Canadian Perspectives on Culture and Volunteering: the « Our Millennium » Project and Other Research

Presentation by M. Sharon Jeannotte
CIRCLE Round Table on Culture, Civil Society and Volunteering
Newcastle, United Kingdom
November 2, 2001
The two faces of cultural volunteering

Types of volunteering
- Formal
- Informal

Outcomes of volunteering
- Strengthening cultural organizations
- Strengthening communities
Trends in cultural volunteering in Canada

- In 1997, 7% of Canadians did cultural volunteering

- 452,000 cultural volunteers in 1997 – an increase of 40% from 1987

- Almost 53 million cultural volunteer hours in 1997, equivalent to 27,550 full-time employees

- Just one-third of cultural volunteers accounted for 81% of total hours contributed in 1997
### Volunteers by type of cultural organization

#### Volunteers Age 15 and up by type of cultural organization

**Canada 1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of cultural organization</th>
<th>Volunteer rate - %</th>
<th>Number of volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media and communications</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>70,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing arts</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>129,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies and museums</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>105,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual arts</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>52,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoos, aquariums, multidisciplinary</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>109,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – Cultural Organizations</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>451,512</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – All Organizations</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,471,512</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of cultural volunteer activity – Canada 1997

- Organizing and supervising events: 64%
- Sitting on board – committee: 53%
- Doing administrative work: 43%
- Fundraising: 42%
- Providing information: 35%
- Teaching or coaching: 23%
- Maintaining facilities: 21%
- Driving: 21%
- Providing food services: 20%
Social background of cultural volunteers

- **Volunteer rates highest for:**
  - 35 to 54 age group
  - women
  - higher income ($70,000 and over)
  - higher education (university degree)
  - urban communities of 100,000 people or less

- **Number of hours volunteered highest for:**
  - over 55 age group
  - women
  - lower income (less than $40,000)
  - lower education
  - urban communities of 100,000 people or less
Motivations for volunteering

- Belief in cause supported by the organization: 96%
- Use personal skills and experience: 78%
- Been personally affected by cause: 66%
- Explore own strengths: 54%
- Fulfill religious obligations or beliefs: 29%
- Because friends also volunteer: 25%
- To improve job skills: 22%
Canada’s « Our Millennium » Project – Everyday Culture in the Life of Communities

- An invitation to Canadians to make lasting gifts to their communities to mark new century

- More than 6500 projects submitted and registered on the « Our Millennium » website

- More than 4.6 million people involved as volunteers, audience or visitors
« Our Millennium » - The significance of arts and heritage

- Over 27% or about 1770 volunteer projects were arts and culture and heritage-related.
- Top six of eleven theme areas:
  - Environment 16.4%
  - Heritage 16.3%
  - Children and youth 13.3%
  - Care and support 11.5%
  - Arts and culture 10.8%
  - Connections 9.2%
- Arts, culture and heritage also figured significantly in projects registered in the other categories.
Millennial cultural projects – celebrating and strengthening communities

Three types of millennial cultural projects

- Commemorative cultural gifts
- « Bonding »
- « Bridging »
Marking the Millennium in Canada – Commemorative Cultural Gifts

- New buildings
- Cultural donations and scholarships
- Festivals and competitions
- Special performances (professional and amateur)
- Special exhibits and heritage projects
- Neighbourhood redevelopments
- Restoration of community landmarks
- New public art
- New historical records
Marking the Millennium – « Bonding »
Cultural Projects

- Celebrating ethnic cultures
- Cultural gifts by and for youth
- Cultural gifts by and for seniors
- Celebrating and promoting women’s culture
- Preserving and celebrating religious heritage
- Recording local history
Marking the Millennium – « Bridging »
Cultural Projects

- Combatting racism and promoting interculturalism
- Building sustainable communities
- Promoting social justice and combatting marginalization
- Promoting safety and combatting violence
- Promoting peace
- Promoting health and well-being
- Bridging the generation gap
Research gaps

Technical problems
- Small sample sizes in volunteering surveys
- Breadth of international standard definition of volunteering in «Culture and Recreation»

Analytical problems
- Accounting for artists’ unpaid contributions (e.g. benefit performances, auctions)
- Understanding the role of cultural volunteering in sustaining communities
Conclusions

- Cultural volunteering is increasing in Canada but problems exist with:
  - volunteer « burnout »
  - lack of resources for training
  - replacement of paid staff with volunteers

- Cultural volunteers play a crucial role in:
  - the health and vitality of the cultural sector
  - the diversity of the cultural landscape
  - « everyday » cultural expression
  - an inclusive and participatory civil society