

MONOGRAPHS

▾ Published Monthly for Members

▾ Volume 4, Number 6

▾ July 1995

MARKETING AND LAAS: REACHING YOUR COMMUNITY'S UNTAPPED AUDIENCE

Written by Arthur Greenberg, AMS Planning & Research

Edited by Jennifer Neiman, Communications Coordinator, NALAA

INTRODUCTION

Steady trends in arts funding and consumer marketing point to a growing need for arts organizations, large and small, to make increasing earned income a top priority. As private philanthropy shifts its focus to education and social services, government funding dwindles, and the consumer marketplace is increasingly crowded with entertainment options and high-tech innovations, it is more crucial than ever for cultural organizations to be competitive by understanding state-of-the-art consumer marketing methods.

*"The arts are increasingly forced to compete with other community needs for dwindling sources of government funding. . . . when constituencies demand more police protection, street improvements, and efficient governments, the arguments in favor of public arts funding grow more difficult."*

Without a specific "product" to market, such as a season of performing arts events, a gallery exhibit, or arts festival, some local arts agencies may view marketing as the exclusive domain of presenting and producing organizations, and limit their involvement to the occasional technical assistance workshop or, in some cases, a cooperative advertising program. It is the intent of this issue of *Monographs* to explore a variety of ways in which local arts agencies can provide a valuable service to their communities and arts organization constituents by becoming more active in the sometimes overwhelming world of "marketing."

Marketing in the '90s

The arts are increasingly forced to compete with other community needs for dwindling sources of government funding. A great majority of LAA directors and board members have become quite familiar with advocacy approaches that promote arts and cultural programs as critical to a community's quality of life, for their economic impact, or for their contributions to helping solve social problems. But when constituencies demand more police protection, street improvements, and efficient governments, the arguments in favor of public arts funding grow more difficult.

In the private funding world as well, private and community foundations are faced with growing demands to replace public sector funding of health care, social services, environment and education, sometimes at the expense of cultural program funding. Corporations themselves, if they haven't already, are re-evaluating the mix of philanthropic contributions and marketing expenses, and turning to solutions such as sponsorships which offer the best corporate identity and "brand image." While in some cases a particular arts audience matches



MONOGRAPHS is one of the benefits of membership in the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, mailed monthly to all members. To discuss ideas for submission, contact Deborah Wolfer Bissen, Publications Coordinator, NALAA, 927 15th Street N.W., 12th Floor, Washington, DC 20005-2304, Phone 202.371.2830. Editing and Design: Deborah Wolfer Bissen.

a company's target market (Mercedes and the Chicago Symphony, for instance), a large segment of small, mid-sized, and multicultural arts groups may find it difficult to tap corporate marketing dollars as funding sources for programs which may have relatively small audience bases.

"... broadcasting has become 'narrow-casting,' direct mail houses can pinpoint ZIP+4 groups by lifestyle, and cash registers in grocery stores print coupons for competing brands based on customer purchases."

Meanwhile, out in the "real world" of products and customers, consumer marketing is growing more sophisticated as new technologies allow for more efficient targeting: Broadcast- ing has become "narrow-casting," direct mail houses can pinpoint ZIP+4 groups by lifestyle, and cash registers in grocery stores print coupons for competing brands based on customer purchases. All indications in the industry point to the continuance of these trends as the information superhighway comes to a computer or home-shopping channel near you.

What it all means for the arts is that the old ratios of earned to contributed income will be forced to shift and new audiences, our "paying customers," are even more essential if cultural organizations are to compete effectively in the marketplace. Cultural groups must take advantage of new technologies, understand their "niche" in the marketplace, and respond with better research techniques, greater understanding of consumer preferences, targeted marketing efforts, cooperative networks, and other marketing innovations.

### *Marketing and Local Arts Agencies*

According to NALAA's Local Arts Agency Facts (*Monographs*, November 1994), 93 percent of LAAs provide information services in their communities and more than three-quarters are engaged in offering some form of technical assistance services to artists and arts organizations in their communities. Most often, the type of marketing technical assistance offered to arts organizations consists of workshops, sometimes followed by one-on-one consultancies. In some cases, LAAs may operate central arts "hotlines," and many publish newsletters, directories, or central calendars of events.

Needs assessments conducted by LAAs in selected large cities and smaller towns almost always reveal two chief concerns among constituent organizations for technical assistance services: Fundraising and Marketing. There are, increasingly, new areas of marketing technical assistance in which LAAs can get involved and provide a valuable service to their local communities and constituent arts groups. Some of these areas include cooperative research projects, collaborative advertising and outreach programs, mailing list exchanges, and marketing networks.

### *Some Quick Definitions*

What do we mean when we say "marketing?" The traditional text book definition refers to the "Four Ps" of Price, Product, Promotion, and Place. A widely-read handbook for nonprofit, low-budget marketing (Jay Conrad Levinson's *Guerrilla Marketing*) says marketing is at least

100 different methods, with paid advertising, public relations, billboards, and coupons representing just four elements of the long list. One important arts marketing guide (*Waiting in the Wings* by Morrison & Dalglish) refers often to the acronym "SELL," or "Strategies to Encourage Lifelong Learning," and discusses the role of "point-of-entry events" and arts education, for children and adults, as critical tools in developing new audiences.

