

# Successful Arts Management Job Seekers Combine Artistic Passion with Non-Profit Savvy

## THE ARTS

By Ande Diaz

In a political climate where arts organizations are constantly "strategizing" and adapting, smart job seekers would do well to follow suit. The House of Representatives just confirmed a commitment to maintain the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) budget at the reduced rate of \$99.5 million for two years but then to phase out the

and family values has long been documented, but the political climate has galvanized collaboration as a survival tool. This trend is reflected in the funding community as the selection criteria of foundations, public agencies, and corporate grantmakers reflects an increased interest in collaborative proposals.

So what does all this mean to the

example, a museum is likely to have staff members in education who collaborate with schools to introduce children to the exhibits. A gallery needs employees with good organizational and computer skills to coordinate exhibits and work with artists to track various art submissions. An opera company, concert hall, or theater needs box-office and "front of the house" workers to manage ticket sales, write press releases, market the productions in the community, and create visibility. A symphony needs general managers to schedule tours, collaborate with businesses, monitor union agreements, and run the business side of music performances.

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federal agency. The Clinton Administration, which has supported the NEA's continuing existence, has asked for NEA funding of \$136 million for fiscal year 1997. In anticipation of that pending battle, the NEA has outlined programs to conduct public dialogue in six communities nationwide. Their strategy includes involving a broader audience of arts supporters and community members to discuss issues of concern in those communities.

For many seasoned professionals who have seen evidence of the power of art to transform individuals and communities, broadening the base of support for the arts makes sense. Business people, state and local civic leaders, educators, and human service providers are all stakeholders and potential collaborative employers looking to make fundamental improvements in our society. The relationship of the arts to economic development, public health, violence prevention, education and learning, civic engagement,

job seeker? Job seekers interested in career opportunities with arts organizations ought to identify the stakeholders who want to ensure that communities can continue to be enriched by the existence of a dynamic arts presence. In order to learn about current initiatives and collaborations in the geographic locations that you are targeting for prospective jobs, contact the state arts councils.

### Typical Roles for Staff

Arts organizations, like most for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations, have a number of administrative, business, or management functions. These roles require people with creativity and an understanding and passion for the arts as well as skills in a range of areas from finance and marketing to education.

The specific positions available at an arts organization will depend on the organization's activities and the size of its budget and staff. For

### How to Start the Search

In all job searches, two things are necessary for a candidate to obtain a job. First, an individual must develop the skills to perform the work needed in the position, and second, she must create access to learn of opportunities. In a world where 65-85% of jobs are filled through contact or referrals, creating professional and personal contacts is essential.

Very few people are born with the access, relationships, and contacts in their field of interest. Most people must build their own networks and create their own access. This can be done through practice and experience. As you review the following sections about the process, tools, and resources for getting a job in the arts, keep in mind the two components of a successful job hunt—developing skills and creating access.

## What Job Seekers Want to Know

**Q:** What are the necessary qualifications for arts management jobs?

**A:** Many employers want to hire people who have good oral and written communication skills; an ability to research, write, and proof-read; a bias for detail; and a professional phone manner. In addition, they often look for personal attributes such as creativity, enthusiasm, resourcefulness, reliability, and general common sense. Other qualifications vary with the job, even within the same organization. If you are interested in working in the development (fundraising) or membership department, experience in research, writing, marketing, and organizing events will be especially valued. If you are attracted to the education department, however, experience with children will be more important. Employers seek applicants who have familiarity with their type of organization and arts area.

**Q:** I'm not good at schmoozing. Why is networking so important?

**A:** Buzzwords such as "informational interviewing," "networking," and "contact development" get used a lot and boil down to one key point: people tend to hire people they know, or people who are referred by someone else whose judgment they respect. This is especially true in the arts. Building relationships can be an effective tool for finding and applying for jobs.

