Creative Technology Strategies

Wednesday, May 5, 2010
Web Seminar
Abridged Transcript

Introduction

Sue: Good afternoon. I'm Sue Struve, NASAA communications manager, and we are pleased to welcome all of you to the latest session of NASAA's 2010 web seminar series. The theme for today's web seminar is technology. Technology is a topic of perennial interest, but it has taken on extra importance in today's environment. Resources are tight and state arts agencies have to find alternative ways to get their messages out. And today we are happy to be able to spend some time talking about how state arts agencies can use technology to communicate with their constituents and reach out to the public. Today's session is all about strategy. This will not be a how-to class about Facebook or any specific application, but rather a strategy discussion about how state arts agencies can mix and match different technology tools to achieve their communications goals.

Let's start off by talking a bit about the context in which state arts agencies are making their choices. Right now state arts agencies are dealing with shrinking budgets and reduced funds for operations, personnel, convening and traditional print publications. Travel restrictions have reduced opportunities for face-to-face meetings with constituents. At the same time, communications demands are increasing, and there are rising expectations of connectedness and immediacy with constituents. People are looking for 24/7 access to information and real-time updates on important issues and opportunities. It has never been more important for state arts agencies to express their value in clear, accessible ways.

To navigate these intersections, state arts agencies have become highly creative in their use of technology to manage their resources, operate efficiently and provide services to the public. You see some of the uses listed here. Today's session will focus primarily on the communications part of this list, how state arts agencies are using technology to get their messages out to the public and keep their constituents informed and engaged.

Using technology — National Assembly of State Arts Agencies — KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY

- Promoting programs and opportunities
- Grants administration
- Providing technical assistance
- Communicating the work and value of your agency
- Collecting data, input and opinions
- Advocacy and teaching
- Convening constituents
- Building community and networks
- Documentation and preservation

There are lots of communications tools available today, and state arts agencies are tapping many of them. In the last few years, NASAA has noticed a dramatic increase in state arts agency use of social networking and media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. State arts agencies also are achieving communications goals through podcasts, blogs, e-newsletters, on-line calendars, rosters, survey tools and web seminars.
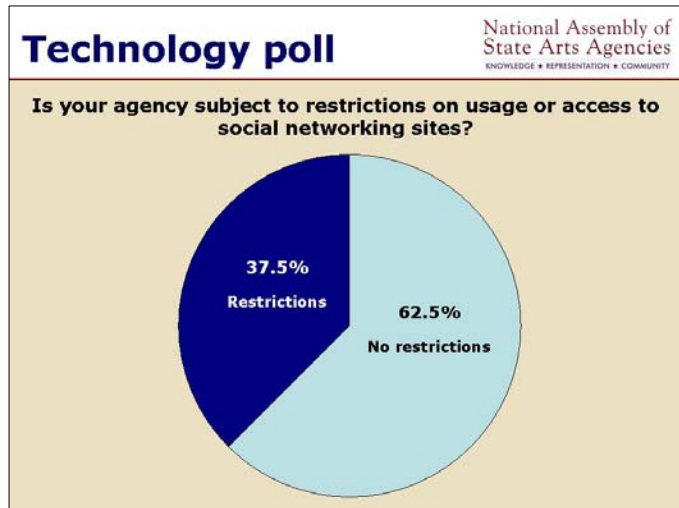

Communication Tools — National Assembly of State Arts Agencies — KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY
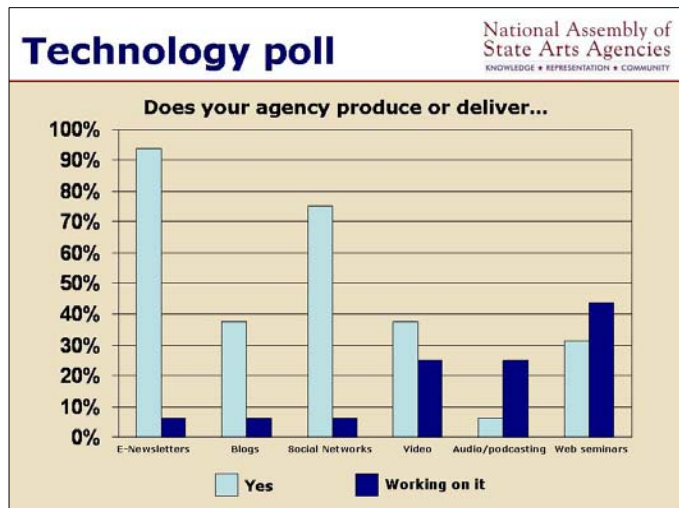
facebook   You Tube

Because things change so quickly, we wanted to give everyone a fresh update on what states are doing. We conducted a snap poll of the field just a couple of weeks ago and here is what it shows. We first asked about restrictions that state arts agencies might experience in their access of networking and social media sites. This question gives us insight into the technology environment in which state arts agencies act and whether there were significant roadblocks to using new communications technologies. The responses to our survey showed that, while a majority of agencies do not face limited access, a large percentage experience some type of restrictions. What these restrictions look like varies from state to state.

