

# Like, Link, Share:

## How cultural institutions are embracing digital technology



Commissioned by the Wyncote Foundation

November 2014

How are cultural institutions using digital technologies to further their missions? What can we learn from talking to innovators doing this work? The Wyncote Foundation commissioned this report to help answer these questions.

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**WYNCOTE FOUNDATION**

The mission of the Wyncote Foundation is to support efforts that strengthen and enrich culture, community, and the natural environment.

## INTRODUCTION



As supporters and in some cases board members of cultural institutions, Wyncote directors have seen first-hand the challenges faced by established institutions as they grapple with rapidly changing technology. Taking full advantage of digital opportunities requires organizations to change their internal systems, work processes, and staff structures, and to tailor the development of digital capabilities to their individual programming, operational, and revenue strategies. However disruptive this process may be, digital strategy is no longer optional but essential. The public expects to engage with culture digitally, to sample and share, to connect and participate.

Visitors exploring the Collection Wall in Gallery One at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Our inquiry focuses on the universe of “legacy cultural institutions,” defined as decades- or generations-old anchor organizations that have benefitted from substantial public and private investment, that are not founder-led, and that demonstrate enduring value and significance. These include art museums, symphony orchestras, theaters, dance and opera companies, historical societies, libraries, and science centers. We identified a study group

## 40 STUDY ORGANIZATIONS

### Site Visits:

Cleveland Museum of Art  
 Exploratorium  
 The Henry Ford  
 Kansas City Public Library  
 Opera Philadelphia  
 Philharmonia Orchestra  
 San Francisco Ballet  
 Steppenwolf Theatre

### Profiles:

Alvin Ailey American  
 Dance Theater  
 American Museum of  
 Natural History  
 Berlin Philharmonic  
 Bibliotheca Alexandrina  
 Brooklyn Museum  
 Chattanooga Public  
 Library  
 The Cliburn  
 Cooper Hewitt  
 Smithsonian Design  
 Museum  
 Dallas Museum of Art

of 40 exceptional organizations that have a meaningful digital presence and are viewed as leaders. They were nominated by grantmakers, practitioners, service organizations, journalists, and by asking the nominated organizations themselves. Fortunately, the same cohort of organizations was named again and again, giving us confidence that our study group, while not exhaustive, is a solid one.

While established legacy institutions play a unique and esteemed role in the cultural ecosystem, they also can be viewed less favorably from some vantage points. In their lack of diversity in staff, governing boards, and often in their audiences, they reflect social dynamics that have existed for decades or centuries, including the unequal distribution of resources and access across our communities. By limiting our project to examination of changing dynamics in only these institutions, we did not include the vibrant neighborhood, artist-led, and diverse cultural organizations that paint a fuller picture of the vibrancy of the 21st century arts community.

Nonetheless, these generally larger-budget leadership institutions face particular challenges in their systems and relationships that make it difficult for them to nimbly adjust to a changing environment. In pursuing our study, we sought evidence that embracing digital and interactive technologies offers an opening for these institutions to change in ways that make them more relevant, accessible, and connected to communities.

We picked eight organizations to visit, seven non-profits and one public entity. Their characteristics—geographies, sizes, age, endowments, donor bases, and other attributes—differ strikingly. Over the summer of 2014, they willingly shared their stories and experiences with us, generously spending time and allowing access to internal documents and data. What we learned is that despite their differences, these organizations face common obstacles in embracing digital innovation.

# This report highlights the five themes we think are most important, our “takeaways”.

The accompanying website ([www.LikeLinkShare.org](http://www.LikeLinkShare.org)) features detailed stories and project documentation that will allow you to explore our eight study organizations, and the larger study group, in depth. Among the 40 organizations, we visited some in person, interviewed executives of others by phone, and learned about others through on-line research and public information resources. The website provides links and project examples from all.

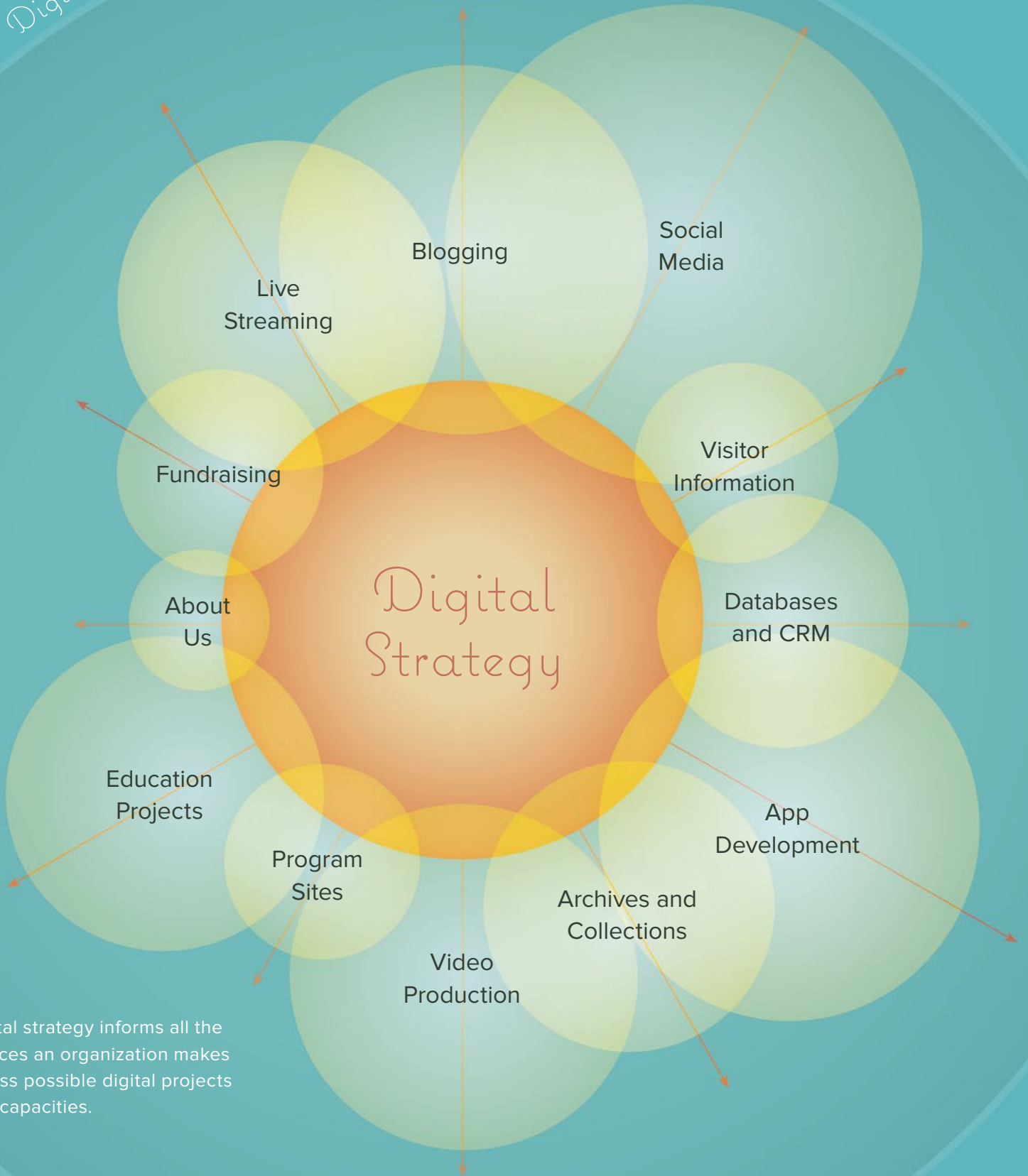
We came away optimistic. As legacy institutions become more adept with digital technology and interactive modes of audience engagement, they are reaching more people, learning new ways to engage substantively with audiences, and opening their physical doors to new publics. Digital innovation is sparking not only “cool new projects” but also fundamental changes in the orientation of legacy institutions toward a more spirited public presence and a renewed sense of civic purpose. Organizations whose physical structures have been described as shrines and refuges are becoming platforms for participation and creation. This is welcome news, and you can expect more of it as these organizations forge new ways to adapt and evolve.