Resist the temptation to view networking as distasteful "schmoozing" with a mission. It might feel like that if you are talking to people who are working in a field that you care nothing about. If, however, you are trying to identify people who are involved in work that really interests you, networking can be exciting and invigorating. Think of networking as talking to interesting people who are knowledgeable and passionate about the arts. In addition to learning about what's going on in your field, you may even develop some allies in your job hunt.

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One of the most destructive attitudes a job seeker can have is some variation of, "Oh, I don't know anybody, I don't have any contacts, and therefore I'll never get a job." Very few people are born with contacts; most people have to create their own by starting with people they know. The key is to spread your net wide. If you ask the question, "Who do I know who works at a theater company?" you might not come up with any contacts. However, a reframing of the question such as, "Who do I know who might know someone working in an art school, a design firm, a magazine, or in music?" will almost certainly yield several contacts who can refer you to someone working at a theater company.

**Q:** What exactly are trade associations and what can they do for me?

**A:** Trade associations and professional organizations disseminate information and provide resources for professionals in a specific field. They often publish magazines or newsletters with information about jobs and grant opportunities, publicize competitions and funding opportunities, discuss trends, and

offer special events and opportunities to connect with other people interested in the arts. Examples of associations in the arts include the Actors Equity Association, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, and the American Symphony Orchestra League.

**Q:** What needs to be on my resume?

**A:** Information on resumes varies enormously by the different field of arts endeavor. For example, a graphic designer's resume (aside from being viewed as a design sample) should highlight any graphics software program competency. For theater management, omit such physical or personal information that would be appropriate for an actor's resume, and instead stress any prior experience in researching, writing, communicating, organizing, bookkeeping and juggling multiple tasks. While familiarity with acting will be appreciated, acting skills will not be the essential ones desired.

As you develop your resume, keep in mind that employers value volunteer and college extracurricular experience and look for a demonstrated interest in the arts. When listing any experience, make sure you describe your role or responsibility clearly. Arts organizations are looking for people who share a commitment to the arts and who can bring certain skills and experiences to the organization.

Many arts organizations have small staffs and too few resources to accomplish all they would like, so employers place high value on an employee who has experience taking initiative and being productive with just a small amount of direction. Other valuable experiences to highlight are those that indicate an ability to investigate and come up with innovative solutions to problems; an ability to research and uncover funding opportunities; excellent writing skills; coordination and organization skills; and an ability to prioritize and juggle multiple tasks. Employers also want their employees to exhibit a collaborative spirit and to produce creative ideas for obtaining financial support.

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**Q:** What do I need to include in a cover letter?

**A:** Cover letters are important because they can determine whether an employer will be inspired to read your resume or examine samples of your work. Cover letters should have a clear purpose and should be tailored to the specific organization and the opportunity that interests you. Regardless of whether you are writing to request consideration for an open position, or to request an informational conversation, your cover letter needs to address the following four questions: (1) why you are writing, (2) what they need to know about you, (3) why you are writing to that particular person or organization, and (4) what they can expect from you next (e.g., that you will telephone them next week to follow up). As for tone, try to create a balance of professionalism and personality.

Applications with typing mistakes are frequently discarded, so it pays to proofread carefully. Cover letters should give a potential employer a sense of your motivation and personality. Don't fall into the trap of only discussing your background and neglect to explain why you have written to that particular organization or person.

**Q:** What should I expect from an interview?

**A:** There are many different kinds of interviews. Most interviews consist of the following components: an ice breaker, general discussion, more focused discussion, and an understanding about next steps.

Although you can't foresee exactly what kind of tone or format your interview may take, you can keep in mind a few strategies when representing yourself:

- Research the employer in

advance. Know the organization's focus, its clientele, its past artistic work. As a result, you will feel prepared and more confident.

- Listen for and inquire about the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying. Keep in mind the few key points you want to convey, based on a self-analysis of your skills, values, and interests.

- Prepare a few questions that will help you determine if this organization is a good match for you. It is perfectly fine to ask about the organization's goals and vision, and it is a good idea to think about how you might support those goals.