Our survey illustrated that many states have, or are currently working on, e-newsletters or social networking sites. To a lesser extent, state arts agencies are starting to use blogs, on-line video and audio, podcasts and web seminars. While our sample survey did not include responses from every state arts agency, the displayed graph coincides with what NASAA already knows about current state arts agency practices. With that as our backdrop, let's move on to some folks who are working with these kinds of tools.

Jesse Rye, NASAA's policy and program associate, is going to be moderating today's discussion. He will be discussing state arts agencies' technology practices and perspectives with Gaye McElwain from the Texas Commission on the Arts and Darrell Bulmer from the Maine Arts Commission. Then we will shift gears and hear perspectives from the larger technology environment from David Dombrosky of the Center for Arts Management and Technology and Rachel Weidinger from Tech Soup. We have two official opportunities scheduled for Q&A breaks, where you will be able to ask Gaye, Darrell, David and Rachel questions. In the spirit of today's discussion based session, please feel free to send us questions at any time and we will do our best to work them into the flow of the conversation. That being said, it is time to turn the session over to Jesse and start the discussion.

State Arts Agency Practices and Perspectives

Jesse: To start things off today, I'd like introduce Gaye McElwain, director of marketing and communications for the Texas Commission on the Arts, and Darrell Bulmer, communications associate for the Maine Arts Commission. We are very pleased to have you both with us today. They will each begin by giving us an overview of their current communications strategy and how they are utilizing technology to achieve their goals. First, let's hear from Gaye.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
KNOWLEDGE ● REPRESENTATION ● COMMUNITY

Gaye McElwain
Director of Marketing and Communications
Texas Commission on the Arts

Darrell Bulmer
Communications Associate
Maine Arts Commission

Gaye: At the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA), we use a lot of different communications media, but our main method of connection is through our website. We launched it in 1996 and it continues to be the primary source of information coming from our agency. We use it as our call to action and we make sure everyone knows that our website is the best place to start when they need any information. In addition, we're able to communicate directly with our grant recipients via our on-line grants system. We place information directly into their on-line accounts in order to keep them informed on things like panel comments or scores, reporting requirements and other things of that sort. It serves as a direct connection to those grants recipients. We also have a quarterly e-newsletter that has been in place since 2001. And we send out e-mail blasts as needed directly to the field.

Constituent Communications — Texas Commission on the Arts — Investing in a Creative Texas

- **Website (1996)**
- **Online Grants System (1998)**
  - **information in online accounts**
- **E-Newsletter (2001)**
- **Email blasts**

Over the course of the past year, we've made some additions to our technology and communications. One of the most significant has been the use of web seminars. We use these as a tool to educate our constituents about our new grant programs, and we've made some significant changes over the past two years. By using web seminars, we've been able to connect with a large statewide audience and take people step by step through the changes while giving them an opportunity to ask questions. This has proven to be really cost effective and was very well received by participants in the web seminars.

New this year — Texas Commission on the Arts — Investing in a Creative Texas

- **Webinars**
  - **to educate about new grant programs**
  - **reach broad audience cost effectively**
- **Virtual Grant Panel Meetings**
  - **cost savings; efficient use of staff**
  - **less burden for grant evaluators**

We have started hosting some of our grant evaluation panels virtually. We hold a lot of panel meetings; over the last 12 months, TCA has convened 39 evaluation meetings with 157 evaluators. Of those meetings, 22 have been convened virtually and there have been significant cost savings in terms of travel and meeting expenses, a much more efficient use of staff time, and it is much easier on our evaluators, who no longer have to take time out of their busy schedules to travel to Austin. On the downside, virtual panel meetings do lack some of the interaction and organic conversation that comes from meeting in person. They are not ideal for every situation, but they have certainly proved an effective technique for us.

Also in the past year, we implemented several technologies in an attempt to connect with a larger audience. So one of the things we have done is launch a blog called Art on Art. The focus of this blog is cultural tourism, so we are really focusing on things that are happening around the state that would appeal to tourists. We highlight things that are happening in our cultural districts, things that TCA funds and the arts in general. Another purpose of the blog is that we are able to connect with arts organizations and provide them with information that is helpful to them. For example, we make them aware of cooperative marketing opportunities. Or we tell them about career development workshops that are coming up that might help them develop bigger audiences to view their work.
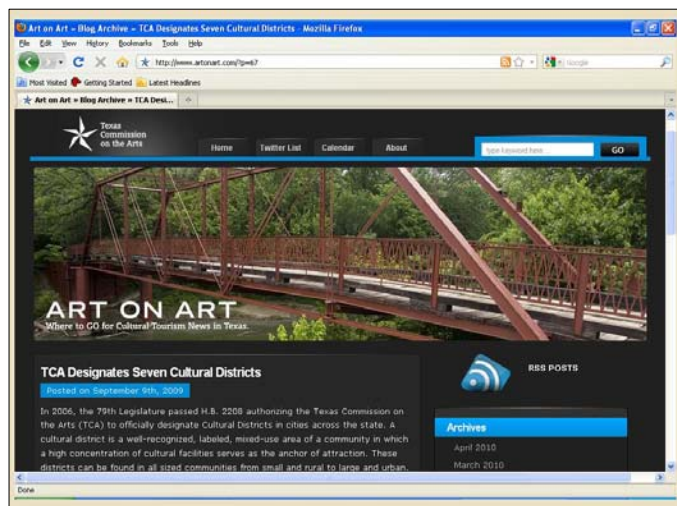
We've used YouTube for some very specific promotions. We did a promotion for our specialty license plates that was very successful. During the time that it ran we saw a significant increase in our sales. I think this is the sort of thing we will look to do more of in the future. We are looking at Facebook and Twitter, but I have to be honest, we haven't really developed a strategic communications plan around those technologies. We're still looking at how we can really use them to advance our mission and goals, so that is still very much a work in progress.

