

Technology and the Arts

Technology is omnipresent and expanding daily. It can be a valuable tool for arts creation, as well as for organizational administration and development. It is in individual artists' and arts organizations' best interests to stay current and understand the capabilities and benefits that technology can bring them. Yet the arts have been behind the technological curve. According to one survey, approximately 13% of arts organizations were without websites of any type as recently as 2003, and an astounding 75% had no strategic plan for the role of technology within their organization.¹ Individual artists seeking to create and distribute their work have much to gain from technology, as well, but anecdotal evidence suggests a "digital divide" may exist based on economic, educational, genre-based, age, ethnic, and/or geographic lines. Likewise, an "organizational divide" appears to exist between arts organizations, based in part on size, finances, sophistication, and/or artistic genre.

The objectives and strategies outlined below have been developed with one mission in mind: to expand the capacities of creative people. The strategies are intended to suggest actions that can positively impact the availability, accessibility, and training for technology. All support both the creation and presentation of art by artists and the building of audiences.

The Goal: *To achieve technological competence and access for artists and arts organizations.*

The Top Three Objectives

1. Provide a technological framework for individual artists that supports both their creative work, and distribution of that work.
2. Increase the technical capacity of arts organizations.
3. Develop technological resources for artists and arts organizations.

Achieving These Objectives

As a first step toward addressing their goal, the Technology Working Group recommends that a statewide assessment and survey of best practices be undertaken to establish a baseline for New Jersey artists and arts organizations. In addition, a "Help Desk" should be established by hiring a person or company, or by identifying a corporate partner who will staff a statewide "Advocacy/Help"

technology center. A “Help Desk” has the potential to become an invaluable resource for information sharing and training – I.e., supporting other strategies.

Equally important: establishing an Advisory Council that includes artists, arts organizations, corporations, businesses, foundations, staff to coordinate the technology and the arts efforts (i.e., the “Help Desk”), a liaison with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and technology experts. The Council can provide invaluable information about how to develop the technological capacity for individual artists and arts organizations. It can also serve as a key advocate for this technology initiative throughout the State.

Advocacy will be crucial to meet the goal. Arts Plan NJ should recognize and promote the value of technology, both for individual artists and for arts organizations – recognizing that advocating technology in the arts is the first step in raising the level of technological literacy for all.

ⁱ Arts and Business Council of Greater Philadelphia survey, 2003