

Critical Issues for Research in Arts Management

Antonio C. Cuyler
Florida State University, USA

ABSTRACT

To develop a more respectable image as a field of inquiry and employment, Dorn (1992) warned that Arts Management needed to create a body of knowledge through scholarly research. To accomplish Dorn's goal, Arts Management should address three critical issues: (1) the need to establish a discipline and profession specific research agenda, (2) faculty preparedness to conduct and supervise research, and (3) student education in research, to guide the development of Research. Addressing these three issues will ensure Arts Management's ability to benefit from and protect its intellectual capital while developing a reputation as a viable academic discipline and profession.

Keywords:

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Discipline building

Research agenda

Systematic review

Introduction

Over the last fifty years, Arts Management has made considerable progress towards developing into a valuable academic discipline and profession globally (Evard and Colbert, 2000) including meeting several of the eight characteristics of DiMaggio's (1987) definition of professionalization. These characteristics include: (1) occupations with a monopoly of esoteric knowledge, (2) a body of professional ethics and standards, (3) professional associations that enforce these standards, (4) accredited training institutions, (5) licensed practitioners, (6) collegial interactions among practitioners employed in different organizations, (7) a commitment to professional standards even when they conflict with organizational goals, and lastly (8) a claim to altruism in professional practice.

Although scholars have explored the topic of research in Arts Management (Pérez-Cabañero & Cuadrado-García, 2011; DeVereaux, 2009; Dorn, 1992; Heidelberg, 2010; Jeffri, 1988; Miller, 1974; Rentschler & Shilbury, 2008), faculty have had difficulty directing institutional auditors to a coherent body of knowledge that can assist the discipline's professionalization (Rentschler & Shilbury, 2008). In addition, Jeffri (1988) argued that some academicians view Arts Management as soft, undisciplined, and not rigorous enough, while Rich and Martin (2010) found that some practitioners devalue Arts Management education. Echoing DiMaggio (1987) above, Dorn (1992) warned that Arts Management needed to create a body of knowledge through scholarly research to develop a more respectable image as a field of inquiry and employment. DeVereaux (2009) contextualized these issues in a state of the field examination.

The need to create a body of discipline and profession specific knowledge has provided Arts Management with an incredible harvest ripe with opportunity for research. However, to benefit from and protect the enterprise of its intellectual capital, Arts Management should respond to these critiques in order to foster self-reflection and self-initiated change with regard to research. By developing a discipline and profession specific research agenda, addressing faculty preparedness to conduct and supervise research, and committing to student education in research, Arts Management will do more than achieve Dorn's (1992) goal of developing a reputation as a respectable discipline of inquiry and employment. To do so, first, Arts Management must develop a discipline and profession specific research agenda.

Research Agenda

Arts Management has not identified, codified, or quantified the most important lines of inquiry warranting further scholarly investigation. For example, Table 1 shows the results of a systematic review of the research published in the *International Journal of Arts Management* since its 1998 inception (Hannah and Lautsch, 2011). Scholars have produced a great deal of knowledge about Marketing research and management, as well as case studies on specific arts and cultural organizations internationally. Based on these numbers, however, scholars have not produced as much research about arts funding, sponsorship, or mass communication. Arts Management should consider the educational and practical consequences of the lack of knowledge in these essential areas of management.

Topic of Inquiry	Number of Articles
Arts Funding	4
Company Profiles	44
Financial Management	8
Ideas & Opinions	15
Industrial Organization	12
Human Resources Management	8
Management of Change	11
Management & Organizations	31
Manager's Voice	15
Marketing Management	39
Market/ing Research	57
Mass Communication	1
Measurement of Cultural Organization Performance	11
Sponsorship	5
Strategic Management	14

TABLE 1. ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTS MANAGEMENT* (BY TOPIC OF INQUIRY)¹

¹ The numbers represented in this table are accurate as of the *International Journal of Arts Management*, Spring 2013, 15 (3).