*"Receptionists, office managers, and box office staff are, in consumer parlance, the first contacts a customer has with an organization."*

For the purposes of this publication, we'll settle on a definition of marketing that entails much more than Sunday newspaper advertisements, press releases, posters, brochures, and flyers. Let's agree on a broader definition which explores how direct mail and advertising are complemented by promotions (a world of creative methods to get "butts in seats") and, especially, outreach. And let's not forget how business cards, letterhead, even answering machine tapes can also play a role in developing audiences.

## ■ CONSTITUENCIES

It can be helpful at first to think about how local arts agencies interface with their communities, and the respective marketing needs of the public at large, special target audience segments, as well as large and small cultural groups.

### *Locals and the Community*

The Arts Council. The Cultural Commission. Often a central place to seek information on leisure-time cultural activities. "Looking for something to do this weekend, why not call the arts hotline and find out what the Acme Theater Company is up to." Audiences, sometimes known as consumers, want information to make informed decisions. The most traditional method of disseminating that information is the arts calendar or newsletter, a vehicle which most often "preaches to the converted." Sure, if I've heard of the Urban Bush Women or Garth Fagan Dance Company, and I know they're in town, I might choose to go. But to the largest segment of the public, sometimes more than 80 percent of a community's population who do not regularly attend arts and cultural events, providing information needs to go further.

Several theater companies participating in a national foundation's audience development funding initiative have recognized the importance of having "front-line" staff and personnel trained to add an extra dimension to the weekend's calendar listings. Receptionists, office managers, and box office staff are, in consumer parlance, the first contacts a customer has with an organization. When Josephine Public gets an idea for a special night out, she may want a bit more information: "Will this modern dance concert be offensive? Might it bore my new boyfriend?" Local arts agency staff and volunteers can provide a valuable public service by being informed and becoming familiar with a community's arts and cultural offerings. Providing that front-line information (is it easy to park? do they serve refreshments? is there child care or a coat room?) is a valuable public service, and a logical extension of a local arts agency's role as central coordinating entity.

*Locals and Arts Organizations*

When it comes to the “product,” it’s the producing and presenting organizations, often the members of the local arts agency, to whom the LAA directly provides a service. Obviously, the artistic product, venue, and target audience vary greatly between the ballet’s annual *Nutcracker* and the avant-garde performance art presenter. What are the respective needs of the “biggies” and emerging cultural groups?

**"Majors"**

The major organizations, most often symphony orchestras, opera companies, ballet troupes, museums, and resident theaters, frequently employ staff in a marketing department, may print glossy season brochures, tend to have large mailing lists and, by most standards, healthy marketing budgets. They are quite distinct from small and mid-sized groups who generally don’t have marketing directors and, in many cases, don’t have budgets for marketing. (It is likely that for every “major” group there are at least four of the smaller type who are in real need of a LAA’s marketing services.)

LAA’s can provide marketing technical assistance to the majors as well, and in so doing can build bridges with the community’s largest cultural institutions. Majors may conduct audience or market research, but can get bigger “bang for the buck” by doing so as part of a cooperative research project. While they tend to maintain large mailing lists, they’re often interested in accessing new names and target audiences for special mailings. They may also be open to partnership opportunities with smaller groups for special marketing projects. In reality, even arts groups with the largest marketing budgets in town are always looking for ways to be more efficient and successful in their efforts, and LAA’s can help.

**Small and Mid-sized**

Clearly the small and mid-sized organizations are in most need of a LAA’s marketing technical assistance. Within this category are often found the culturally- and ethnically-specific groups, the community-based volunteer organizations, and the coalitions devoted to avocational pursuits like a local watercolor society. Their needs are more basic: From “how to write a press release and where to send it,” to “what should I do when I can’t afford to advertise?”

Local arts agencies can provide a full slate of services to these organizations who, in more cases than not, account for the majority of a community’s cultural ecology. Beginning with self-help workshops, progressing to one-on-one consultancies, and leading to participation in mailing list co-ops, cooperative advertising programs, and potential partnerships with major organizations, LAA’s can spearhead a methodical program of assistance and intervention to help smaller groups develop audiences, increase earned income, and, ultimately, become more self-reliant and successful.

■ **RESEARCH**

Local arts agencies should recognize the area of market research as one of the best ways to be of service to major, mid-sized and small organizations by spearheading and providing valuable information on current and potential audiences. Sometimes the cost of conducting research is prohibitive for smaller groups, and, in many cases, valuable dollars are reserved for printing and mailing. Research is often seen as an unnecessary expense. But the biggest, most successful U.S. companies, along with scores of arts and entertainment organizations, will attest to the importance of conducting research on their existing consumers and potential markets. Before setting out to attempt new marketing or audience development strategies, it is wise to have some answers to the components that will shape the Four Ps:

"... the biggest, most successful U.S. companies, along with scores of arts and entertainment organizations, will attest to the importance of conducting research on their existing consumers and potential markets."

