

Pew Research Study: Digital Technologies critical to the spread of the arts

More than 1200 organizations that received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts between 2006 and 2011 participated in the survey — including respondents from the fields of visual arts, theater, dance, literature, photography and media arts. Question topics ranged from management of digital marketing outreach to strategies for building community and prompting more audience engagement during performances and events.

The survey found organizations are striving hard to capitalize on opportunities and incorporate new technologies to build new relationships with supporters, their audience and the broader community. But to do that effectively, they find they need skilled staff and dedicated budget for products and services, which makes it difficult at a time of reduced arts funding. It also showed social media is having a major impact, particularly in how audiences and communities expect to engage with artists and organizations, and that's prompting a reexamination of the role consumers play during performances and events, and in having their voices heard throughout the artistic lifecycle.

The Pew Report found “a widespread sense among arts group leaders that digital technologies are critical to the spread of the arts,” with 81% of participants saying the internet and digital technologies are “very important” for promoting the arts, and nearly as many saying technologies are “very important” for increasing audience engagement.” Not surprisingly, digital technology was also found to be very important for fundraising, for increasing efficiency, and for engaging in arts advocacy.

Most participating organizations strongly or somewhat agree with the statements that technology and social media have made art a more participatory experience (92%), and that they have helped make art audiences more diverse (83%). To accommodate the new realities, organizations are turning to new tools on the internet and in mobile technologies to increase awareness, promote events and exhibits, and provide custom experiences. But there are costs involved, even when using tools that are free or affordable, particularly with regard to staff and training. That said, 99% of organizations have their own website; 97% have an active social media presence; 50% maintain a blog; and about half that number host podcasts, webinars and provide educational content and materials online.

Looking forward, the report findings suggest, that there is a lot of experimentation going on and that we are likely to find ourselves experiencing the arts in many new and different ways. More information is available at <http://raabassociat.es/Y2bnWH>.

The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project recently released the findings of a report that outlines the impact digital technology and social media are having on arts in America. The survey provides a picture of a fast-changing landscape, and one that presents many challenges for organizations and individuals.5:6/13