This is a screen shot of our Art on Art blog. We try to post something at least twice a week. With a state as big as Texas that tends to be pretty easy. Now that the word is getting out, we are actually being contacted directly by arts organizations that have things in their communities that they would like us to speak about and feature on the blog.

Looking ahead to the future, we are hoping to build on the success with the webinars we have had to date. We think that we can use them as an effective educational tool, but also incorporate them into strategic planning. It is a great way to get feedback from our constituents and it is more interactive than just an on-line survey might be. We also think we can use webinars to provide some educational topics to the field, maybe topics like succession planning, marketing and other topics that will help our grant recipients do a better job in their work. We also are looking to expand our social media. It is possible that we will expand the topics we include on the Art on Art blog, maybe include arts education, grant categories, legislative updates and things of that sort. And as I mentioned earlier, we are looking at Facebook and Twitter and trying to determine how we can use them more strategically. Like all arts agencies, we serve a very large and diverse audience and we are trying to consider all our options and be open to new technologies.

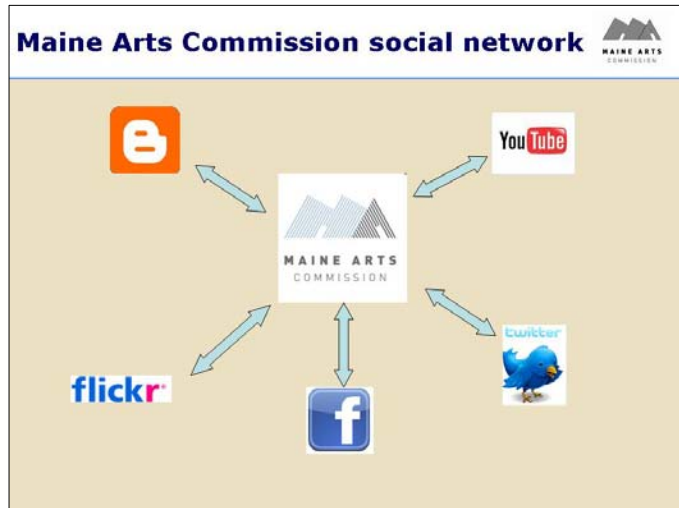Another up and coming area for TCA is promotion of our new cultural districts designation program. What you see here is a screenshot of a website template that we provide to the communities that are accepted into our cultural districts program. We provide this to them preloaded with information on TCA and some relevant links, but then they really get to customize with their own events, maps and information. You can't see it on this shot, but along the bottom there are also links to Facebook and Twitter. By providing this to the communities, we are giving them a marketing tool that they can use and that TCA can use to promote them. It also gives the program a consistent brand, and we think that this will be very helpful as the program expands in the future. So those are some of the ways that TCA is using technology to communicate with the public and our constituents.

Jesse: Thanks, Gaye. It is really great to hear what's going on in Texas. We've already received a number of questions for you and we will get to those in just a little bit, but first I want to switch gears and turn it over to Darrell Bulmer in Maine.

Darrell: As you can see, the Maine Arts Commission's social network works in conjunction with the agency's website. It consists so far of a blog, Facebook, Twitter and Flickr accounts, and a YouTube channel. We also have a whole host of interfaces, such as Polldaddy, Box.net, Vimeo, Constant Contact surveys and Photobucket, to name a few. In fact, I now have a two-page document of websites and passwords as it has become impossible to remember them.

The entire social network, seen here through screenshots, is itself supported by our listservs, of which there are nine, as well as our day-to-day emails and print materials. We found that this additional out-of-network support is essential to drive people to our network, and this was especially critical during the start-up phase. The Maine Arts Commission's social network was created for many of the reasons that most turn to these networks, and we heard many of those from Gaye—increased exposure, etc. But among those many reasons we found some interesting and unique goals for here in Maine. Three key issues were identified in a statewide survey sent out to our constituents and through internal discussions.