- **POSITION (or PLACE):** What is the *image* of our organization in the marketplace? Who is our target audience? Do people consider us an alternative to movies or television? Do they think of our theater as a good family experience, a nice place to take a date, or a comfortable place to relax at the end of a long work week? Do people perceive us as a place where they "have to" dress up?
- **PRODUCT:** What type of "product" (which play, what season of events, which musical group, etc.) is appropriate for this marketplace?
- **PRICE:** What is a realistic price to charge for tickets that won't be seen as "too cheap to be good," or too expensive to prevent audiences from coming?
- **PROMOTION:** What different marketing methods will be most effective? If I can't afford advertising, can I rely more on mailings and outreach? If I'm going to advertise, which newspapers or radio stations will deliver the best target audience?

Some traditional research methods are described below along with some thoughts on how local arts agencies can be involved in these projects. (A recent NEA Research Division Report, *A Guide to Arts Participation Research*, explores these topics in depth.)

***Participation Studies***

**Market Survey**

A market study generally takes the form of a telephone survey of heads of households in a particular community or market area. A professional research firm or crew of volunteers is recruited to administer a 10- to 15-minute survey of a randomly-selected sample of the community. Questions revolve around people's current activities, awareness, interests, likelihood to participate in different events, sources of information, and so forth. The fact that the survey is administered to a random sample (usually 300-400 people) means its findings are projectable to the community at large (within an acceptable margin of error). If 20 percent of the survey respondents say they listen to a particular radio station during morning drive time, it can be inferred that their behavior represents that of the community as a whole.

*"The market survey is an ideal way for a local arts agency to find out the desires and opinions of its community with respect to a wide range of arts and cultural issues."*

The market survey is an ideal way for a local arts agency to find out the desires and opinions of its community with respect to a wide range of arts and cultural issues. It is the single best method to provide information on people who *don't* attend arts events, and to help answer questions about why they don't go. It is a method which allows for community-based cultural issues to be discussed: "Do you think it's important for children to have access to arts activities in school?" (results to be used in advocacy efforts with the school board), or, "Would you support a surcharge on your utility bill to support a new performing arts center?" (maybe a new funding source can be leveraged).

Local arts agencies can often enlist several community arts groups to participate in the research and share costs. Armed with information about why people don't attend, there are steps that can be taken to address these issues and develop new audiences. If people don't feel comfortable attending, maybe a "dress-down" night or special program like "Beethoven & Blue Jeans" is in order.

Locals can also work with Chambers of Commerce or Convention & Visitors Bureaus. By including some questions about cultural tourism (Where do you take visitors for a cultural experience?) or arts-related business (Where would you shop for a new poster or print?), these agencies may be willing to share costs. While market studies can be expensive (ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000), they serve as valuable sources of information about a community's arts participation patterns and attitudes with respect to arts and cultural issues.

**Intercept Surveys**

The intercept survey loses a degree of "randomness" or projectability, but can still get at a cross-section of a community, at least those who can be "intercepted" at specific points around town. The intercept survey can be self-administered (people fill out survey forms) or interviewer-administered (volunteer asks 5 to 10 minutes worth of questions from survey form). Interviewers would stake out spots outside grocery stores, movie theaters, parks, malls, airports, or other public gathering places and ask every fifth person (or fourth or sixth) they see to answer some questions or fill out a survey about arts and culture in the community.

Since results are not entirely projectable to a community it is not wise to base important decisions entirely on intercept survey results (i.e., maybe everyone who shops at Grocery Store "A" happens to listen to Radio Station "X" while the rest of the city doesn't). Still, survey information can be quite useful in program decisions if the sample is large enough. Sometimes a sponsor may even want to identify intercept sites based on the target audience that frequents them: We want to reach the "yuppie-cappuccino-drinking" crowd for our gallery walk, so we survey the cafes, book and music stores to learn more about that potential audience segment.

Local arts agencies can sponsor or co-sponsor intercept surveys in much the same fashion as a

market study: Spearheading the effort, working with other community partners, coordinating the participant arts groups, and including questions about Arts Council/Commission memberships, programs, identity, and so on.

### Audience Surveys

Audience surveys represent the best way to learn more about current audiences or visitors, an important piece of knowledge when developing marketing strategies. As consumer marketers will often advise, “spend 60 percent of your marketing budget reaching your current customers”; or, “every sale to a current customer should represent three sales: The initial purchase, a

follow-up purchase, and a recommendation to a friend” — the all important word-of-mouth!