**Q:** I'm too old, too broke, or too experienced to volunteer or intern; why does everyone suggest it?

**A:** Serving as an intern or a volunteer in an arts organization develops real working experience and contacts. These are two excellent strategies for helping you obtain skills, learn the lingo, and develop contacts so you are known to people who might hear of a job opening.

A short term internship will help you get familiar with the language or lingo of a field, which will be useful in your job hunt. For example, a Creative Executive and a Development Associate both work in the development departments of a film production company and an arts museum, respectively. Interning in a development department is a great way to know what day-to-day development work is like, which can only strengthen your job-hunting style and make you a more savvy job candidate.

Volunteering to do a specific project can be an efficient use of both your time and the time of a prospective arts employer or col-

league. Interested in proposal writing? Consider volunteering with your local community arts center to help research and write proposals to get experience and learn development skills. Have an interest in arts education? Contact your school department to teach or assist in an art class.

If you are currently in school, consider getting involved in a combination of extracurricular activities, summer or part-time jobs, and formal study and training. If you have graduated, consider combining a

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part-time internship for gaining experience and developing contacts, with a part-time job for money.

**Q:** What kind of degree do I need to get a job?

**A:** Over the last decade, arts management has become a growing field with increasing specialization and training. As a result, a number of new graduate training and certification programs have emerged. Some arts managers suggest eventually pursuing a business degree with a specialization in nonprofit management. Almost without exception, however, arts managers advise getting work-related experience first and considering graduate study later on.

For advanced positions, a graduate degree can be an attractive credential to potential employers. To run an arts education program in a school for dyslexic children, a masters in education or human services might be prized. To lead a curatorial

department, a terminal degree is essential (Ph.D. or M.F.A.). To head up the communications or finance department of a large arts organization, an M.B.A. degree with a focus in non-profit management may be more flexible. However, if you know that you want to work in museums or public cultural agencies, perhaps a masters in arts management or museum studies will serve you best. It is important to get input from professionals in your field before making a decision about graduate programs.

**Q:** I hear the pay is lousy; what can I expect?

**A:** Salaries in non-profit arts organizations do vary enormously, but do tend to pay significantly less than private sector jobs with similar functions. An entry-level public relations position at the Guggenheim Museum pays in the low 20's while an entry-level public relations position in a New York company easily pays upper 20's to low 30's. The Executive Director of the Boston Museum of Science draws a comfortable annual salary of more than \$160,000 while his corporate counterpart, such as a Chief Executive Officer of a Boston company, might make twice that amount. Clearly the museum professionals have found that salary is but one component of a compensation package and that the rewards of their career decisions are more than just financial.

In general arts administration salaries are most heavily influenced by 1) the operational budget of the organization and 2) the geographic location. The places with the most arts employers are urban centers on the east and west coasts. Not surprisingly, those locations with higher salaries also have higher costs of living. To get an accurate idea of the entry-level and more advanced salaries in your area of interest, read trade publications and ask arts professionals these questions during

informational interviews.

**Q:** How can I keep from feeling overwhelmed by my job search?

**A:** The keys are to break your search down into smaller manageable components and to pace yourself. Start by thinking about and researching the kind of arts organizations in which you are interested. Talk to arts professionals. Develop the tools (resumes and cover letters) you will need for your job search. And, of course, candidly assess your strengths and limitations and think about strategies to improve your skills and your access.

Be sure to cultivate creative, personal and inexpensive ways to manage your stress such as yoga, running or reading fiction. Don't try to conduct your job search full-time. If your financial situation permits, an ideal weekly schedule is to dedicate at least 5-10 hours to volunteering or interning, 10-15 hours to your job search and informational interviewing, and 20 hours for income. If you are employed in a job you dislike, try to dedicate at least five hours a week to networking and informational interviewing. Set up morning coffee dates, lunch-hour appointments, and networking events after work. Your current work situation will feel more tolerable if you are creating contacts and know that your situation is temporary. In any case, plan for a search that will take a number of months.