The first issue is that we wanted to place more dynamic content, such as video and audio, on-line without paying for the ever-increasing costs. We turn to the aptly named "cloud" and so-called Web 2.0 services to host these things for free and allow us to share that content throughout our social network. YouTube is a prime example, but besides video we now have a whole host of documents and images stored for free on-line.
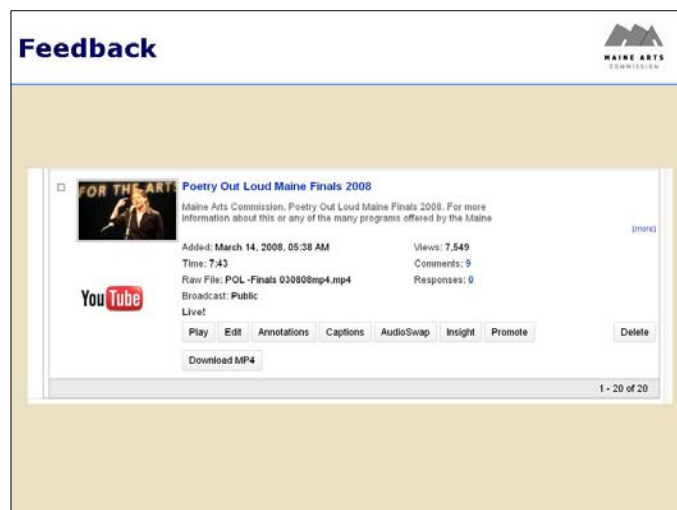
The second issue we wanted to address was to reach a broader demographic that included younger participants in the arts. Maine is the nation's grayest state and our workshops and interactions with our constituents have reflected that. A YouTube channel and Facebook allowed us to promote our Poetry Out Loud competition in Maine. We increased participation threefold rather quickly. Our director wanted to reach, engage and retain young college-age talent for Maine to avoid the brain drain that occurs when students move out of state. We are now seeing a greater demographic mix at our events, in our grant applications and throughout our social network. Suddenly the stoic suit-wearing state worker is almost cool enough to talk to.

Lastly, we wanted feedback. The new social networks provide a continuous loop, a new way to communicate with our public that has allowed them to praise or criticize our actions and help actively shape the future of the agency. This has worked well. Comments, like those seen here on Facebook, are read and shared among staff and answers are posted. A new level of trust and transparency is being achieved and new ideas from the field enter the mix.

Feedback is almost instantaneous in the form of numbers. We know how many watch a video—for example almost 8,000 watched the Poetry Out Loud final in 2008. We often know how many readers visit our blog posts, and this allows us to shape our message to be more successful. Through the numbers we gather we are able to continually learn; we were never able to do this before with only conventional media. For instance, we have noticed that our blog seems to be visited more when we talk about blog opportunities, whereas Facebook seems to be more of a casual story of interest thing.

The agency did experience some teething issues, however, especially with the set-up of our in-house information channel. Many staff members wanted to be hands on in the beginning and run the social network by committee. The lesson was quickly learned that there is a large time commitment to social media and many soon dropped away. Now our social network is administered through the communications office, also known as "me." Another thing we've learned is that you can only do so much and that you need to choose your outlets wisely with a keen eye on time considerations and to whom you wish to communicate. For

instance, here's a simple Microsoft Word document with a lot of wonderful tools, but when you open all the tool bars at once it quickly becomes chaos. So we ditched MySpace early on and found content sharing systems like TweetDeck to streamline and avoid duplication of work. Overall we achieved or are well on our way to achieving our goals. We continue to set new goals and move towards getting to the next level. We are beginning to use Facebook, for example, to host groups and for information sharing through committees. There are many more uses that continue to develop outside our formal social network communications plan.

State Arts Agency Discussion

Jesse: Let's move into the next section, where we'll discuss more specifics of technology and communications at state arts agencies. The first question I have for Gaye and Darrell is: Do both of your agencies have formal communications strategies or plans? If so, what is the focus on new media and technology?

Darrell: In a word, yes. We do have formal plans and formal social networking plans. Our communications plan when using these new technologies to reach out was really centered on attracting a younger audience.

Gaye: Yes we do have a plan and we develop one every year for the agency and how we can best achieve the goals we've laid out. We also work with four other state agencies to develop the state's strategic tourism and marketing plan that's led by the office of the governor. That plan also has some communications, marketing and social media components to it. So we have those two plans that work in harmony with each other.

Jesse: Gaye, it is really interesting that you bring that up. I've read a bit about the partnership you have there in Texas and I was wondering, is that the reason you decided to focus your blog on tourism?

Gaye: Actually, it was. We had been kicking around a couple of ideas like that, but when we began working with the other agencies it became clear that a goal of that partnership was to make better use of social media. There has been a lot of research about travel and tourism planning being done on-line, so as a group the State of Texas has decided that we are going to emphasize our product through social media.

Jesse: What have been some of the most successful outcomes of using these technologies? How has it made your work easier?

Darrell: The increase in attendance at our events thanks to Facebook and Twitter has been one of the most noticeable effects. We've almost tripled attendance at some of our major events where we present awards. People are showing up to experience the art firsthand. Another one of the successful outcomes is we can host countless terabytes of audio and video on-line, so we don't have to pay for so much server space. We're able to balance it out by using the "cloud" to host our materials. I would say that it makes it easier for me to reach out to the crowd and receive an instantaneous response—similar to the beginning of this web seminar when you launched a survey. That sort of thing has made our lives easier. It allows us to find trends and shifts very quickly and easily and document them.

Jesse: We find that helpful as well. What has your experience been like? Do you find that people are receptive to being surveyed in this new form?

Darrell: Actually, when I first started here we were doing surveys primarily through paper and mail and we would receive approximately 200 to 300 responses. Since we went to on-line and social networking, we have consistently received between 700 and 1,000 responses for each survey. The numbers really speak for themselves.

Jesse: And Gaye, what have been some of your successful outcomes and ways that technology has made your job easier?