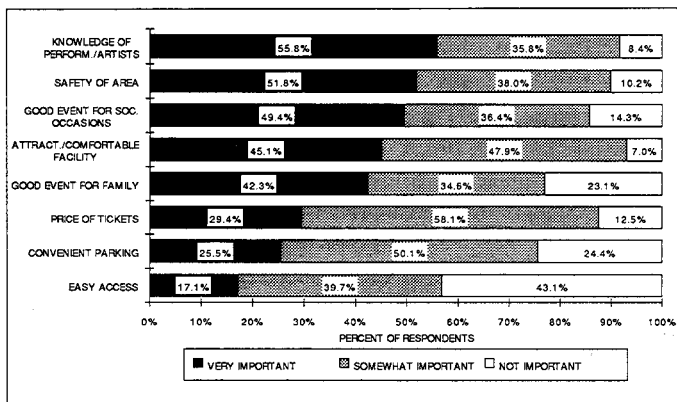
If we can learn more about our current audiences, patrons, and visitors, chances are we can find more people like them, learn how to reach them more efficiently, and gain a better understanding of their lifestyles, interests, and cultural consumption habits.

Audience surveys are generally inserted into programs or handed out by ushers. It helps to have little pencils (known

officially as golf pencils because of their utility in recording pars and bogeys on score cards) on hand. Also helpful to increase the rate of return (get more completed surveys back) is to have the house manager or usher make a stage announcement before the show or at intermission to encourage folks to fill out the forms. Many groups offer incentives as well: A drawing for a free pair of tickets to a future concert (or an around-the-world cruise), or a free cup of coffee at intermission for every completed questionnaire.

At museums or galleries, docents, guards, and “desk-watchers” can ask visitors to take a few moments in between exhibits to help the institution learn more about their patrons. Experience shows that arts participators, our audiences and patrons, are generally quite willing to help the institutions they patronize. Market researchers are often impressed by the willingness of cultural consumers to fill out questionnaires. Don’t fear asking — chances are your customers are willing to help.

Local arts agencies can be most helpful in coordinating multiple organizations in conducting audience surveys cooperatively: The theater company’s own audience survey results will be that much more interesting when compared with the folk dance troupe’s. LAAs can organize consortia of producing groups and save money on data processing: The more surveys that are tabulated, the less cost per tabulation. Final reports can be prepared for each participant individually, and for the community as a whole so groups can learn about their audiences in



An important audience survey question asks respondents to rate the importance of attributes when deciding to attend an event. In this community, “safety of the area” was rated very important suggesting that the arts council might arrange for private security guards or valet parking, and promote the safe environment in marketing materials.

relation to others, and about arts patrons in the community at large. If you're trying to reach new audiences and new segments (and who isn't), this information is invaluable.

*Focus Groups*

*"... the 'focus group' is a way to get more in-depth input on issues which may arise from telephone surveys and questionnaires. Focus groups offer a chance to ask why (a lot) and have people talk through their answers rather than fill in circles or talk to faceless telephone interviewers."*

The formal focus group is conducted in a specially-designed focus group facility, with a one-way mirror, a "client viewing area," tape and video recorders. Informally, they can consist of a group of members or subscribers gathered in a living room. Whatever the form, the "focus group" is a way to get more in-depth input on issues which may arise from telephone surveys and questionnaires. Focus groups offer a chance to ask *why* (a lot) and have people talk through their answers rather than fill in circles or talk to faceless telephone interviewers.

Focus groups are generally conducted with between six and 12 people representing a specific group: Lapsed subscribers, for instance, or non-attenders, young attenders, Hispanic non-attenders, new members, frequent visitors, infrequent older visitors, and so forth. Groups are chosen based on what marketing approaches you want to try or which segment represents the best potential to support an organization: "We want to do a focus group with Asian immigrants to find out if they'll support a special festival of touring dance and drama productions for the 2nd Annual Asian Fest, and to learn more about which groups to present," or, "as an Arts Council, we'll do a focus group with lapsed members to find out why they didn't renew, what new benefits we might offer, and what we can do better in the future."

Focus groups generally entail different modules:

- **Sources of Information** (detailed information on how people find out or don't find out about the arts)
- **Leisure Activities** (what else do people do besides the arts?)
- **Program Preferences** (what programs appeal? which do not? is there willingness to try new programs?)
- **Attitudes, Image, Identity** (do people like us? know about us? hate us? think we're elitist or accessible?)
- **Barriers** (what keeps them from coming, and what can we do about it?)
- **Incentives** (what can make them come at all or more often? what groups do they belong to that we can target for group sales?)
- **Creative** (do they like our brochure or calendar? is it readable or confusing?)

Again, local arts agencies can act as sponsoring organizations for constituent arts groups and/or learn more about their own programs and services to the public. Is our calendar effective in communicating its message? Would you consider joining the arts council if you received discount dinner coupons or a free oil change?



*Other Research Methods*

There are other survey methods such as mail-return questionnaires, but their utility is limited. A mail-return survey is generally stuffed into a regular mailing or mailed out to a special list (new members, for instance). The “self-selection” of respondents (i.e., only certain people choose to fill it out and return it) means that results may not be reflective of the sample.