David Haas  
Vice Chair  
Wyncote Foundation

Sarah Lutman  
Principal  
Lutman & Associates

Detroit Symphony Orchestra  
Dutch National Ballet  
The Field Museum  
The Getty  
Indianapolis Museum of Art  
Jacob’s Pillow  
Maine Historical Society  
Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Metropolitan Opera  
MoMA  
Monticello  
National Theatre  
New York City Ballet  
New York Philharmonic  
The Public Theater  
Rijksmuseum  
Royal Opera House  
San Francisco Symphony  
SFJAZZ  
Seattle Public Library  
Shakespeare’s Globe  
Tate  
Vienna State Opera

Digital Reach



Digital strategy informs all the choices an organization makes across possible digital projects and capacities.

THEME ONE

# Strategy: Know the Game Plan

Large institutions require substantial internal momentum merely to keep up. The sheer volume of artistic production, visitor and audience services, fund-raising, and physical operations keeps everyone busy. To carve out time for new projects and capabilities, and to make changes in programs, structure, and strategy, requires energy and persistence.

This is particularly true in digital strategy where there are so many possible options for new initiatives. As they make continuous and deeper investments, our study organizations talk about working smarter, not harder, by aligning digital strategy with the organization's overall direction. Even as the external environment for media continues to change rapidly, study organizations say they know more about how to make the right decisions and avoid the wrong ones. That's not to say that what's clear is also easy to carry out.

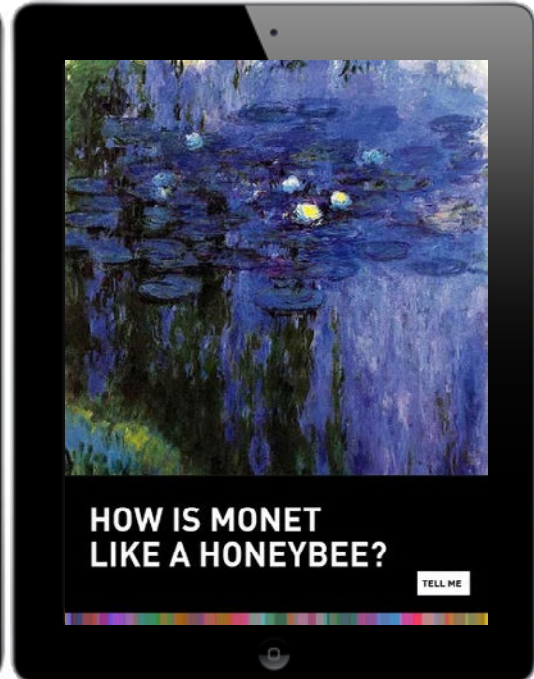
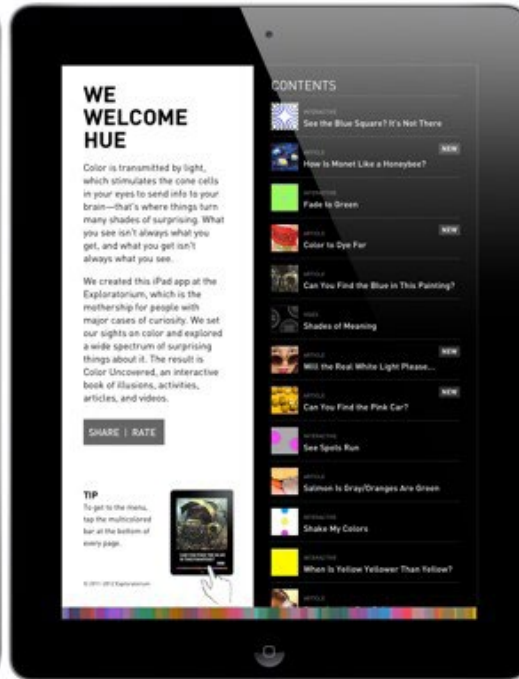
Strategy is important not only to guide decisions but also to identify the measurements and indicators that gauge progress. Without strategy, any measurement will do. With strategy, measurements can be refined and, using digital tools, quantified through detailed tracking of audience use. Measurement fosters learning.