Gaye: Like many state arts agencies, we've been faced with some significant budget cuts. The technological approaches we've been using have really allowed us to do our jobs very efficiently and effectively at a very low cost. I'll go back to our web seminars. We were able to get the word out to our constituency about some very significant changes to our grant programs in a way that was cost effective, yet in a way that was better than ever before. We are hearing from folks that the blog is providing some much appreciated extra attention and they are getting bigger audiences and greater opportunities. We are seeing it have a significant impact on the people that we serve. As far as making my job easier, I have to agree with Darrell, it allows us to really reach a much greater audience quickly. We send information out and it gets passed on exponentially.

Jesse: What are some of the challenges you've been experiencing? How has technology made your life harder?

Gaye: One of the big challenges is that we really don't know what we should and should not and can and cannot do. We see lots of variation among state agencies in what social media they are using, how it is being used, and their policies. There is no real consistency, so there's no place to turn for guidance. There are some rules, but a lot of gray area as well.

There is also a big question about how we make it work for our agency. There are a lot of exciting things out there, and we get excited about using them, but then you have to take a step back and think about how would we use this most effectively, if at all. So we are really having to think in a different way, which is a challenge.

In terms of making life harder, it hasn't replaced any of our traditional methods of communication, so the workload continues to get bigger, not smaller.

Jesse: That brings up a question that just came through, How do manage staff time for social media outlets?

Gaye: It's interesting, you just sort of expand time magically. It is one of those things that you just have to find time to work in. Actually, as I have worked on the blog it has helped me become more knowledgeable about our constituents and beyond. I have to constantly look for things to post so I am continually building an archive of successes in the field. This helps when I need them later on, rather than having to do a last-minute outreach, so you can start to connect things up a bit behind the scenes. It is a challenge, but you just have to manage your time effectively.

Jesse: What about you, Darrell?

Darrell: Well, I really want to echo what Gaye has just said to a large degree. And I want to build on that in a couple of ways. We are obviously the front line for the field contacting us, and as these technologies grow, people are contacting us to learn how to use these technologies. Gaye talked about using web seminars and we are turning to screen casting [A screencast is a digital recording of a computer screen output, also known as a *video screen capture*, often containing audio narration] to train people how to use them and build along with us. We really started this process to train the field how to market themselves as markets and organizations. Like Gaye said, it is like adding another job to your description. I am now doing marketing workshops throughout the state as well as screen casting. Even though I can say it is a challenge, it is also a lot of fun and provides good opportunities to make connections in the field.

I want to add one thing: time is definitely our biggest concern. I was at a workshop recently where someone observed that technology has given everyone an extra two hours a day, but it has also given us more work to fit into those two hours. So just like Gaye was saying, we have to find time to learn these programs and figure out how to use them effectively.

Jesse: Hearing what you have to say about this, there is another question that pops into my mind. It seems like nonprofit organizations and nongovernment organizations have a certain amount of flexibility in what they can do with their technology. What is that like in a state government situation? Does it create extra challenges?

Gaye: I think that security is a big issue for state government, and there are obviously parameters and guidelines set forth that we have to adhere to. It might be a little bit different if we were in the private sector. We have concerns about some of the information that might be posted. We don't want anything that might be considered offensive posted, we do operate under an obscenity clause, and there are other things we have to keep in mind. I do think that we can definitely do a lot within those parameters, we just need to be cognizant of them when we make our plans.

Darrell: I am lucky to have Gaye go first since she is really speaking for me today. We are in exactly the same situation, almost word for word.

Jesse: Thanks. Let's move on to the next question. How are your constituents responding? Are there any complaints?

Darrell: I actually enjoy the interaction I now have with the constituents. The ability for them to leave comments, contact me directly through a variety of methods, and interact with their colleagues and respond to our work is just wonderful. So far they have enjoyed it and really appreciate the effort we are making to get out there and engage them in a different way—especially in a state like Maine that is so rural. We are 97% trees, a massive state with only a million people living here and most of them in those trees. This gives us more of an opportunity to interact with us in their own time.

Gaye: A similar situation here. I really have not heard any complaints. On the contrary, people have expressed a lot of gratitude for the efforts we are making to introduce these new technologies, make use of them and in some ways demystify them. For many of them this is their first experience participating in a webinar or other on-line activity. And they are very appreciative and excited about seeing their events and activities appear in the blog.

Jesse: A question has come through that raises an interesting aspect of this: Do you think that people who live in areas where they might not have access to these technologies might be left behind as your efforts move forward?

Darrell: Actually we face that a lot and we are very conscious of that when we load stuff to our site. It is one of the reasons we went to cloud computing in the first place. It helps people load things a bit quicker when they access it from our website. There are a lot of people in Maine that are still on dial-up and we go over that question a lot in staff meetings here. Honestly, we don't have an answer besides the fact that, in the long run, we expect those people to be on broadband and we need to work forward with that in mind.

Gaye: It is a concern. However, it is a concern that we have been thinking about for a while, especially after we started our on-line grants application program and making so much available

through our website. We always have been concerned about everyone's ability to make that transition. In terms of the people we are working with, they seem to be doing a very good job of it. For our core constituency it appears to be working pretty well. Texas is a very large state, and for a lot of people their primary means of communication is through these very technologies. They are so far out and removed. To echo what Darrel said, people are moving more and more to broadband, so over time it is going to get better. It is a concern, but it so far has not been a big issue for us.