Ask yourself: "What kind of plan do I want to make for the next six, twelve, or twenty-four months?" Focus on a manageable block of time, not the rest of your life. The future tends to sort itself out when you break it down into smaller steps.

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# Arts Management Job Search Resources

## RESOURCES

By Ande Diaz

### Descriptive Information

Descriptive Information defines and describes a career field and the kinds of roles and responsibilities that exist.

*The Artist in Business* by Craig Dreeszen, Arts Extension Service, Division of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, 1991.

Geared to the needs of enterprising crafts people, visual artists, and performers. This resource provides a framework for acquiring skills in such essential areas as: fundamentals of business operations; record keeping, taxes, and the budget process; understanding your legal rights; and financial resources.

*This Business of Music* by Sidney Shemal and M. William Krasilovsky, Billboard Publications, Inc., New York, NY, 1985.

*Careers by Design: A Headhunter's Secrets for Success and Survival in Graphic Design* by Roz Goldfarb, Allworth Press, co-published with American Council for the Arts, New York, NY, 1993.

Describes graphic, identity, print, environmental, industrial, and computer design. Also gives advice on portfolios and discusses salaries and hiring practices.

*Career Opportunities in Art* by Susan H. Haubenstock and David Joselit, Facts on File Publishing, New York, NY, 1988.

Describes positions, responsibilities, and career paths in museums, arts education, auction galleries, and funding agencies for the arts.

*Computer Graphics Career Handbook*, Association for Computer Machinery, Inc. Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics, New York, NY, 1991.

Provides computer graphics career data and profiles of professionals in the industry. Also includes a listing of colleges and universities offering courses in computer graphics. Contains information on job-search process.

*For the Working Artist: A Survival Guide for Artists* by Judith Luther. National Network For Artist Placement, Los Angeles, CA, 1991.

Helps artists master the business side of their careers, including grant writing, legal assistance, financial management, copyrighting, and negotiating contracts.

*The Harvard College Guide to Grants* by Lisa M. Muto and Paul A. Bohlmann. Office of Career Services, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, 1994.

Basic information on fellowships and the application process. Includes grants for study in the United States and overseas, as well as grants for work and practical experience. Annotated bibliography. Alphabetical index of grants.

*Jobs in Arts and Media Management: What They Are and How To Get One!* by Stephen Langley and James Abruzzo. American Council for the Arts, co-published with Allworth Press, New York, NY, 1990.

Describes the various career fields and offers job-hunting advice. Lists graduate programs in arts administration; arts, media, and management internships; and seminars, workshops, information centers, referral services, membership associations, and job newsletters.

*Performing Arts Career Directory*, edited by Bradley J. Morgan and Joseph M. Palmisano. Gale Research, Inc., Detroit, MI, 1994. Includes advice by industry professionals; job-search guidance; job and internship listings from leading companies in the United States; additional career resources.

*Supporting Yourself as an Artist: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. by Deborah A. Hoover. Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, NY, 1989.

Provides sound advice on how to deal with the most common problems confronting independent artists. Explains how to develop a network, identify support, find appropriate funding sources, and write proposals.

*Writer's Market: Where and How to Sell What You Write* by Mark Garvey, editor. Writers Digest Books, Cincinnati, OH, annual.

### Directories

Directories provide detailed lists of information about organizations, training programs, or funding sources. Directories are usually more useful and less overwhelming after you have reviewed some descriptive information.

*The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs*, 6th ed., D.W. Fenza and Beth Jarock, editors. Association Writing Programs, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, 1992.

Describes graduate and undergraduate creative writing programs in the United States and Canada. Includes faculty listings and information on conferences, colonies, and centers for writers. Index lists programs by degrees offered and by state. Includes the AWP Guidelines for Creative Writing Programs and Teachers of Creative Writing.