Every one of our study institutions has taken time to develop its strategy, by testing and refining ideas, often through organization-wide conversations and multiple project cycles. Further, once agreed to, strategy is led from the top. Leaders, often including directors, champion the work, helping to gather resources and remove roadblocks. Finally, strategy is not fixed. Strategy changes as conditions change. By having a strategy, constantly stressing it, testing its efficacy, and measuring results, our study organizations are learning and evolving.

## Takeaways:

- Leaders have an articulated digital strategy
- Strategy informs what measurements are used
- Overall strategy is the basis for digital strategy
- Organizations' strategies will be different







Here are some examples of digital strategy:

## 1 Steppenwolf

**Strategy:**

engage audiences for live performances by providing information that enhances the performance they'll attend and will deepen and strengthen their relationship to Steppenwolf

**Measurement:**

attendance, email "open rates" for pre- and post-performance information sent, visits to video and other content distributed to audiences

## 2 San Francisco Ballet

**Strategy:**

use social media to expand the global reach and reputation of SF Ballet as one of the world's pre-eminent ballet companies, and deepen the commitments of current and prospective attendees from the region

**Measurement:**

digital reach, engagement, and revenue; size of fan base in tour markets, social media revenue by last touch attribution and social-media only promotions

## 3 Exploratorium

**Strategy:**

creatively explore the use of all available media to expand the museum's reach beyond its land and buildings

**Measurement:**

audience size and reach for websites, specific projects, and apps; growth in overall core digital audience; user evaluation

## 4 Philharmonia

**Strategy:**

create new audience experiences with classical music, especially orchestral music, and to allow participants to experience the process and pleasure of music making

**Measurement:**

participation in digital experiences (number of people), time spent in digital settings, formal evaluation of audience response

## 5 Cleveland Museum of Art

**Strategy:**

attract visitors, increase frequency of attendance, and enhance the visitor experience

**Measurement:**

overall attendance, frequency of attendees, use of individual digital tools, formal evaluation of visitor feedback

## Questions to Consider and Discuss

- What are the main current strategies and efforts that pre-occupy your organization?
- How can digital media staff and tools accelerate your efforts?
- Which digital metrics should stand beside other organizational measures to inform your initial and ongoing choices? What are the most important things to measure, and why?

## THEME TWO

# Build Capabilities Not Projects

Organizations report that the majority of funding for digital initiatives has come from project grants. But these organizations have come to understand that what they need are new long-term capabilities, not merely a series of new projects.

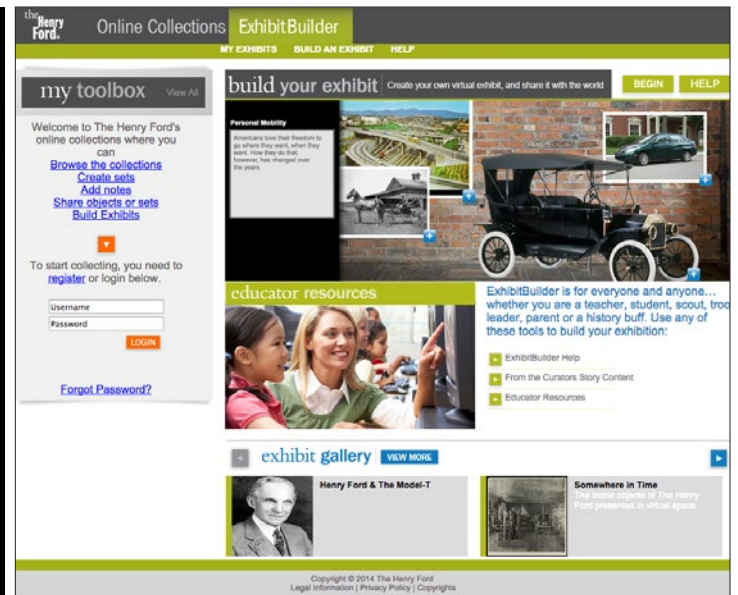
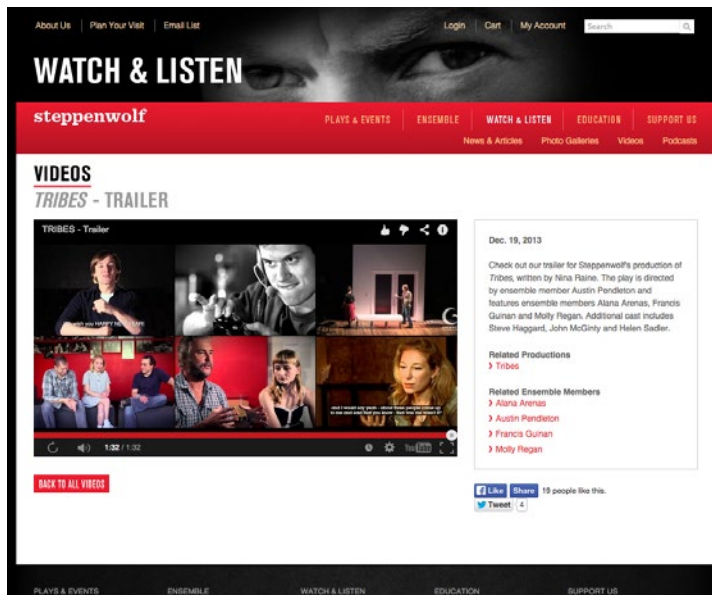
## Takeaway:

- Leaders are building capabilities not just “doing projects”
- Projects are designed with learning in mind
- Grantmaking practices with a project orientation can make capacity-building more difficult
- Sustaining capabilities post-project often comes from expense reduction in other areas

So they’re designing projects that build toward capabilities, that offer opportunities to test and refine new ideas, and that foster new relationships with partners and audiences. Their advice to funders and other trustee and staff leaders is to avoid the “cool projects and shiny toys” orientation that new technologies can encourage. What’s needed instead is a long-term capabilities mindset in a short-term project environment.

Many of our study organizations mapped an overarching digital strategy and the necessary organizational structure, and then sought project grants that could provide building blocks toward their long-term goals. But even organizations that did not map out strategy and long-term goals in detail have learned to build projects prudently. Here are two examples.

Digital audiences want access to the deep asset collections of legacy institutions. Institutions are working to digitize assets, to make them accessible to see and share, and in some instances to preserve them. Performing arts organizations have archived videotaped and audiotaped performances that exist on fragile and deteriorating tape that needs to be converted to more durable storage platforms. Museums own tens of thousands of objects they want to document and make searchable for internal and external use via databases. However, grants of sufficient size to digitize an entire asset collection are unrealistic, given the scope of these organizations’ holdings.