Jesse: Although this session isn't meant to be a how-to, I have a couple questions that I would like to get to in our allotted time. First up, how have you been using these tools for advocacy?

Darrell: We just had a meeting recently about advocacy and a long discussion with our communications committee. Being a state agency we can advocate, but not lobby. There is a fine line even using social media. So really we are developing technologies and sharing them with people in the field who are willing to be our state arts advocacy captains. So we let them know what technologies and

materials are available and they host it and use it. It has been successful. Using Constant Contact for questioning people and surveying them, using listservs and Facebook has worked wonderfully.

Gaye: We have not been using it for advocacy work. It is the same situation that Darrell discussed. We are very sensitive to the fact that we are a state agency and do not want to come across as if we are doing any lobbying. There are other organizations who do that and we can provide them with information, but we stay away from it in that sense. However, I will say that for example with our blog, some of the success stories out there are noticed by legislators and it sort of speaks for itself. You actually see the good that is being done. It is a good way for us to get the message out that public funding for the arts is really impacting local communities. It kind of becomes an advocacy tool because it is providing so many good success stories.

Jesse: I think the points you just made are relevant to a lot of our members. Gaye, I have a question that came in for you. In terms of the cultural districts website, was there any resistance to the standardized look? If some of the organizations already had a look in place, could they have put those in instead?

Gaye: A lot of the districts that have participated have been in midsize and rural communities, and they have been very grateful to have that work done for them. We've actually kind of had to do some hand holding there and get them involved and visible, but in the end they have been really grateful for it. However, some of the other cultural districts have been up and running a long time—for instance, the Houston museum district or the Dallas Arts District and others in major urban areas. They tend to have their own websites that are very extensive and well put together. We haven't actually said, You must use this template, but because it is a Wordpress template we have suggested that maybe they could make it a page within their preexisting website. That way, as we are in our promotional activities, we are creating a consistent branded look and it is a simple thing for them to do without affecting their overall website. We are happy to work with them on that. For the most part people have been very happy to have that look, because it gives them that state of Texas brand.

Jesse: I have time for one final question: How are you handling legal archiving and public record requirements when you are using social media tools?

Darrell: With a blog, thankfully, it is what it is—a web log. But as far as the comments and things left on our Facebook page, we have just not found a way to do that yet. I actually have a 10-page document from the Office of Information Technology, who are drafting legislation to address this need. So, right now we are not retaining the information, it is just there. We could get it if we needed to, but we are not actively archiving it.

Gaye: I have to be honest, I am not entirely sure I know the answer. We have what they call a retention schedule for various documents, how long they must be kept and how they must be kept, but I don't know if that information has been updated to include this type of media. That is probably something we really need to look into since I don't think it has come up here yet. There just isn't a big book of how to do this in Texas, so we're kind of learning as we go.

Advice for State Arts Agencies

Jesse: That actually provides us with a good transition. We are fortunate to have with us David Dombrosky, the executive director at the Center for Arts Management and Technology, as well as Rachel Weidinger, senior manager of marketing and communications at Tech Soup Global. They will be discussing the larger issues of using technology from a slightly different vantage point outside of the state arts agency sphere. Before we begin, would you both like to tell us a little more about yourselves? Let's start with David.

David Dombrosky
Executive Director
Center for Arts
Management and Technology

Rachel Weidinger
Senior Manager,
Marketing & Communications
TechSoup Global

David: I'm David Dombrosky, the executive director of the Center for Arts Management and Technology at Carnegie Melon. We are an applied research center looking at how arts organizations can more effectively use on-line technology to meet their missions and advance their goals. We accomplish that through a number of means, including partnering with other organizations to create products for the field in times of need, as well as to monitor changes that are taking place in the landscape through our Technology in the Arts service arm. This arm has podcasts, blogs and all of the social media tools that we have been discussing, and it has been using them as forms of communication for quite a while now.

Rachel: I work for TechSoup Global in San Francisco, and we are a nonprofit that helps support nonprofits, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and social benefit organizations with technology all over the world. I support the marketing and communications functions of our global network in 33 countries, so I am a trainer of trainers in marketing. We have a wide variety of tech capacity-building capabilities, from something as nitty-gritty as hardware and software to community forums and an extensive web seminar series.

Jesse: The first topic we wanted to dive into is: How can states evaluate the impact that new technology is having on their communications strategy?

David: There are a couple of ways. The first is to be clear about your goals when engaging these tools. If you are going to be on Facebook and have a state arts agency profile, what exactly is it that you hope to achieve by doing so and how are you going to measure that? You can then break down the tactics as to how you are going to achieve those goals as well as the metrics for how you ascertain your progress towards those goals. When you are talking about impact, that kind of goes beyond statistics. It is not just the numeric side of it, how many eyes you have on your page and things of that nature, but sometimes it is more about things like how timely your communication is. For example, last year during the big budget crisis, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts [PCA] posted more information on how the crisis was a affecting the arts through Twitter than I found through any other media outlet. So one of the things you can do is ask. Ask your constituents how they are finding out about your data, your information and things that are going on. It is something that is so simple, but something we don't often do.