*Directory to Industrial Design in the United States*, Charles Burnette and Associates. Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, NY, 1992.

Contains descriptive profiles of independent consulting firms and corporate design departments that provide design services and resources. Also lists schools that offer educational programs and publications that serve the field.

*Education Career Directory*, 1st ed., Bradley J. Morgan and Joseph M. Palmisano, editors. Gale Research, Inc., Detroit, MI, 1994.

Includes advice by industry professionals; job-search guidance; job and internship listings; information on additional career resources.

*Free Money for People in the Arts*, by Laurie Blum. Collier Books, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1991.

Lists by subject organizations that provide grants, prizes, residency programs, and other funding. Offers guidelines for writing successful grant applications. Includes sample proposals and well-detailed entries.

*Grants and Awards Available to American Writers 1994/95*, 18th ed. PEN American Center, New York, NY, 1994.

Directory of grants and awards for use in the United States and abroad. Includes section for Canadian citizens. Appendices contain information on state arts councils, award, and category indexes. Alphabetical entries coded by literary categories, i.e., fiction, poetry, drama, etc.

*Guide to Arts Administration Training 1993-1994*, American Council for the Arts, co-published with Allworth Press, New York, NY, 1993.

Describes graduate programs. Appendix includes contacts for short-term training programs such as seminars, workshops, institutes, and job-listing services.

*Handels National Directory for Performing Arts*, 5th ed. RR Bowker, New Providence, New Jersey, 1992.

Volume One lists organizations and facilities arranged alphabetically by state, city within each state, and by arts area. Volume Two lists educational institutions alphabetically within the states and contains specific information on their dance, music, and theater departments.

*Money for International Exchange in the Arts*, Jane M. Gullong and Noreen Tomassi, editors. American Council for the Arts, New York, NY, 1992.

Profiles 160 different organizations that offer information and technical assistance; exchange programs and travel grants; exhibitions and presentations; grant, fellowship, award, research and study opportunities; and artists' residences and colonies. Indexes alphabetical, geographic, discipline, types of support.

*1993-1994 Fifth Bi-Annual National Directory of Arts Internships*, edited by Warren Christensen. The National Network For Artist Placement, Los Angeles, CA, 1991.

Lists over 1,000 host organizations offering more than 2,300 internship opportunities for careers in arts management, dance, theater,

music, literature, art/design, film/video, photography, performing arts design and technology, and inter-disciplinary arts fields. Includes useful sections on how to design an individual internship, as well as practical information on preparing resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and yourself for an interview.

### **Magazines and Trade Publications**

Magazines and trade publications are read by professionals in specific fields within the arts. Reading the ones relevant to your area of interest will alert you to trends, job openings, and other opportunities.

*Artists Resources Letter*. Boston, MA. Bimonthly.

Published by the Career Services Office of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. Contains employment opportunities and grants, fellowships, residencies, plus exhibitions and competitions at the local, regional, national, and international levels. Available by subscription to individuals.

*ARTnews*. New York, NY Monthly.

Includes various articles on subjects ranging from Annie Leibovitz to Andy Warhol. Includes what is happening on the art market, current events and issues, and reviews.

*ArtSEARCH*. New York, NY. Twenty-three issues per year.

A national employment service bulletin for the arts including, but not limited to, administration, artistic, and production opportunities. In addition, lists internships, apprenticeships, and education positions.

*Aviso*. Washington, DC. Monthly.

Published by the American Associations of Museums. Includes events, deadlines, and classified ads.

*The Independent*. New York, NY. Ten issues a year.

Published by the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers. Includes feature articles, media clips, field reports, festivals, calls for entries, and job postings.

*WESTAF's National Arts Jobbank*. Santa Fe, NM. Bimonthly.

Published by the Western States Arts Federation, a regional alliance of state arts agencies. Opportunities are indexed by agencies, presenting organizations, artistic performance, internships, and other opportunities.