum to After Hours Exploration

Although behind-the-scenes and "open house" events tend to be cost ineffective, hosting museum sleepovers can generate positive cash flow, especially since the release of the popular movie *Night at the Museum* starring Ben Stiller. These events can be geared towards children, Valentine's Day or New Year's Eve. Renting space for private events can generate even more revenue for museums. Although staff may be required to be on hand to ensure collection safety, private event rental continues to be a cost-effective method for generating significant income.

Diversify Revenue Generation and Fundraising Strategies

Depending on a single strategy can lead museums to financial instability. Like personal financial portfolios, diversity is the key to sustainable long-term stability for museum revenue streams. Administrators should explore online and offline options that focus on museum programs or external factors. Museums should develop new ideas and thoroughly examine old ideas that no longer seem to work to see if they can be repurposed. In membership and fundraising, recognize small givers as well as big givers. Ensure that financial support is flowing into the museum from enough sources so that if one suddenly dries up, the museum won't flounder. Through a combination of some of the strategies listed above, any museum should be able to find some successful alternatives that generate revenue.

Glossary

Blog

Blog is short for "web-log" and is essentially an online forum for an individual or a group to post relatively short items of information or opinion for sharing with a larger group or the general public. While serving as a type of online journal or diary, one of the most popular elements of a blog is the comments function, which allows readers to post their own thoughts and opinions on the subject matter discussed in the original post. In this manner, readers unconnected to one another can create a dialogue with one another through the blog. Blogging is a form of social media.

Democratization

Democratization as it applies to nonprofits refers to the act of changing the methods of a particular organization or the sector as a whole in such a way as to better represent, appeal to or benefit the public at large. In particular, it refers to the opening up of information or processes previously closed to the general public, such as participation in exhibitions, the ability to serve as donors or philanthropists or the ability to make informed decisions about philanthropy. Movements such as microphilanthropy, the push for better and more transparent analysis and evaluation of nonprofits and the adoption of social media by nonprofits can all be seen as methods of democratization.

Embedded giving

Embedded giving at its most basic level is the incorporation of a philanthropic donation to some other form of financial transaction.

e-Philanthropy

e-Philanthropy is the practice of online giving; that is, of making charitable contributions to a nonprofit organization via electronic means on the Internet. e-Philanthropy may happen directly on the nonprofit organization's website or through a third-party donation site.

Evaluation

In the context of this paper, when we speak of evaluation we are not referring to exhibition evaluation but rather to the assessment of the effectiveness of the nonprofit organization as a whole. At the moment, this is primarily achieved by looking at financial information provided by the organization itself on an IRS Form 990. From this form, the ratio of overhead costs to program costs can be calculated. Typically, when this method of evaluation is used, an organization that spends a relatively high amount on overhead compared with programs will be rated lower than an organization whose ratio is in favor of programs. This method of evaluation is currently being challenged by members of the philanthropy community, but no other definitive evaluation tools have been vetted yet by the sector as a whole.

Metrics

Metrics are the measuring sticks by which the health and effectiveness of nonprofits are evaluated. While the best form and use of metrics is a hotly debated topic in the philanthropic sphere, the most commonly used form of metrics right now is the ratio of overhead costs to program costs.

Millennials

Although demographic experts differ on the starting date for the "millennial" generation, the typical definition includes anyone born between 1980 and 2000. Millenials also are sometimes referred to as "Generation Y."

Social media

Social media is any Internet-based technology whose aim is to create a multi-directional exchange of information. Examples of social media include video- and photo-sharing sites, social networking and meeting sites, blogs and even news sites if they incorporate feedback mechanisms or methods of evaluating articles.

Tagging

A "tag" is a keyword that is assigned to an article, blog post, photograph, video or other online media. The purpose of the tag is to help others quickly and easily identify and share the content of the tagged item. The author of the tagged item accomplishes tagging primarily, but in social tagging other viewers may also add or create tags for items.

Transparency

Transparency as it pertains to this paper specifically refers to the sharing of private information about an organization or a person in order to promote openness and to achieve accountability. For example, the sharing of financial data regarding the programs of a nonprofit is a form of transparency. Likewise, the disclosure of affiliations or possible conflicts of interest when endorsing an organization is a form of transparency.

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