Rachel: One of the reasons these new technologies are so exciting is that the days when you could send out a newsletter and only have a few points of trackable impact are effectively gone. Now we can estimate how many people saw a specific tweet in my stream or how many people clicked on a link and a whole string of on-line actions they took after that. In order to really do a good job of evaluating and tracking impact, you need to track the path of those numbers and how it is impacting you organization inside. What is the impact of that tighter feedback loop and how does it affect your organization in a deeper way? Watch for impact inside your own organization to really grasp the full impact of using these tools.

Jesse: Is there anything different that a state agency should do when approaching that evaluation?

Rachel: It is a process of how you think about documenting the flow of information. Sometimes you will learn something like, we had 30% more people show up for this arts event than in previous years, we think that was due to social media, and here are some numbers that support that. Then you can track how that result impacted your future work.

Jesse: To jump back to you for a moment, David, and something you mentioned earlier, do you have any advice on how state arts agencies can establish their own on-line voice?

David: It is really important to think about the norms for the tool that you are choosing to use. For example, if you choose to have a Twitter stream for your state arts agency, then you need to consider the norms of usage for Twitter. Twitter is a fairly conversational and informal type of tool among its practitioners. What happens if you insert a more formal, authoritative voice into that context? Do you get drowned out? Do you get ignored? Does it get more recognition because it is different? When you think about on-line voice, you need to think about what you are trying to get across in this particular medium that is different from other mediums you would choose. Maybe you have more authoritative publications or newsletters that are distributed in other ways. What happens when you speak about those publications in another social media

outlet? How does your tone change? How does the way in which you engage people more conversationally impact the awareness they have of you in that new on-line environment?

Jesse: To shift gears a bit here, are there any best practices you would like to share with state arts agencies about using social media?

Rachel: Building on what David just said, I am a big fan of polyvocal storytelling. The first tools that come to mind are blogs and Twitter where it is okay to have multiple authors and to have some transparency around that. The personal passion that can come out through these social media tools can be quite powerful. One way to respect the norms present in any of these media is to allow individuals to have individual voices within the

account, rather than attempting to have one strict agency voice. So you could have specialists in certain areas allowed to be passionate about what they are passionate about in these public forums.

David: I would like to focus in on just a few best practices. Darrell already mentioned the importance of having a gatekeeper in your office of all the site log-ins and passwords for the social media tools you are using. Often it is good to develop a kind of password structure. For example, an organization is always going to have "GCA", the year of its incorporation and the first three letters of the website domain that we will log into. If you always have that pattern it is easier for staff to remember the passwords for the sites.

And regarding voice: The American Red Cross put out a social media handbook for all of the ARCs. It was really great in touching on issues like your personal communications versus communications on behalf of the organization, and it provided staff with a lot of guidance for multiple individuals within an organization speaking on behalf of that organization. It talked about blogging, about Twitter, about Facebook. That social media handbook is an example of a really good best practice.

For those of you who are engaging in Twitter, there is a model out there called the 70-20-10 model. The idea is that 70% of your communication through that tool should be sharing resources, 20% of your engagement should be connecting with your constituents through dialogue and comments, and 10% should actually be things about yourself, such as promotional materials or comments. The funny thing is that we tend to see this idea inverted and these tools are used in a professional manner, with 70% all about us, 20% sharing resources and then only 10% engaging those that are following the organization.

Jesse: A question came through that is related to this. Do you know of any organization that incorporates or invites outside professionals or artists or arts administrators to initiate blogs or identify content, rather than staff?

Rachel: There lots of models for blogging with multiple authors. I think it is a good idea to always have at least one person from the agency involved, but all of the posts don't need to come from inside the agency. But you definitely want to have a strong hand in that conversation. The Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN) does an excellent job of having a variety of people post guest posts, and that is one way to manage that.

David: Rachel hit on a really solid model as far as guest blogging. Coincidentally, I shared a tweet on our Twitter stream today on some dos and don'ts about guest blogging. So if you are going to do that, definitely develop and share policies regarding guest blogging. In the case of state arts agencies, you'll need to make it clear that whoever is posting will be speaking through the voice of a government agency. The other thing to consider about guest posting is the inverse. Perhaps your state arts agency does not have a social media plan that involves a blog and doesn't want to maintain a blog of its own. But what if members of your staff or members of your council were guest bloggers on other blogs based around the state?

Jesse: What should states be considering now to anticipate future trends in technology and social media?

Rachel: I don't think that the open data trend is going away anytime soon. I think it is really worth considering what kinds of data the agency produces and stewards, and how those can be used in other ways. I see the Government 2.0 movement continuing and growing tremendously in some ways. In general that indicates that the walled-garden model that we've had in communications is going away. We have a strong opportunity to engage more deeply in conversations with our constituencies than before and the tools that we can use to do that are getting easier and easier to use.

