



Beyond Economic Impact Studies

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Economic impact studies can be an important tool for arts advocates and have been effective in convincing some policymakers and community members about the value of arts and culture as an industry and employer. However, after some 25 years of economic impact arguments on behalf of the arts, a number of individuals and organizations are exploring new arguments for the arts, including making a case for the arts that includes measured and quantified intrinsic value. What are some of these new arguments? What is meant by the intrinsic value of the arts?

In 2009 WESTAF, the Western States Arts Federation, convened a symposium entitled [Engaging the Now: Arguments, Research, and New Environments for the Arts](#) at the Aspen Institute.

The sessions included presentations and discussion about constructing public-sector-focused messaging about the arts and strategies for making the case for public art funding, among other topics. Speakers included experts in the fields of communication theory, public policy, advocacy, messaging, economics, and popular culture. Advance proceedings from two sessions at the symposium are [now available on the WESTAF Web site](#) and provide thoughtful discourse of interest to anyone interested in strengthening the case that they make for the arts.

Expressive Lives and Creative Capital - Arts Advocates' Best Strategy?

[Bill Ivey's Demos Essay on Expressive Lives](#)

Bill Ivey's address at London-based think tank Demos is thought-provoking must read for arts advocates. In it Ivey

asserts that framing the arts as a pathway to enabling Americans' expressive lives is the best opportunity to create a strong platform from which to advance a public interest argument for government and private support of the arts.

[ArtsJournal's Online Conversation: Expressive Lives: Do we need a new framework for culture? \(January 25-29, 2010\)](#)

Alan Brown: "What gets measured is often what really matters, particularly in the eyes of dispassionate authorizers. All I know for sure is that we need a new outcome rubric for arts and culture, one that re-balances 'heritage' and 'voice,' and one that every community can buy into.

Seriously, maybe the moment is right now for an expressive revolution, given the tidal wave of interest in personal creative expression that is sweeping our country. But whenever I start talking with large budget producing organizations about making more connections to the inventive and interpretive modes of engagement, I get blank stares and hear an undertone of hostility about being taken 'off mission.'"

Read the full posting here: <http://www.artsjournal.com/expressive/author/alan-brown/>

[Assessing the Intrinsic Benefits of a Live Performance](#)

By Alan Brown, WolfBrown

Read how the study determined that intrinsic impacts such as captivation, social bonding, and intellectual stimulation can be measured, that different performances create different sets of impacts, and that higher levels of readiness-to-receive can be but are not always associated with higher levels of intrinsic impacts.

http://www.wolfbrown.com/mups_downloads/Impact_Study_Final_Version_Summary_Only.pdf

Alan Brown: "Increasingly, arts presenters are recasting themselves as catalysts of creativity in their communities, not just as presenters of touring artists."

[ArtsJournal Blog, January 27, 2010](#)

<http://www.artsjournal.com/expressive/author/alan-brown/>

All the economic studies, and all the economic arguments, can?t fix this

Diane Ragsdale, now pursuing a PhD. in cultural economics and formerly of the The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, blogs about the use of economic impact studies by the cultural sector, acknowledging their importance while raising important concerns in her **[new blog Jumper on Arts Journal](#)**.

We Need Better Arguments for the Arts

Greg Sandow in the Wall Street Journal urges the arts community to employ arguments about the intrinsic benefits of the arts in making the case for support.

Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts

Both the **[full report](#)** and a **[summary](#)** are available.

Full report: **http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG218.pdf**

Summary: **http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG218.sum.pdf**

This report by RAND for a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation argues that the intrinsic benefits of the arts—such as wonder, captivation, and meaning—lay the foundation for other benefits such as stronger social bonds and can lead to the development of empathy, understanding, and other qualities that have public value because they are desirable to communities and society. The report argues that an exclusive emphasis on instrumental benefits, such as economic impact, does not provide a sufficient basis for policy decisions about the arts.

*For some analysis of the validity and value of the arguments made in Gifts of the Muse, see pages 28-30 of the Wallace Foundation report, [Creating Public Value through State Arts Agencies](#) by Mark Moore and Gaylen Williams Moore

A Good Economist Knows the Value of the Arts

Economist John Kay argues against the fundamental approach of quantifying the economic value of the arts based on hard direct and indirect sales numbers, while at the same acknowledging the forces and impulse that had made economic impact studies of the arts a mainstay of arts advocacy.

"But bad economics has been allowed to drive out good." -- John Kay

Voices in Support of Economic Impact Arguments for the Arts

Julia Lowell, Economist and Consultant, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California ?

Remarks at WESTAF 2009 Cultural Policy Symposium

- Engaging the Now: Arguments, Research, and New Environments for the Arts

"We have to rely on economic arguments because they appeal to all the people who do not highly value the arts. We can persuade those people that the arts are worth supporting because the arts create jobs in their communities.

To answer the deeper question of why people in the United States do not value the arts, we have to look at children. People do not value the arts because they are not taught to value them from a young age. That problem dates back at least 150 years in the United States. If you do not get the kids, how are you going to get the grownups?"

Britain's New Cultural Capital Initiative Focuses on the Economic Benefits of the Arts in the UK

Cultural leaders such as Alan Davey, the chief executive of Arts Council England, and well-known artists such as Anish Kapoor and Damien Hirst are working to raise awareness of the economic impact of the arts in Great Britain.

www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/mar/25/uk-arts-cash-recession