If constructed as “fail fast” experiments for testing new ideas, projects can help inform stronger long-term capabilities. The key is to design projects with learning front and center.

Much more likely is fund-raising for specific aspects of a collection such as works by specific artists or eras, or specific subject matter. Still, organizations need to create the over-arching digitization plan and design the overall system architecture for the databases in which assets are catalogued and managed. Project grants build toward the larger goal.

Left: Steppenwolf Theatre's staff includes a full-time digital content producer who creates video for many different projects and audiences.

Right: The Henry Ford offers audiences the ability to assemble their own custom exhibitions on-line, then save and share them. This is one of many capabilities possible because of the digitized collection.



Photo by Erik Tomasson



Photo by Olivia Ramsay

Above: By expanding its social media following and understanding who is in its fan base, the SF Ballet is learning to identify and engage global fans, convert regional fans to ticket buyers, and activate both local and global fans to support the organization.

Right: The Exploratorium is learning more about live webcasting to millions of simultaneous users, often in partnership with third-party partners and media organizations. Partnerships deepen content and expand reach, like one with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that brings undersea and other explorations to the Exploratorium's global online audiences.

Another example. Organizations need capable, experienced web developers, producers, and designers. Hiring these staff on only a project basis would make it difficult to build the capabilities they need for the long term.

Managers say they've looked for curious generalists, not specialists, when hiring for project leads. Even when projects require deep subject expertise, organizations often hire short-term contractors or temporary staff for specific content development and permanent workers with broader background and experience for overall development and management. Frequently, these generalists are coming from non-arts disciplines with skills developed in industry, education, and government.

One benefit of organizing work as projects is that they provide a useful construct for "fail-fast" experiments and for testing ideas. Our study organizations take a learning approach to projects to see what works. In doing so they seek to improve audience response, test new technical or interactive systems, explore new delivery channels, and identify fresh ways to bring the artistic development process to audiences. When projects are carefully designed and robust evaluation is in place, they can lead to significantly greater internal efficiencies and more involved audiences.





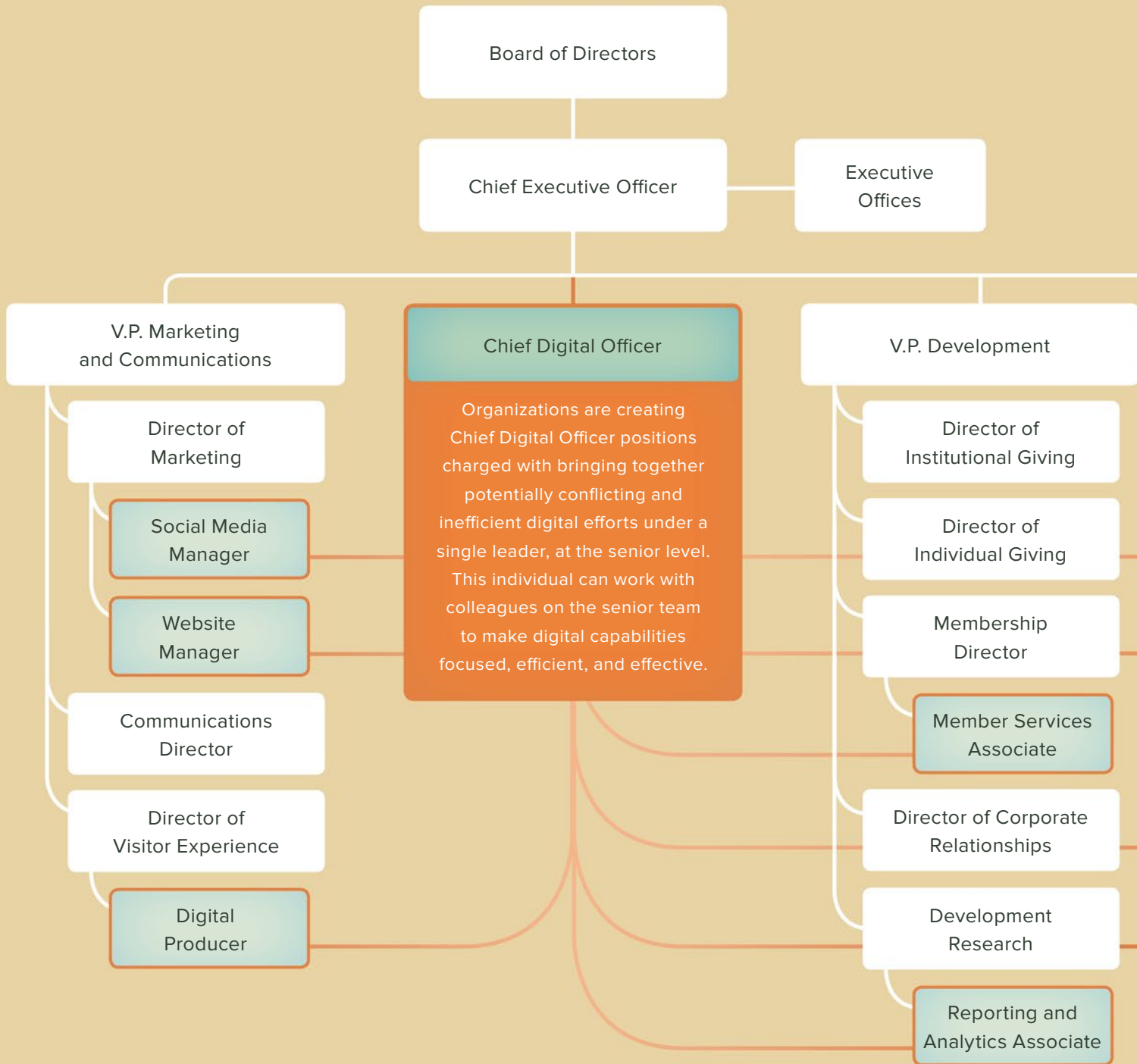
Once project funding lapses, organizations work to sustain their digital functions in a variety of ways. For example, cost shifting away from the traditional marketing expenses detailed below is not negatively affecting attendance and participation in these organizations.