*"One arts group in northern California counts wine versus beer bottles at outdoor picnic shows and notes varietal labels in the recycling bin (cheap stuff? good stuff? Chardonnay or Gewurtz?) to find out what type of patron they've attracted!"*

A show of hands at a performance is sometimes used to get information: “How many of you listen to KXXX?” But again, the results are not projectable and audiences don’t like feeling like they’re back in school (unless it’s a special school performance). One arts group in northern California counts wine versus beer bottles at outdoor picnic shows and notes varietal labels in the recycling bin (cheap stuff? good stuff? Chardonnay or Gewurtz?) to find out what type of patron they’ve attracted! You may come up with other ways of surveying your audience or community, and these can be useful depending on where you live and what resources are available.

*Designing the Surveys*

A word of caution: Don’t copy someone else’s audience, intercept, or other survey or focus group script until you know what questions you want answered. The largest pitfall of market research is not having an idea of how you’ll apply the results before conducting the survey itself.

Form a committee, include experts, and think long and hard about what you want to find out and what you’ll do when you have answers. Seek the necessary support and tools to help get the answers, and decide which survey methods are most appropriate. Then, brainstorm, pool your thoughts, and get on paper everything you always wanted to know about arts attenders or non-attenders. Decide if you can ask the question appropriately, and whether the answers will point you in any useful direction. When all this planning work is complete, you can design a survey that meets your needs; that provides meaningful data which can be applied to actual marketing tactics.

*Market Analysis (secondary research)*

Most market research, such as those methods described above, is categorized as “primary research”: The sponsoring agency is asking a set of questions whether by phone, in person, or through a survey. Secondary research refers to a set of existing information which can be used to further marketing goals. LAAs can often obtain a demographic snapshot of their city or region from the local Planning Department of Community Development Agency. Knowing who lives in the area (their ages, incomes, occupations, and so on) is often a first-step in deciding how you’ll reach them.

A richer kind of data, known as “geo-demographics” or lifestyle segmentation, can tell us

"Armed with a deeper level of understanding of a community's consumers profile allows a LAA to develop corporate sponsorships (i.e., our audience profile matches your corporation's target customer) and help reach audiences through "micro-targeting."

more about what people do during their leisure time, and what products they purchase. Armed with a deeper level of understanding of a community's consumers profile allows a LAA to develop corporate sponsorships (i.e., our audience profile matches your corporation's target customer) and help reach audiences through "micro-targeting." In other words, a special offer to increase membership or test an "arts passport" can be targeted to a certain type of consumer living within a certain ZIP+4 code.

**Research Partners**

As mentioned earlier, sometimes Chambers of Commerce or Convention & Visitors Bureaus can be partners in a coordinated research effort, either through funding or in-kind contributions of volunteers and/or expertise. Other likely research partners can be community foundations or other private funders. A good way to appeal to funders' interests is the "self-help" argument: Grantees can make better use of their funds if they have better information and tools to locate new audiences. Using foundation funds or in-kind support for research and marketing projects is a good way to demonstrate how contributed support can be used to leverage additional earned income.

Sometimes local colleges and universities can be helpful resources through their business schools, planning departments, and other programs. Graduate assistants or class projects are often willing to assist nonprofits with research projects and can even provide focus group facilities at no cost.

■ **MARKETING**

You're ready to embark on the business of marketing once the research is complete. Local arts agencies can play just as important a role in coordinating cooperative marketing efforts and providing marketing services to their constituents and the public as they can in research efforts. Below are some ideas on how LAAs can play a role in the marketing of arts and culture in a community.

**Workshops**

As NALAA's research indicates, close to 75 percent of LAAs provide some kind of technical assistance to their members. Most often taking the form of a workshop, arts and cultural organizations can always benefit from expert advice to develop or hone marketing skills. Some topics to be considered would be *Basic Arts Marketing*, *Advanced Arts Marketing* (research principles, trends in direct mail and promotions), *Public Relations* (press releases, PSAs, how to get features in different newspaper sections), *Meet the Press* (get to know the local arts and entertainment editors), *Direct Mail* (why, how,

In Faith Popcorn's trend-watching book *The Popcorn Report*, there are five trends for the '90s which have significant meaning for arts marketing: Does your local arts agency understand the impact of "Cocooning," "Fantasy Adventures," "Small Indulgences," "Down-Aging," or "Save Our Society"?

where), *Research* (how to design and use audience surveys), *Design on a Shoestring* (how to design and print exciting graphics with almost no money), and so on. Workshops can take the form of a lecture or be more interactive so participant groups can brainstorm collectively about cooperative solutions. Marketing experts from the local advertising agency can be a good resource but should also understand the realities of nonprofit budgets and the subtleties of selling cultural experiences rather than, for instance, shoelaces.

"Sometimes a community's

chapter of Public Relations

Society of America (PRSA) or

AdMark (Advertising &

Marketing Association) can

get involved as a public

service project; often for a

one-year period advertising

executives will provide

creative, media, and other

services at no cost to

nonprofit organizations."