“THE NEED TO CREATE A BODY OF DISCIPLINE AND PROFESSION SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE HAS PROVIDED ARTS MANAGEMENT WITH AN INCREDIBLE HARVEST RIPE WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR RESEARCH.”

A research agenda would help to establish a clear goal for knowledge development and dissemination, and to implement a mechanism for managing and planning progress towards eradicating major disparities in the cannon of knowledge severely lacking in Arts Management. A discipline and profession specific research agenda would also allow Arts Management to assess and distinguish the knowledge the discipline and profession have learned about themselves from the knowledge the discipline and profession need to know about themselves. This will include posing and seeking answers to critical andragogical/pedagogical, experiential, experimental, historical, and philosophical questions pertinent to the sustainability and further growth of the academic discipline and profession of Arts Management.

Music Education’s research agenda could serve as an excellent example from which Arts Management can learn. The National Association of Music Education (2013) has articulated a discipline and profession specific research agenda with broad research questions that scholars can explore from many perspectives. However, Music Education’s research agenda is valuable because it challenges all scholars, practicing professionals, and students to participate in answering key questions important to the development and sustainability of Music Education as a field of inquiry and employment. The research agenda surmises with this quote:

Finding answers to the questions in this agenda is now our challenge. All music educators, pre-service and in-service, regardless of what level or which area they teach, can and should be involved in this inquiry. By seizing this opportunity to study and investigate these important research questions, we can look forward to the promise the results of our research hold for improving the quality of music teaching and learning in classrooms across America (The National Association of Music Education, 2013).

With this kind of forethought and planning, Arts Management could begin to use research as a tool for addressing problems that have plagued the arts and its management processes for centuries. Lastly, based on my observations supervising

bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree seeking students’ theses and dissertations, students often have difficulty committing to a topic that satisfies their curiosity and makes a contribution to Arts Management. A discipline and profession specific research agenda will assist faculty in their roles as supervisors of research by enhancing their ability to guide students’ choices of research topics. In many ways, a discipline and profession specific research agenda would address a complex challenge that threatens the enterprise of Arts Management’s intellectual capital through research.

Faculty Preparedness

A recent survey of full-time faculty teaching Arts Management in degree programs who are members of the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) found that 57% reported the Master’s degrees as their highest degree earned, while only 31% reported the doctorate as their highest degree earned (Maloney, 2013). Given that so few full-time faculty have earned doctorates that would give them access to education about how to conduct research, Arts Management should consider two key questions with regard to faculty preparedness to contribute to and supervise research. If faculty have no previous education or experience in research, how do they come to understand how to conduct research? In addition, how does a lack of education and experience in research affect faculty’s ability to successfully fulfil their roles as supervisors of student research?

Morrison, Oladunjoye, and Onyefulu (2007) found considerable dissatisfaction with the interaction and relationships that students had with their research supervisors, especially within the discipline of Business. A more interesting finding relative to faculty qualifications and experience supervising research is that 94% of the 165 respondents indicated that they would like to see more qualified and experienced lecturers supervising research.

Although the relevance of this finding may require further study in Arts Management, faculty preparedness to conduct and supervise research should remain a top priority for the discipline and profession. Well-prepared Arts Management faculty might explore and interrogate practice using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to reveal knowledge about the deeper ways of doing and thinking in Arts Management (DeVereaux, 2009).

Addressing faculty preparedness to conduct and supervise research will inevitably enhance the quality of research in Arts Management ensuring that the research developed, produced, and disseminated conforms to rigorous standards (Anderson and Kerr, 1968), while honoring professional relevance.

Student Education

To determine where faculty place importance in educating students, one only need examine the curriculum. A recent study of graduate programs in the United States found that less than 50% of studied programs consider research methodology a core subject area (Varela, 2013). However, some of these same academic programs require graduate students to complete a capstone, portfolio, or thesis. This practice should inspire Arts Management to consider how seriously it values research. I am unaware of such a study in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, to require students to perform a task and not give them sincere preparation in performing that task maintains the negative perceptions some academicians have about Arts Management as soft, undisciplined, and not rigorous enough (Jeffri, 1988).