David: Mobile technology. It is huge and not going away. It is estimated that by 2012, more people will access websites through their mobile devices than through desktop or laptop devices. So we need to think about how we are engaging people who are using the hand-held mobile device. For instance, if we are developing large, wide websites, what happens when the screen is reduced to fit in the palm of your hand? A lot of people are considering mobile versions. Not everyone is using a smartphone yet although they are accessing the Internet, but they aren't necessarily doing this through a touch-screen application, and this creates the need for the mobile version for easier navigation. The smartphone trend is only going to get bigger, so we need to think about application development for things like iPad, iPhone and Android-like products. How can we best utilize mobile applications to highlight what is going on around the state or country?

Jesse: For state arts agencies that are facing budget constrictions and are still mandated to reach the citizens of their state, but are unable to invest in these right now, are they doing that at their own peril?

Rachel: That's difficult to answer. One of the most exciting things about the mobile technology for me is that there are many things that can be done just using the SMS-based non-smartphone technology. [Short Message Service, a service for sending text messages on a cellular telephone system.] Some of those can have very low price barrier restrictions, yet still excite engagement and invite participation with diverse populations.

David: I am of the mind that being in the wave of early adopters is not going to meet the mission of trying to connect with every member of your state. But, lagging behind and being a late adopter is not going to be a benefit to everyone in your state, either. You really need to

determine at what point on the wave of adoption is your organization going to engage. Some of these things have a rapid adoption rate and some don't, so you have to monitor the progress of both adoption and discarding of different types of technology. There is a monitoring process that is important when determining when you are adopting these things.

Jesse: This is a good transition to my next question. While a large percentage of our state arts agencies do not have restrictions as to what they can do on-line, there are a few who have hurdles they have to overcome procedurally or policywise. What are your recommendations to those that are facing restrictions?

David: Get a posse! If you can't do it yourself, get a posse of constituents who will do it for you. Going back to the Pennsylvania budget crisis last year, I didn't find out the information directly from PCA, but from other prolific Twitter users who were being fed information from PCA and then sending it out to everyone they knew. So find influencers who use these technologies frequently and have a strong follower base that matches with the constituency you are trying to reach. Providing them with content and information is one way to get around not having access to Twitter or other social media at the office.

Rachel: The other side of what David said about getting a posse is to go to where your best audiences are. They will to some extent find you, but you need to be in that place and listening. If there are restrictions to certain networking sites at work, the listen outside of work. To a certain extent these things sort of build their own arguments for adoption. There are also likely other agencies who will be able to support you, so think about how you could work across agency boundaries within your state government to get to where you need to be.

Jesse: One of the questions that I want to address is one we were not able to really get into with Gaye and Darrell. Do either one of you have advice on how to handle legal archiving and public record requirements in social media?

Rachel: The entire library of Twitter was just acquired by the Library of Congress if that helps. Not that simple in the case of other things.

David: It depends on what tools you are using. Some organizations have built their own social medias using what are called "white labels" like Ning and other tools of that nature. Many of those allow you to export or download content and information. And, if the Library of Congress was able to acquire the Twitter archives, it may be possible for your state to acquire them as well, especially if there are multiple agencies in your government using Twitter as a communications tool. This one is a little difficult, because getting the information from some

of the sites can be difficult, involve a lot of bureaucratic red tape and require a request from the state government on behalf of a number of departments.

Rachel: One of the tremendous challenges of cloud computing is that our legal departments have just not caught up to the new ways of managing data. There is a tool out there now called [Backupify](#) that is designed to back up cloud computing accounts that are hosted on Twitter, for instance. That may help meet some of the requirements in your state.

Jesse: We have time for one more question. How do you balance communicating state arts agency programs versus communicating what the state arts field is providing? State arts agencies offer grants or workshops to support competencies that aren't all that exciting for social networking, but the activities of grant recipients are extraordinary. How do you go about balancing those?

David: To be honest with you, I think that goes back to the 70-20-10 model. Seventy percent of what you are passing on through Twitter or Facebook should be sharing. You should be actively monitoring what your constituents, and grant recipients, are doing on these various social media outlets and then sharing that with everyone. That goes right back to the core ideal of social media, sharing. You are not only sharing what you are doing, but what the people in your network are doing to a certain extent. And so if the core of your network is these grant recipients, you should definitely be sharing what they are doing.

Rachel: I agree wholeheartedly with David. One of the best practices of community management, on-line or off-, is to shine a spotlight on the wonderful things that are happening in your network. Use the credible platform that you have as a state arts agency to elevate the profile of those that are a part of your network and community. One of the real benefits of social media is that you are able to do that and it makes you really successful at social media when you are highlighting lots of cool stuff.

David: You will also find that when you engage in that manner, your network will reciprocate with the information you send out. There is a certain quid pro quo going on with sharing information.

Jesse: Thank you both so much for being with us today, David and Rachel. It truly has been an honor and a very enlightening experience.

This web seminar was particularly timely for us here at NASAA, as we just launched our new website this week. We listened to your feedback and have incorporated a lot of new features and tweaked many of the ones from before. Speaking of the new site, be sure to check out our latest [strategy sampler on creative uses of technology](#). The sampler offers many good examples of how state arts agencies are using technology to meet both their communications and public outreach goals. The sampler includes links and examples of state arts agency uses of social media sites, video, audio and a diverse selection of on-line newsletters, just to name a few. Thank you all for joining us today, and we look forward to seeing you during future web seminars.