*An Example:* The Multicultural Events Network in Denver, a coalition of close to 50 small and large weekend festivals, recently hosted a day-long marketing workshop to learn more about their market area (City of and Metro Denver), marketing methods, sponsorships, and cultural tourism opportunities. The Network was strengthened by the various possibilities for collaborative marketing that emerged from the session and the chance for participants to get to know each other better.

### ***Other Technical Assistance***

In addition to workshops, one-on-one and group consultancies offer local arts agencies another way to assist community-based arts organizations with marketing. Expert consultants are often utilized in this capacity to review past marketing plans and methods, evaluate and analyze resources, and make recommendations for new or different approaches.

Consultancies can be offered in conjunction with workshops (as a follow-up to the group session) or separately. Sometimes it can be helpful for a few groups to participate together: A consultant might review brochures and mailing lists of three culturally-specific theater companies, spend an hour individually with each group, and a half-day consultancy with the three together to develop cooperative marketing approaches.

*An Example:* The City of San Jose's Office of Cultural Affairs has produced the Performing Arts Summer Series for the last three years featuring 12 culturally-specific music and dance performances in a 500-seat downtown theater. Last year the city developed a consultancy program for the participant organizations in an effort to increase their advanced ticket sales capabilities and results. An initial workshop was held for all participants (staff and board members), and subsequent four-hour in-person and telephone meetings held with each participating group to check progress and develop other tactics. Overall ticket sales and advance tickets sold increased dramatically from previous levels.

### ***Marketing Networks***

Often referred to as Roundtables or Committees, an Arts Marketing Network represents an opportunity to bring together cultural groups with common goals and link them with advertising, marketing, and public relations experts in the community. This forum offers an ideal approach to developing cooperative programs. Monthly or other regular meetings are held, marketing plans and mailing lists shared, research pursued in a coordinated fashion, and joint

*"One way in which LAAs can help is to facilitate a cooperative advertising project serving as media buyer and broker. The arts agency might arrange for a long-term contract with the paper for, say, a 1 x 5 inch strip every Thursday and Friday over the course of six months or a year. The LAA then provides groups the chance to list cultural events at a rate below the standard advertising because of the long-term commitment."*

advertising or radio buys facilitated. Sometimes a community's chapter of Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) or AdMark (Advertising & Marketing Association) can get involved as a public service project; often for a one-year period advertising executives will provide creative, media, and other services at no cost to nonprofit organizations. A Marketing Roundtable or Network can provide an important pathway to these connections and facilitate joint marketing efforts. Local arts agencies have an ideal opportunity to facilitate these linkages through convening and coordinating the Marketing Committee.

*An Example:* The City of Oakland's Arts Marketing Advisory Committee was established as a result of the City's Strategic Plan for Cultural Development. Composed of arts groups, advertising agency representatives, and city staff from multiple departments, the Committee was able to leverage in-kind creative support from ad agency staff and institute an overall image campaign for the city (It's Hot, It's Happening, It's Oakland!).

### ***Cooperative Advertising***

The case of an arts organization who can't afford to advertise in the daily newspaper's weekend section is not an uncommon occurrence. One way in which LAAs can help is to facilitate a cooperative advertising project serving as media buyer and broker. The arts agency might arrange for a long-term contract with the paper for, say, a 1 x 5 inch strip every Thursday and Friday over the course of six months or a year. The LAA then provides groups the chance to list cultural events at a rate below the standard advertising because of the long-term commitment. Some locals even subsidize the cost: Rather than run five event listings at \$100 each to pay for the \$500 ad, the local subsidizes \$250 and charges each organization only \$50. Again, local arts agency as facilitator, convener, and coordinator saves constituent organizations money and headaches in this example.

*An Example:* Theatre Bay Area, an arts service organization, sponsors a weekly "Pink Section" ad in the Sunday Chronicle/Examiner in the San Francisco Bay Area. Theater patrons always know where to find theater listings for smaller groups who don't generally advertise on their own.

### ***Image Campaigns***

Another way for LAAs to undertake cooperative advertising is to sponsor or co-sponsor an overall image or awareness-raising campaign to increase a community's support for arts and culture, arts groups, programs, and events. A local arts agency represents the ideal candidate to help stimulate the community's appetite for the arts. Campaigns might include advertising in newspapers, radio, television, cable, public relations including news stories and special features, and other special promotions like billboards, coupons and table tents in restaurants (for reduced tickets), bumper stickers, and so on. Campaigns could feature a catchy slogan ("Celebrate The Arts in Our Community: The Spice of Life") and an image or logo could be

