Molto+Media: Digital Culture Funding
INTRODUCTION

Media Impact Funders is pleased to share this report, which offers a glimpse into the many ways that technology and media are transforming arts organizations, often with the help of philanthropic investment.

Cultural organizations have long maintained partnerships with public media outlets and depended upon commercial media to publish information to stimulate audience interest and demand. Now, arts organizations are using digital media to connect directly with their audiences, to enhance the artistic experience and to improve data management.

One concern we heard while compiling this report is that arts organizations struggle to harness the full potential of digital media because philanthropy has been slow to support these activities. Several of the institutions profiled here paid for their innovative programs with general operating funds, rather than wait for funding support.

However, research shows there are indeed foundations investing in digital media. As part of this Digital Culture Report, we are presenting data from a unique data mapping collaboration between the Foundation Center and Guidestar, with support from the Ford Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Wyncote Foundation. The data included here is from the forthcoming report, Foundation Support for Media in the United States, which will be published next month by the Foundation Center.

For this project, we are extremely fortunate to have the editorial guidance of Sarah Lutman. Sarah’s impressive career – at the Bush Foundation, on the Board of Directors of Grantmakers in the Arts, at Minnesota Public Radio and as president of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra – makes her uniquely qualified to convey the challenges and potential of digital media to reinvigorate arts institutions.

Sarah has given us a jewel box full of cultural media projects – each one a sparkling and multi-faceted example of innovation. And the data mapping project provides the encouraging news that, while precious, these gems are not rare.

Please share with us further examples of cultural organizations and arts philanthropy engaged in digital media activities so we can expand the information further.
Molto+Media: Digital Culture Funding profiles nine organizations identified by grantmakers and our own research as adventurous in their use of digital media. We looked for a mix of arts disciplines, geographies, organizational sizes and media purposes. You’ll see that some are using digital tools to extend organizational capacities in new ways while others are creating, documenting and disseminating the art itself.

Conversations with these nine organizations revealed common themes:

- Organizations describe the work as building capabilities, not “doing projects.” Digital tools and platforms are now essential building blocks in an organization’s work and need to be created accordingly.
- Leading digital culture entrepreneurs want grantmakers to make bigger bets on organizations with strong track records. Building new capabilities is expensive, particularly at the scale of large cultural institutions.
- There is a sense that, globally, U.S. organizations lag. The E.U. has supported open culture, digital initiatives aggressively, making Europe, in particular, a hotbed of digital culture.
- Organizations are looking for much greater risk-taking from the funding community. “Grantmakers still expect only home runs,” said more than one organization, and they point out that in for-profit industry many tech projects fail.
- Digital culture projects are helping organizations reach mass audiences as well as niches. Both are important.
- Several of the organizations in our profiles had received no dedicated funding for their work. “Our funders are not ready to do this, so we have to do it ourselves,” said interviewees.

The most important theme of this report, though, is the incredible creativity and energy of these digital culture entrepreneurs. Cultural organizations and artists are using digital media to invent new ways to create and distribute art and to reach and engage audiences. We encourage grantmakers to talk about digital media with every applicant and grantee to see how they can help fuel and accelerate this lively and important work.
What would happen if children could inform the creative process in real time, as plays are in development? That’s the question asked by the Children’s Theater Company (CTC), the largest children’s theater in the U.S. and a prolific creator of new works. CTC calls its new effort “Kidcentricity,” a company-wide investigation into how the theater can engage young people authentically in the creative process. Children are offered a deep set of real questions that directors and designers are grappling with, and teachers help them develop answers that will inform working artists.

Starting in the 2009-10 season, CTC’s Artistic Director, Peter Brosius, led a pilot project that let 50 elementary school students inform choices like set design and color schemes for a new production of Disney’s Mulan, Jr. The following season, a larger group of students helped make decisions for Alice in Wonderland, including brainstorming ways to make the Cheshire Cat appear and disappear, and thinking creatively about what a Jabberwock looks like. A third pilot, for Shrek, is now in progress. Artistic exchanges happen in person and via email.

CTC is now experimenting with ways to bring Kidcentricity to scale, involving thousands of students not only locally, but globally. A first step was the re-negotiation of its union contract to allow broadcast of the play development process into classrooms. The organization’s new Agreement with Actors’ Equity secures the use of fully-recorded performances and accompanying educational support materials for free distribution to educational institutions for the next four years.