Examples:

- Spend less on print display advertising
- Spend less on radio and TV spots
- Use direct mail less frequently
- Save transactional costs by using email for gift solicitation, thank yous, ticketing, and other transactions
- Train staff in digital production and disperse responsibility across departments
- Raise endowment funds specifically for digital
- Use crowd-funding or other digital donation mechanisms to fund digital projects
- Prioritize digital capabilities when operating budgets grow incrementally

## Questions to Consider and Discuss

- What long-term capabilities do you need in order to make full and creative use of digital tools and channels?
- How will you sequence the process of building these capabilities?
- What projects can you design that will speed up learning?

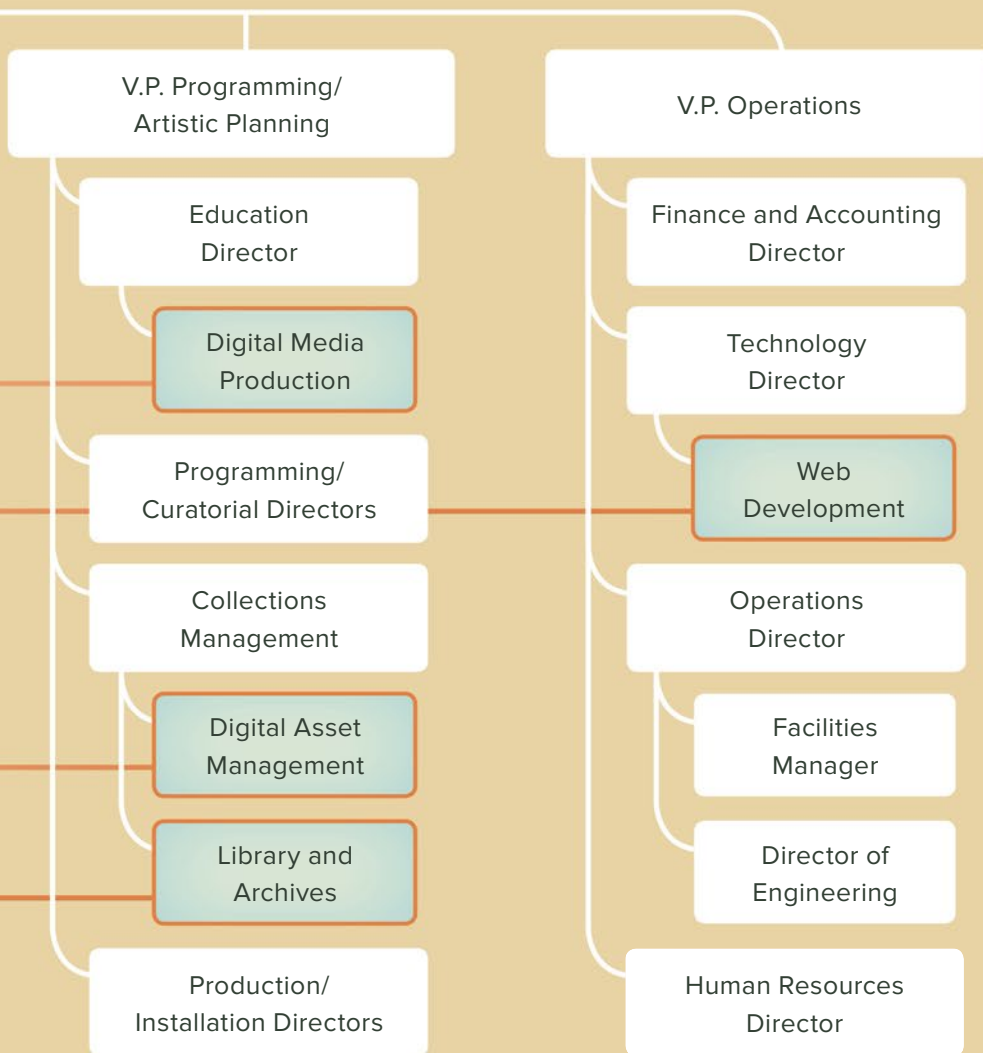


Here is a hypothetical organizational chart showing the ways digital expertise is distributed across organizations. This is a sample organizational chart, broadly representative of cultural institutions, and showing that digital team members often have dual reporting relationships.

## THEME THREE

# Shake Up the Org Chart

Organizational design requires that structure follow strategy. As organizations test, learn, and iterate digitally, their strategy evolves, and structure changes. Every organization we visited has taken an iterative approach to its hierarchies, job descriptions, and departmental responsibilities.



## Takeaways:

- Organizational structure is in flux as institutions search for efficient ways to organize around digital
- Chief Digital Officer positions are increasingly common
- A flexible organizational chart in an established enterprise is challenging to manage

Digital started as an isolated effort but we realize now that good content production involves everyone.

David Hawkanson, Executive Director, Steppenwolf Theatre

After a long period of stability in the ways organizations described jobs and prerequisites, they have now turned these functions and many others on their heads. Interns teach executives. Marketers create program content. Program staffers and artists have become marketers. CEOs are pouring over the literature on innovation to come up with examples and ideas from outside the arts sector.

Digital initiatives in our study organizations frequently started out within specific departments. For example, the Programming Department at the Exploratorium is principally responsible for the webcast, blogging, and contextual information around scientific expeditions. Marketing led the development of social media channels at the San Francisco Ballet.

The Education Department led the immersive projects of the Philharmonia Orchestra.

But these once silo-ed departments came to recognize that their initiatives required collaboration across departments. As one example, social media channels are built around

rich content and therefore need collaboration with artists and programming and curatorial leaders. The curatorial department's major digitization effort requires working alongside IT. Marketing can bring audience insight into the ways curators and programmers tag and describe digitized artworks.

Chances are someone in your organization already knows how to do a lot of what's needed, but they aren't in a position to do it. Find them.

Richard Slaney, former head of digital, Philharmonia Orchestra



The search for “the right structure” is the single most common dilemma identified by our study organizations. Digital responsibilities, including responsibility for channel development, user experience, and content development and management, are increasingly led by a single position. Increasingly, one executive with a powerful title—“Head of Digital” or “Chief Digital Officer”—reports directly to the CEO or COO. In the performing arts, digital is often but not always housed in the marketing department. (Philharmonia’s Director of Digital position is part of the senior management team.) Organizations differ in their perspectives on whether a Head of Digital also should lead IT. Structure is constantly debated, and is rapidly changing.