**NALAA STAFF**

*President and CEO*  
Robert L. Lynch

*Vice President, Government  
Affairs and Development*  
Nina Ozlu

*Director of Finance*  
R. Brent Stanley

*Director of Programs  
and Member Services*  
Mara Walker

*Director of Research  
and Information*  
Randy I. Cohen

*Director of Meetings*  
Kate Kershner

*Arts Education and Community  
Development Coordinator*  
Nancy Langan

*Communications Coordinator*  
Jennifer Neiman

*Membership Coordinator*  
Tom Roberts

*Publications Coordinator*  
Deborah Wolfer Bissen

*Bookkeeper*  
Austin Lawson

*Executive Assistant*  
Kelly Kinneen

*Government Affairs and  
Development Assistant*  
Anna Lincoln Rianhard

*Administrative Assistant*  
Pam Ritter

*Institute for Community  
Development and the Arts Fellow*  
Brian Ledgerwood

The **National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies** represents the nation's 3,800 local arts agencies in developing an essential place for the arts in America's communities. It helps member agencies with leadership and professional development, research, information and publications, public policy development and public awareness. To reach the NALAA staff, write or call:

NALAA  
927 15th Street NW, 12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005  
tel 202.371.2830  
fax 202.371.0424

used in all participating arts groups' flyers, brochures, posters, and ads. Marketing networks and other community partners (Chambers, CVBs, PRSA chapters) are also good participants in such an effort.

***Outreach Programs and Group Sales***

Word of mouth! Often cited as the number one way in which people find out about arts and cultural events in local surveys, hearing about programs from friends, relatives, and co-workers beats advertising and critical reviews nearly every time. Arts agencies should consider their potential role in developing and coordinating an outreach program featuring a speakers bureau and group sales package. Recent experiences by theater companies participating in a nationwide audience development initiative, funded by the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, have proven that one-on-one marketing and group sales can work in nearly any market. Market research has shown that, as the cliché goes, people find safety in numbers. Arts patrons, especially previous non-attenders, like to attend in groups for the social and communal benefits.

Arts agencies can work with volunteers to inventory social, business, religious and civic clubs in their community. Artists can be recruited to make short presentations to these groups, and group ticket prices offered. Instituting a fundraising program for the groups themselves can also be useful to both parties: We provide you 20 tickets at \$10 each, and you can sell them for \$15, keeping the extra \$5 to support your organization.

***Coordinated Events***

Many communities are familiar with Thursday Night Gallery Walks where visual arts spaces may agree to stay open late one evening and/or coordinate their exhibit openings to create a "happening." Locals can also play a role in helping visual and performing arts groups to coordinate the programming, for instance, around a certain theme or civic celebration. In Houston, the Grand Opera and Museum of Fine Arts produced Frida Kahlo programs simultaneously which were then cross-marketed to audiences and visitors. Other cities have undertaken thematic plays, concerts, and exhibits centered on the city's 100th birthday party. Arts councils can help generate critical mass and excitement in the community by convening groups to work together and create coordinated programming.

***Mailing List Co-ops***

Direct mail is still a primary source of information for arts and cultural events, and experts in the field cite a growing trend toward spending more money on list acquisition than the brochure or flyer itself. In other words, the best marketers send moderately-priced mail to the right people rather than beautiful brochures to households which aren't likely to care.

Local arts agencies can play a role as well, with the participation of arts and cultural groups,

*"In New Orleans, the Jazzy Cabby program introduces taxi drivers to local arts and cultural assets so these 'point-of-first-contact' citizens can act as cultural ambassadors."*

in developing master mailing lists of current arts patrons and likely attenders. Instituting a mailing list co-op involves a set of policies and a mailing list management service; organizations can protect certain names and throw others into the pot. Groups can select addresses for certain mailings and trade, share, or purchase parts of other lists. Arts councils can buy lists of households who subscribe to certain magazines or who fall into specific lifestyle segments that contain likely arts attenders. For a relatively modest cost (less than \$100 for 1,000 names), a new database of potential cultural participators can be developed by the agency and provided to large and small cultural organizations.

### **Information Services**

Kiosks, calendars, newsletters, and arts hotlines are the traditional methods of providing information on cultural events to the public. Many arts councils provide this service, a valuable commodity for the audience member seeking a special night out, and the cultural organization wanting to be included in central listings. There are other distribution points for information as well: To reach cultural tourists or visitors looking for a quality experience, some arts agencies provide weekly calendar listings to the hotel concierge and front desk staff, often through the local concierge association or CVB. In New Orleans, the Jazzy Cabby program introduces taxi drivers to local arts and cultural assets so these "point-of-first-contact" citizens can act as cultural ambassadors. School districts are also sometimes used to distribute information: In conjunction with special school performances, distributing calendars of events to take home to parents can utilize the recently-enlightened and excited student as bearers of event information. Locals can research other methods to distribute information: Get the most mileage out of your newsletter and Hotline to ensure that information reaches those who want it.

### **Other**

Comprising the "other" category are literally hundreds of other methods: From classified ads and special singles nights, to festival booths, window displays, and impromptu street performances. Whether the ideas stem from marketing handbooks, workshops, networks or local experts, local arts agencies can play meaningful roles as convener, coordinator, and facilitator of cooperative marketing efforts. Some arts councils sponsor flex passes offering admission to a slate of performances through a single card. Arts passports are designed to support arts exhibits and local businesses; the bearer obtains special rubber stamped impressions every time they visit the local dry cleaner or grocery, and completed pages are redeemable for half-price tickets. One arts commission creates "table tents" for local restaurants and distributes CDs of upcoming performers to local cafes and coffeehouses. Within every local arts agency is a better idea for a marketing method that will help sell the arts in your community.