The second step, taking place throughout the 2013-14 season, is to experiment with social media platforms like Pinterest and other crowd-sourcing and interactive technologies to create a digital dialogue with audiences, while keeping the online environment safe and appropriate for children.

“Every day in our rehearsals, we see how empowering it can be for a young person to see their ideas respected and integrated in a way that benefits the work,” says Artistic Director Brosius. “As new digital platforms help this experience reach scale, we can bring artistic interaction off the stage and into classrooms. We can make the community true co-creators of our work.”
The Curtis Institute of Music is the nation’s most selective college, accepting about 4% of applicants into its 165-member student body. The school is tuition-free and accepts students of any age based on competitive auditions. Students receive intensive training by pre-eminent faculty musicians. A hallmark of the Curtis experience is “learning by doing.” Students annually perform in hundreds of recitals, chamber music concerts and orchestra and opera performances. Many renowned soloists, chamber musicians, music faculty, conductors and orchestral players are Curtis graduates.

In partnership with Coursera, Curtis recently created two MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that open the intimacy and exclusivity of a Curtis education to thousands. Designed to reach and engage music lovers and musicians who will never walk through the school’s doors, the two courses have so far enrolled 46,400 people in 132 countries. Courses are **Exploring Beethoven Piano Sonatas** with faculty member Jonathan Biss and **Western Music History Through Performance** with faculty composer David Ludwig and conductor Jonathan Coopersmith. Based around video lectures, recommended recordings and further reading, the classes were produced within Curtis using - in part - student talent. Launched concurrently, Curtis Performs is an on-line, on-demand stage for HD concert highlights and full-length works performed by Curtis students. Students are supporting digital production through classes, fellowship stipends and volunteering. In-person meet-ups with Coursera faculty also are extending the Curtis name in informal settings. Twenty-five Coursera students recently crowded a Philadelphia café for an hour’s Q and A with pianist Biss.

“A survey of Coursera students shows that 75% of enrollees had never heard of Curtis or had no prior connection,” says Elizabeth Warshawer, chief operating officer. “We are sharing institutional capacity in completely new ways and engaging in entrepreneurial risk we hope will inspire students. The more we can share, and the more we interact, the better we can insure the future of Curtis and of classical music.” An unexpected result? “Adventurous new partners are approaching Curtis with projects we couldn’t have imagined,” reports Warshawer.

**Funding**
Self funded

**Links**
- www.curtis.edu
Fractured Atlas supports artists’ entrepreneurship with open-source technology solutions and a 21st Century take on artists’ services

Fractured Atlas was created to give artists the tools needed to eliminate practical barriers to artistic expression, and thereby foster a more agile and resilient cultural sector. “We build products that solve long-standing, thorny problems” of independent artists and arts organizations, says founder and Executive Director Adam Huttler.

Ten years in, Huttler realized that Fractured Atlas’ growing cohort of tech projects was forming a body of work that could be named and described. “We’re operating a technology R and D company within a service organization,” Huttler continued, “So we’ve identified stages along a formal development pipeline from conceptual and blue sky thinking to planning to prototyping to scaling.” Aligning expectations and deliverables along the pipeline has allowed staff, Board and funders to understand a given project’s status. Six projects are in the pipeline today.

One example of a mature product already reaching significant scale is Spaces: An Online Marketplace for Arts Space Rentals. The cloud-based application provides a comprehensive database of space listings. For artists, finding the right space is quick and easy. For venues, Spaces offers direct access to a targeted audience of potential renters. In New York City, Spaces had more than 120,000 unique users and generated $9 million in incremental rental income last year. Spaces can be adapted to any geography and is in use now in nine cities beyond New York. After subscribing to a “Pro Account” on NYC’s Spaces, Fourth Arts Block saw rental traffic spike to four times recent historical levels. Joe Goode Performance Annex in San Francisco saw their number of rentals “at least triple” after subscribing.

Artful.ly, a more recent launch, is an online service for managing tickets, donations and contacts in one integrated, open-source platform. Already used by more than 1,300 artists and organizations, Artful.ly offers a significant upgrade in both capability and adaptability when compared to off-the-shelf choices. Users can sell tickets and accept donations from their own websites, keep all their contacts organized in one place, track individual donor and ticket-buyer data and create customized reports. Artful.ly’s beta version has had a 500% increase in users year-to-year. The good news? Huttler sees unlimited potential to add functionality to the already-robust platform.