This suggests that Arts Management should value research enough to make a sincere commitment to student education in research. This education should encourage students to become intelligent consumers and evaluators of research promoting evidence-based decision-making management. More nonprofits have shown that data collection and analysis can change the way an organization operates and improve its results fulfilling its mission (Perry, Preston, & Switzer, 2013).

As early as 1979, DiMaggio and Useem studied the factors that prompted arts organizations to use decentralized applied research such as audience studies. Drawing on the findings of twenty-five intensive case studies, they found that studies were most likely to have powerful effects when findings confirmed the predilections of arts managers, when an influential person actively sought implementation, and when researchers were involved on a sustained basis in staff deliberations. Conversely, arts organizations did not use studies under conditions of high turnover, when organizations lacked resources to use their findings, and when influential individuals were hostile or indifferent. Yet, Heidelberg (2010) has

forecasted that arts organizations will need to hire an in-organization researcher to shift from using research defensively to using research offensively in order to thrive during economically challenging times.

Thus, Arts Management educators should value the ability to conduct research in the same way that it values the ability to manage finances, raise funds, and market and program the arts. The ability to conduct research can lead to the development of a significant skillset that harnesses individual intellectual curiosity for future employment opportunities. Increasingly, arts organizations advertise positions for researchers who can support fundraising, marketing, programming, and organizational operations through information analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. Perhaps more importantly, Arts Management should value research for its ability to promote the life-long learning that will transform

students into what Schön (1983) described as “reflective practitioners” and Jeffri (1988) defined as “the generalist”: “Not the soft, flabby thinker, who knows a little bit about a lot of things. Rather, the arts administrator/manager for whom the quest is not part of one’s job, but part of one’s life.” She explained, the generalist is one who knows how to think, and keep on thinking, who reads and reads on, who writes, studies, and is disturbed and occasionally gratified.

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Conclusions

In this article, I sought to articulate three interconnected critical issues that threaten the development of Arts Management’s intellectual capital and enterprise through research. This included a discussion of the need to establish a discipline and profession specific research agenda, the need to address faculty preparedness

to conduct and supervise student research, and lastly the need to commit to student education in research. Inevitably, the question of who should take responsibility for addressing these issues emerges from a critique of this nature.

Professional educational associations such as the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE), the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centers (ENCACT), and the Asia Pacific Network for Cultural Education and Research (ANCER) should take the leadership role in addressing these three critical issues. First, the professional education associations could collaborate with practicing arts manager and their professional associations to establish a meaningful research agenda. The educational associations should also

do more to professionally develop the discipline and profession's human capital with regard to research.

This might include adding workshops on how to conduct research, or how to develop significant research questions to the discipline's knowledge base, as well as methodologies, and their appropriateness to certain research questions at annual conferences. Workshops of this nature might also inspire research collaborations between academically and professionally qualified faculty (Madzar and Citron, 2009). Because of its age, relative to other formally established disciplines and professions, Arts Management could harness its human capital to use practice and faculty members' experiences and expertise to conduct research that will develop theories that have considerable implications for Arts Management education.

In terms of student education in research, the above listed professional associations could encourage their memberships to add a course in research methodology to their curricula or find creative ways to incorporate research methodology throughout the education of emerging arts managers. This will lead to a student population better poised to acquire jobs as researchers in the arts and Arts Management, as well as arts managers well versed in consuming and evaluating research and its significance to their work. If Arts Management responds to the three critical issues articulated here, it will accomplish the following: continue on its path towards fully achieving professionalization, change the negative perception that the discipline and profession are soft and not rigorous enough, develop a reputation as a respectable field of inquiry and employment, systemically create a comprehensible body of knowledge, enhance public awareness about Arts Management, and lastly as Miller (1974) suggested maybe even allow research to save the arts administrator/manager.

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