**NALAA BOARD  
OF DIRECTORS**

*Executive Committee*

*Chair*

Harriet Sanford

*First Vice Chair*

Patricia Holihan Steinhardt

*Second Vice Chair*

William Lehr, Jr.

*Third Vice Chair*

Ramona Baker

*Treasurer*

John Haworth

*Secretary*

Bill Bulick

*At Large*

Sandra Gibson

Raymond J. Hanley

Sherry Shannon

Caroline Bock

Janet L. Brown

Tina D. Burdett

Robert Bush

Ken Ferguson

Gretchen Freeman

Flora Maria Garcia

Michael Garcia

Betty Jo Hays

Pamela G. Holt

Robert Moore

Adolfo Nodal

Janet Sarbaugh

Joan Small

■ **SUMMARY**

The arts communities across the nation are filled with creative people, and those who make their living through public relations, marketing, and advertising often work in “creative” departments. The local arts agency world is a constant source of ideas which only require resources, people and money, to be realized. Locals can help stimulate the ideas and secure those resources through partnerships in the community, among and between constituent groups.

Marketing and earned income is an imperative for our field, and this writer is convinced daily of the untapped potential audience members who are our neighbors and colleagues. According to national surveys, there are 17 million U.S. residents who classify themselves as woodworkers, and almost double that number who pursue sewing and needlework crafts. The museum exhibition showcasing antique toys, furniture, or quilts need only bridge the gap between what we call the “arts” and what others pursue as leisure activities or crafts.

Every visual or performing arts event has a theme or angle which should stimulate LAA staff and volunteers to make connections, think like marketers, and begin reaching potential audiences who will, when approached through the right vehicle and with a relevant message, begin to the arts and culture as enjoyable leisure alternatives. ▼

**About the Author:**

*Arthur Greenberg is a Manager with AMS Planning & Research. Based in the consulting firm’s California office, Greenberg previously served as Marketing Director with the City of Oakland’s Office of Cultural Affairs and as a curatorial consultant to Levi-Strauss & Co. He is involved in cultural facility planning and development, cultural planning, foundation program evaluations, market research and planning. He has coordinated cultural plans in Anchorage, Acadiana, Las Vegas, and Santa Monica. AMS offers the ArtsVision® line of marketing products and services to assist cultural organizations with identifying and reaching target audiences. Mr. Greenberg leads marketing workshops for local arts agencies, community foundations, and other sponsors.*

# NATIONAL ▾ ASSEMBLY ▾ OF ▾ LOCAL ▾ ARTS ▾ AGENCIES

TO ORDER ADDITIONAL  
COPIES OF THIS AND PAST  
MONOGRAPHS . . .

Call or write:

NALAA MONOGRAPHS  
927 15th Street N.W., 12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005-2304  
tel 202.371.2830  
fax 202.371.0424

Additional copies are \$5 each  
(plus postage and handling).

## MONOGRAPHS

Marketing and LAAs: Reaching Your Community's Untapped Audience	July 1995
Overview: Untapped Public and Private Funding Sources for the Arts	May/June 1995
Arts in Education Planning: Three Local Communities, Volume II	April 1995
An Introduction to Arts Incubators	March 1995
The Public Art of Re-Collection	February 1995
Arts in Education Planning: Three Local Communities, Volume I	January 1995
NALAA 1994 Annual Convention Keynote Speeches	December 1994
Local Arts Agency Facts 1994	November 1994
1994 Crime Bill Analysis: Funding Opportunities in the Arts and Humanities	October 1994
HUD: Integrating the Arts into Community Development and Revitalization	Aug/Sept 1994
Arts Resolution Services: A National Mediation Program for the Arts	May/June 1994
Arts in Education: From National Policy to Local Community Action	April 1994
ISTEA: An Arts and Transportation Partnership	March 1994
Jobs, the Arts and the Economy	Jan/Feb 1994
International Arts and Cultural Exchange	December 1993
Summer Youth Employment Programs: Four Local Arts Agency Models	November 1993
Inside Images: Art For A.R.T. (At-Risk Teens)	October 1993
The Religious Right	Aug/Sept 1993
Tolerance As An Art Form	May/June 1993
Public Trust or Public Trough?: The Ethical Crisis Facing Nonprofit, Tax-Exempt Cultural Institutions in America	April 1993
Arts Programs that Revitalized a Downtown: Tucson, A Case Study	March 1993
Local Arts Agency Facts 1993	February 1993
An Arts Magnet	January 1993
Olimpiada Cultural: It's More Than A Game	December 1992
An Overview: The National Cultural Facilities Study	November 1992
An Elephant In Your Living Room, or the Squaw Peak Pot Controversy	October 1992

## National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies

927 15th Street, N.W.  
12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005  
tel 202.371.2830  
fax 202.371.0424