Funding
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
The Kresge Foundation

Links
Artful.ly: www.artful.ly
Spaces in New York
http://nycpaspaces.org/
Cultural data visualization
Fiscal sponsorship
Link to Artful.ly video
In August 2013, the Getty announced the first step in an institution-wide move toward open content. The news rippled quickly throughout the cultural sector since the Getty has long had a reputation for control, in particular for its prior practice of sharing only through specific licensing, and for a fee. The first tranche of some 4,600 high-resolution images is available for anyone to use, modify and publish, and for any purpose including educational, personal and commercial. Images have been downloaded more than 70,000 times in the four weeks since launch.

Why did the Getty initiate this new policy, which is the first step in the planned release of all public domain images, research information and documents? In his on-line announcement, Director James Cuno said, “The Getty was founded on the conviction that understanding art makes the world a better place, and sharing our digital resources is the natural extension of that belief. This move is also an educational imperative. Artists, students, teachers, writers and countless others rely on artwork images to learn, tell stories, exchange ideas and feed their own creativity.”

The Open Content program is “a capability, not a project,” says Nik Honeysett, the Getty’s Head of Administration. This meant adapting enterprise-wide curatorial systems to make the process of adding images to the Open Content platform an integrated part of the digital asset and gallery systems management functionality that was already in place. “New content has to roll off the production line,” he explained. The most challenging part of the work was to decide to do it in the first place. “It was a long conversation about who we want to be,” says Honeysett. He reports that Getty curators are energized by the public response. One of the top 25 downloads is a painting the Getty has never displayed publicly (see image); it hangs in the Getty’s board room. “Every staff member here knows the painting well, but why was it so popular?” Investigation showed that the work had been included in an online curriculum. Just the sort of sharing the Getty had hoped for.
Seattle-based On The Boards (OTB) introduces audiences to international contemporary dance, theater and music, and presents new work by Northwest performing artists in its 300-seat mainstage and 84-seat studio theaters. Founded by artists in 1978, OTB has a lauded history of commissions and premieres by leading voices in contemporary performance.

In 2010, On The Boards launched On The Boards TV. The purpose of the service is to commission filmed versions of six to eight of its performance projects each season and to make them widely available for viewing on digital platforms. On The Boards TV distinguishes itself by pairing artists with artists – filmmakers with performers – going beyond “documentation” of a performance to a creative partnership that yields a new artwork, the film. On The Boards also built and hosts the archived films on a subscription-based on-demand platform, sharing subscription revenue with the artists themselves.

Thus far, 32 films are archived at On The Boards TV and about 8,500 registered users from 132 countries have watched them. Thirty-six universities are institutional subscribers to the service, which gives access automatically to anyone with a university-affiliated email address. This allows faculty to easily include contemporary artists’ work in their course curricula. Artists have received as much as $2,000 in royalty payments, which OTB pays quarterly.

On The Boards TV also screens the films at other U.S. contemporary performance centers and at community sites, splitting admission revenue with artists. A recent film of Amarillo, a production of Mexico’s Teatro Linea de Sombro, was the first in OTB’s Community Screenings Project, which offered the film plus discussion both in rural Washington farming communities and in partnership with Seattle-based Latino service organizations.

OTB thought their efforts might encourage other contemporary arts centers to build comparable media platforms, however, they’ve found that these centers are potential collaborators. To become “the Hulu for contemporary performance,” says Monique Courcy, Manager of Digital Media and On the Boards TV, OTB is raising funds to film 100 performances over the next four years at venues across the U.S.
For the 2013-14 season opening performance of Verdi’s Nabucco, Opera Philadelphia created its third annual Opera on the Mall (OOOM), a big-screen broadcast of the full opera, presented outdoors at Independence Mall in Philadelphia’s historic district.

But this was no mere broadcast in the park. The media event was carefully designed to support the company’s two major strategic objectives: to be influential in American opera for its innovative practices, and to enlarge its civic footprint in the city of Philadelphia.

After the first OOOM was created in 2011 as an opening-night simulcast, the company decided the event would work even better as a broadcast the night following the opening performance at the Academy of Music. Board members and donors who attended the Academy performance could also experience the outdoor event, helping to welcome Philadelphians to “the people’s opening night.” Production logistics also are simplified by broadcasting instead of simulcasting. This year, Nabucco’s 72-member chorus joined the audience, surprising everyone by singing live from among the crowd, and greeting and mingling with guests.