Part of my job is to help people realize just how much we have to change in order to do this work.

Thomas Weitz, Senior Manager,  
Digital Marketing, San Francisco Ballet

As the museum’s digital work has evolved, my role has shifted to its current position. Now I report to the Museum’s Director as CIO. This is the best place to support the implementation of his vision and to continue to break new ground in pursuit of our mission.

Jane Alexander, CIO, Cleveland Museum of Art

Multiple staff re-organizations over a relatively short period of time are a management challenge for our study organizations. Leadership teams say they need to communicate constantly and widely, to persuade employees to understand and buy into strategy, and sometimes to give up responsibilities or take on more. It takes time to explain and move along these changes, and many leaders say more changes are coming.

## Questions to Consider and Discuss

- What does your digital staff need in order to be an effective strategic partner across the organization?
- What roadblocks prevent the digital staff from moving as quickly as possible?
- How are senior managers learning to become digitally fluent?
- What talent already exists in the organization that is not being tapped?

### 1 Kansas City Public Library

Shift: Not optimized for audience usability and needed restructuring, the Kansas City Public Library decided to reorganize its assets and collections under a single digital branch manager assigned to oversee all digital channels and improve users' experiences.



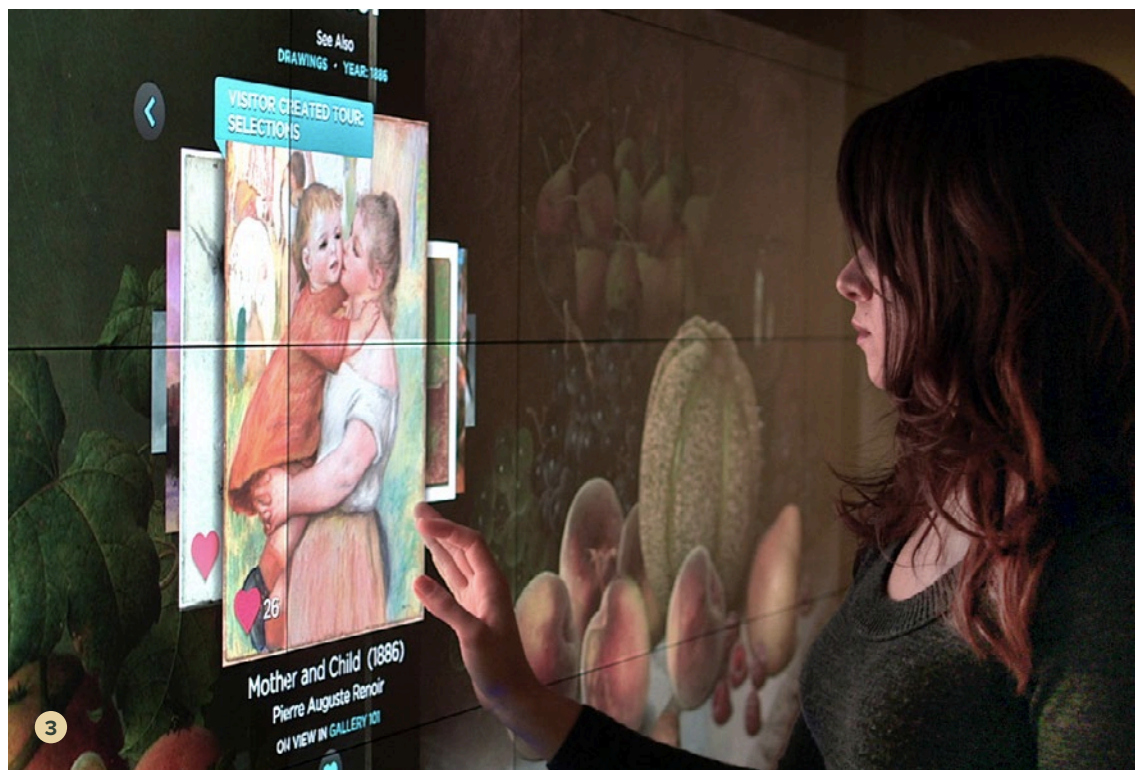
### 2 The Henry Ford

Shift: Realizing that its digital assets were organized along the same lines as its physical plant, The Henry Ford recently re-vamped its website and underlying content, and re-launched as a series of digital channels that ignore its five physical properties. Then the Museum re-organized its staff from the top, creating a position to lead the digital audience experience.



### 3 Cleveland Museum of Art

Shift: After research showed that visitors wander through its premises, not following prescribed sequences and tours, the museum built its digital collections and interactives to support non-linear exploration. Visitors can create and save their own tours, search the collection by shape or medium, and otherwise choose the way they search and sort the collection (via artist, era, geography).





THEME FOUR

# Audiences First

The audience is driving the urgency for organizations to develop fluency and capability in digital media. To compete successfully for people's attention, organizations need to be present and responsive when and where the public expects them to be (in other words, all the time, and from any device).

If anything, an extra burden of expectation rests on established institutions: they're perceived as major enterprises. They engage with hundreds of thousands of visitors. The same people who bank online, travel with online tickets and boarding passes, shop online, communicate online, and keep track of their fitness online expect to be able to engage with arts organizations and artists online. It's as simple—and as complicated—as that.

Once they're present in interactive media, organizations learn just how readily audiences will talk back and participate. Audiences have a voice and they use it, contributing actively through social media channels, making comments on blogs, and providing content for audience-driven platforms when invited. But it doesn't take the organizations being present for there to be a conversation. People are happy to talk amongst themselves about all kinds of products and experiences. Third parties like Yelp, Twitter, and TripAdvisor aggregate conversations and ratings to make them easy to find and join. Arts organizations are more or less tuned in to these conversations, based on how welcoming they are to engagement and how widely they seek it out. Looked yourself up on Yelp lately? Searched for yourself on Twitter? Googled yourself?