Opera Philadelphia tickets the free event to identify and engage participants. By collecting email addresses and analyzing results, they’ve learned that 40% of OOOM’s audience is new to their database. This prompted Opera Philadelphia to identify audiences at all of its free events, like its popular family concerts. With a tailored customer relationship management platform on the back-end, Opera Philadelphia is learning much more about audience behaviors and preferences.

The combination of a large-scale, free public event and back-end audience analysis also has informed the creation of new programming, like the Opera in the City initiative that will bring world-class opera performances to non-traditional settings. “We want to infiltrate this city with opera at the highest level,” says General Director David Devan. “That starts with understanding our audiences and how we can connect with them at their preferred day, time and venue, and with meaningful product portfolios, whether live or through media. To be honored, we must be relevant. That means creating an active community with opera at its center.”

Funding
Wyncote Foundation
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Fidelity Foundation

Links
OperaPhiladelphia.org

Opera on the Mall

Opera in the City

Acts of Culture
In January 2011, the Sundance Institute announced an ambitious effort to provide filmmakers access to a broad array of third-party digital engagement and distribution platforms to help artists connect directly with audiences. Increasingly, filmmakers want to explore ways to create, own and control their own projects from concept through distribution, either as an alternative to or in conjunction with more traditional pathways to theatrical release. To help artists succeed, Sundance Artist Services has brokered “umbrella” deals with third-party partners like Kickstarter, Netflix, YouTube, Hulu and Amazon Instant Video.

Sundance’s mission is to provide a space for independent media artists “to explore their stories free from commercial and political pressures.” In today’s environment, “artists consider their marketing an extension of their storytelling,” said Joseph Beyer, director of digital initiatives, “and they can use digital platforms to build direct relationships with their fans.” Sundance provides individualized artist development workshops to help filmmakers understand the ins and outs of different platforms, and also shares information more broadly through workshops and via its website. “We’ve already seen that when given the tools, filmmakers will use them in incredibly creative ways we never imagined. Artists today have much more creative control and more possibilities than ever in terms of how a film will reach the public.”

The Sundance/Kickstarter collaboration is especially notable. Sundance created the first-ever curated collection of projects on the Kickstarter platform. As of September, over 150 Sundance-curated projects have raised around $6 million from more than 116,000 backers. In 2013, 17 films by “Kickstarter creators” premiered and went on to win six of the coveted Sundance Festival awards, including the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award for U.S. Documentary for Blood Brother. Six to eight new films are being added to the Kickstarter platform every month. These projects, and links to films in digital release, are easily discoverable on the Artist Services home page, where Sundance is building its own direct relationships with film fans globally.
The Trey McIntyre Project (TMP) is a contemporary dance company that chose Boise, Idaho as its home in 2008 after considering options for places its artists and staff could deeply root themselves in a community. TMP’s community engagement philosophy runs deep – it’s embedded in the mission statement and evident in programs bringing its artists to schools, businesses and hospitals, and “popping up” in street performances. Openings for dancers draw hundreds of applicants; finalists not only audition as dancers but also spend a week in Boise so that TMP can see how enthusiastically they share the company’s commitment to engagement work.

In Boise, it’s possible for engagement to be very direct and in person. In a relatively small city, dancers can be well known as citizens. Early on, TMP decided to develop a strong presence on digital platforms as well, to connect its 10 individual dancers and key staff members even more directly and frequently to audiences. TMP dancers tour about 20 weeks each year, taking them away from their home community. And because much of the touring is in countries and venues the company visits only occasionally, connecting with audiences on-line is a means of sustaining a community of interest around TMP projects.

Whether in town or on the road, each TMP dancer spends at least an hour a week engaging digitally with the public, whether through their Twitter accounts, Facebook updates, Pinterest, Instagram or Tumblr. Video of rehearsals and performances is freely shared on YouTube. And as they tour and perform, dancers individually welcome live audiences after every performance, signing autographs and chatting. Audiences get to know each dancer and feel a personal connection to them.

Success is measured not so much in the number of followers, viewers, “likes” or hits, but in “how constantly we are improving our connections to community,” says Kyle Morck, TMP’s full-time digital producer. “Our question is, year-over-year, are connections increasing?” Just imagine if every dance company, theater and orchestra’s roster of artists did the same.

Funding
No dedicated funding for the digital media work, but TMP has recently used Kickstarter to raise money for a documentary: http://bit.ly/TMKickstarter. The company has many national and regional funders.

Links
Trey McIntyre Project
www.treymcintyre.com

Connect page

YouTube collection

Individual dancers help this company build relationships with audiences and communities through digital media and personal connections.
New York Public Radio purchased WQXR from the New York Times Company in 2009, liberating the struggling commercial classical music station from growing financial pressure inside the Times’ family of companies and giving it a robust public media home, one known for its innovation and ambition.

WQXR immediately expanded its strategy to embrace mobile and digital media, broadening its content beyond traditional terrestrial music broadcasting to include on-line news and features, alternative music streams and on-demand concerts. WQXR’s Vice President Graham Parker explains that public media today is not “a directional linear audio platform.” It’s a “multi-pronged hub and spoke system” where the goal is building an engaged community of classical music fans with WQXR as the convener.

WQXR offers three on-line music streams, available over any Internet-connected device; provides classical and cultural news and information; archives concerts and interviews with leading artists and ensembles; and presents high quality video to complement its audio output. Unique visitors were up 40% in each of the last two years, and new users have increased from 25 to 33% of all visitors. And while terrestrial radio still attracts the largest number of WQXR listeners, there is downward pressure on radio listening in general. Meanwhile, WQXR’s mobile and on-line stream requests have grown quickly from 450,000 per month two years ago to 1.3 million per month today. Major events like a ten-day all-Bach festival or Beethoven Awareness Month drive attention and traffic and offer interesting themes for new creative content. Last year traffic spiked over a feature collection of Bach-inspired guitar shredding videos.

Digital media initiatives are changing WQXR’s profile from a relatively stuffy classical broadcaster to one that’s newsy, energetic and fun. “Today we can drive the conversation in ways that radio alone could not, and we can use social media to make listeners part of a community.” Next steps? Welcoming classical fans who don’t have media resources like WQXR in their communities.

Funding
No specific funders for overall digital effort.

Links
WXQR
www.wqxr.org

Operavore (opera stream + editorial)

Bach 360*

Beethoven Awareness Month
The Foundation Center has been philanthropy’s ally in tracking and understanding the field of philanthropic investment for many years. As part of a new effort surrounding media-related grants tracking called Foundation Support for Media in the United States, we asked the Foundation Center for baseline data on digital media grants to non-media focused arts organizations to see what, if any, patterns or themes might emerge from two fields that are increasingly intersecting.

While this data does not represent an exhaustive survey, it does offer a big picture of the media investments at arts organizations from 2009 – 2011. The data is based on all grants of $10,000 or more awarded by a national sample of 1,330 larger U.S. foundations (including 800 of the 1,000 largest ranked by total giving). For community foundations, only discretionary grants are included. Grants to individuals are not included in the file.
The good news is that media-related grants increased over the course of the three years, both in grant dollars awarded and number of grants. We look forward to tracking this data over the coming years to see whether this trend continues. The charts above illustrate some of the trends we identified from the current data.
Of $62,964,398 in grants awarded for digital media projects in 2009 - 2011, Media Channels and Formats received over 80% of that funding - or $50,821,386. Media Channels and Formats refers to content creation and distribution including web, television, radio, print, film, audio and a general ‘media channels and formats’ sub-catgory, which includes projects with multiple types of media.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Wyncote Foundation for funding the production of this report.

Thank you to the Foundation Center for data and guidance on the research.

Special thanks to Sarah Lutman for her leadership and editorial skills in creating this report.

Sarah Lutman is an independent consultant working with public media, cultural and philanthropic organizations as well as on writing and project development. She has diverse leadership experience across the nonprofit sector, most recently as President and Managing Director of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, where that distinctive ensemble began to archive its live performance recordings and make them available free to audiences online.

Lutman was previously Senior Vice President for Content and Media at American Public Media, where she was responsible for all broadcast, digital and live event programming, including MPR’s regional radio networks and APM’s national program portfolio in news, idea programming and popular and classical music. She earned two Peabody Awards as executive producer of American Mavericks and The MTT Files.

Prior to her public media work, Lutman served as senior program officer at The Bush Foundation in Saint Paul, where she worked principally in public broadcasting, cultural and educational sectors in the upper Midwest. Earlier, she was Executive Director of the Fleishhacker Foundation in San Francisco. Lutman co-founded and co-edited the Grantmakers in the Arts Reader and was active nationally in cultural philanthropy for nearly two decades. She is a blogger at www.artsjournal.com/speaker, a columnist for Twin Cities Business Magazine, and speaks frequently at national meetings on media, cultural and nonprofit policy.