There can be enormous tension when legacy arts organizations open up to hear the conversation that is already taking place, and even more tension as they bring the audience conversation inside and listen to it. Legacy institutions

## Takeaways:

- Audience expectations are driving the urgency for digital fluency
- Digital platforms provide tools for organizations to be participatory from concept to final presentation of artistic programming
- Not all institutions can feed the audience appetite for digital artistic programming due to rights and work rule restrictions
- Organizations are working to change rights and contracts that inhibit digital sharing



Photo by Dominic M. Mercier / Opera Philadelphia

Thousands gather to experience a free outdoor video transmission of the opening night performance of Opera Philadelphia's season. Opera on the Mall is held each fall on Independence Mall, and is a free, but ticketed, event.

are accustomed to being regarded as the authoritative experts in their fields; their orientation to the audience has reflected an us-to-you, one-to-many connection. This is reflected in the physical plant – usually set apart as a refuge or shrine to art. There is a single way in. Information is delivered in linear formats like tours, program books and catalogues. Even a play or symphonic program is a curated, linear experience. The tone and content of interpretive materials is often academic and rarely conversational. “We” provide experiences for “you.”



Digital disrupts the linear story line and subverts authority. Audiences “enter” from anywhere (usually via search engines), bounce off or stay immersed based on their own interests. They choose experiences that are neither sequential nor orderly, and are as likely to sample as to stay for the whole show. The tone of social media is vernacular and immediate. Fun is definitely allowed.

And major cultural institutions can fall flat. Their isolated and scholarly disposition can lead them to resist real-time participation in a continuous digital conversation. These organizations also are not structured to provide the behind-the-scenes and work-in-progress engagement that audiences expect. They are hampered by union contracts, entrenched work processes, multiple sign-offs for approval of public content, and lack of staff to connect and interact with digital audiences.

But the shift to the participatory organization is here, it’s real. This has consequences for legacy cultural institutions that parallel the changes affecting other sectors. Transparency is paramount as the public searches for information and increasingly expects to find it. Audiences demand discussion of management practices—witness the social media campaigns in the recent labor negotiations at the Metropolitan Opera. And the public now simply expects major institutions to have a seamless and lively presence on digital channels. We may rarely go inside a bank, yet nearly all of us use banks. Why should the public think about arts participation any differently?

Many of our study organizations are keenly aware of the ways they’re unprepared to engage fully outside their physical spaces, and are working to evolve as quickly as they can.

## Questions to Consider and Discuss

- Who are the audiences for your digital media channels and how are you organized to engage with them at Internet speed?
- What information is shared with senior leaders and the governing board based on ideas and preferences coming from digital audiences?
- How can the audience become an active partner in the enterprise? What platforms and projects can you create that allow the public’s fullest participation?

## THEME FIVE

# Toward New Business Models

Increasingly, the organizations of our time are social organizations, sharing organizations, and participatory organizations, and this opening up of businesses and nonprofits has emerged because of the public's ability to search for and share information of all kinds.

## Takeaways:

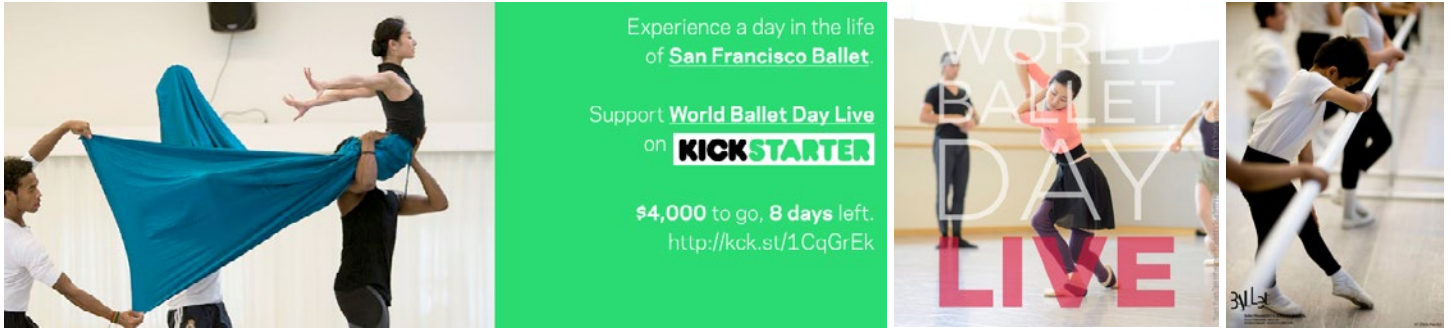
- Organizations are actively experimenting with new business models
- For now, revenue from new models remains small relative to the flows generated by traditional models
- Experimentation is needed because traditional revenue sources are eroding

Consumption has become collaboration: we share, celebrate, and assess what we see, do, and think with friends and strangers alike. Large businesses—Twitter, Etsy, and AirBnB, and others—have quickly emerged with “product as platform” business models built on the assumption that the public will participate if the right tools are in place and easy to use.

Legacy institutions have the potential to become lively players in this environment. They have rich repositories of artistic content and deep relationships with living artists to share, and they achieve a scale—in terms of physical audience reach—that dwarfs smaller cultural nonprofits and many businesses.

Our study organizations increasingly understand what's required to survive and prosper in the parallel universe that is virtual, not physical. Yet more often than not they express concern about what they are not yet able to do, not pride in what they've achieved. To them, the gap between their current work and their full potential feels large.

One reason may be that there is as yet no established pathway to revenue from digital media for these income-hungry, high fixed-cost organizations. In fact no clear business model so far shows a solid return on investment for supporting digital-only operation. Meanwhile, the legacy cultural sector in



the U.S. still relies on what one of our study organizations called “the tyranny of the purchase funnel.” By that he means that the dominant logic of the sector is based on the user’s progression from awareness to sampling, then on to occasional and eventually loyal user, committed contributor, and finally, to the legacy bequest. This patron development pipeline is in the mind of nearly everyone at a legacy institution because it has been the proven route to revenue.

The San Francisco Ballet used Kickstarter to raise more than \$35,000 to fund its role in World Ballet Day, a digital campaign for digital audiences. Shown here are images from the Ballet’s digital campaign on Facebook and other social media.

But digital is the new frontier, the Wild West. Legacy enterprises are vulnerable to new entrants who are digitally nimble, lean, and responsive. It’s an unruly and unpredictable environment where major players, new and old, lose major money. So why invest? And why not invest cautiously? Why risk effort that could be put toward the known, and use it for the unknown? The

Many organizations have made room for sponsor messaging and advertising through banner ads on websites, and sponsor logos and content in e-mail marketing materials.



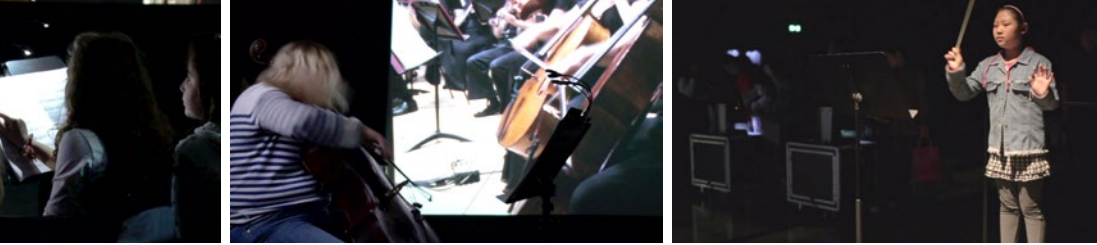
The Philharmonia Orchestra's media installations have both provided new avenues of community engagement in home and touring locations and opened new routes to sponsorship and other funding.

answer lies in the shift that's occurring in the broader culture and economy. Traditional revenue sources for legacy enterprises are eroding as the public's consumption habits change. The middle class is getting smaller, resulting in a smaller pool of the audiences legacy institutions have relied on for attendance, membership, and contributions. The population is far more diverse racially and socio-economically than the primary audiences for our study organizations. And competition for time and attention is fierce, with endless entertainment options available on the device in your pocket, and much of it is free. Experiments with programming for new audiences, and the exploration of new revenue and untested business models, are necessary and urgent.

Realizing its audience flecks to digital artistic content, Opera Philadelphia is exploring ways to work with local performing arts unions and technologists to allow new behind-the-scenes and work-in-progress content to reach audiences.

Fortunately, business model innovation is actively underway in some of our study organizations. Those in the vanguard are attracting wholly new audiences from more diverse demographics, particularly young adult





## The Henry Ford earns revenue through partnerships that provide their syndicated content to third party websites hungry for material.

audiences. Some are succeeding with entirely new revenue sources. They're testing new revenue propositions, and seeing that digital audiences and revenue follow a different dominant logic, more closely parallel to non-profit media organizations than to traditional cultural institutions.

Many thousands of additional patrons can be engaged and served digitally rather than physically. Our study organizations see that they can deliver substantive programs to mediated audiences, and that it is important to do so from a mission perspective. Digital becomes not merely a toolset readied and honed for marketing purposes (feeding the purchase funnel) but also a vast programming channel and set of creative tools, wide open for discovery. By thinking like media organizations from both a programming and a business model perspective, leading innovators are finding new ways to deliver their mission of wonder, awe, delight and inspiration to larger audiences.

### Questions to Consider and Discuss

- How widely are you reading in the innovation literature to stay abreast of industry, technology, and audience trends?
- Who on your staff is well versed in digital revenue patterns, trends, and possibilities?
- What revenue tests are you exploring?
- Which start-up organizations in the social sector are earning or attracting revenue for digital that could be examples for you?
- Does your governing board have members who can be helpful in this effort?

## CONCLUSION

# Change Matters

This report has focused on the organizational development and capacity building efforts of legacy organizations in digital media without yet touching on the subject of art itself. But legacy institutions face one overarching imperative: to create a platform for living artists and the art of our time, and to find the resonances that connect the old with the new. In doing so these institutions foster art itself.

In this realm digital fluency becomes even more necessary. Artists today can seek and engage the public on their own terms and in their own ways through digital media channels, and many do so adroitly. Artists also are using media to create new work in all arts disciplines, incorporating digital imagery, film, recorded music, and all manner of multi-media in genre-defying projects. Without the capabilities to join with and support living artists in the ways they currently work, legacy institutions risk becoming undesirable partners in the significant bodies of work created in our time. They risk losing relevance not only with audiences, but also with artists and artmaking.

Herein lies the responsibility for change, which is required for relevance. To be relevant means to make connections to the world around us, as it exists today and not as it used to be. Meaning is created in a contemporary context. Relegating legacy institutions to cloistered programming that serves aging and mainly wealthy audiences is not a prescription for survival. Look closely and you will find leading innovators working to bring the world inside their institutions, and to pursue renewed relevance to their communities.

Above all, our research demonstrates the value of curious, capable, and courageous leadership. Our study organizations are led by impressive individuals and high functioning teams. They're full of remarkable people committed to learning and change. Innovative organizations are able to excel because their leaders have the vision to move their institutions forward.

# Further Reading

Among the many news articles, evaluations and reports on digital media, here are ten we found especially helpful. Many more links and references are available on the website that accompanies this report.

- 1 Foundation Center, *Growth in Foundation Support for Media in the United States*, November 2013  
[foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/mediafunding\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/mediafunding_report_2013.pdf)
- 2 Media Impact Funders, *Molto + Media: Digital Culture Funding*, November 2013  
[mediaimpactfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Digital\\_Culture\\_Funding\\_Report.pdf](http://mediaimpactfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Digital_Culture_Funding_Report.pdf)
- 3 Nesta, Digital R and D Fund for Arts and Culture, *Case Studies from the Pilot*, July 2013  
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Author:  
Sarah Lutman,  
Lutman & Associates

Report & Website Design:  
Andee Mazzocco,  
Whole-Brained Design

Website Development:  
I-SITE

Research Assistant:  
Jessica Fiala

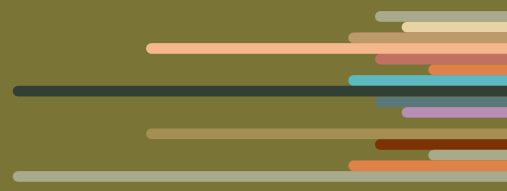
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Wyncote Foundation

1717 Arch Street, Suite 1430

Philadelphia, PA 19103

[www.wyncotefoundation.org](http://www.wyncotefoundation.org)