

Understanding the Associational  
Infrastructure of the Arts and Culture

Margaret J. Wyszomirski and Joni M. Cherbo  
[Wyszomirski.1@osu.edu](mailto:Wyszomirski.1@osu.edu)  
[Jmcherbo@pipeline.com](mailto:Jmcherbo@pipeline.com)

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Margaret J. Wyszomirski  
The Ohio State University

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**Understanding the Associational Infrastructure of the Arts and Culture**

by Margaret J. Wyszomirski and Joni M. Cherbo  
The Ohio State University

Associational activities and organizations have played a significant role throughout American history. In the arts and culture, they have played significant roles in the development and implementation of public policies as well as in the evolution and self-governance of artistic

professions. Arts Service Organizations (ASOs) come in many varieties. Some represent similar groups within a particular artform (e.g., symphony orchestras in the American Symphony Orchestra League or opera companies in Opera America or non-commercial publishers in the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses). Others represent a particular type of organization across a number of fields or disciplines (e.g., museums of all sorts art, science, history in the American Association of Museums or presenting organizations in the Association of Performing Arts Presenters). Still others represent the corporations within a particular entertainment industry (such as the Motion Picture Association of America) or types of governmental agencies (e.g., National Assembly of State Arts Agencies). Unions (e.g., Actors Equity), guilds (e.g., Screen Actors Guild), and certain professional associations (e.g., ASCAP) focus on individual members rather than organizations. Ethnic and linguistic cultural groups as well as cultural hobbyists and avocational artists have come together in a plethora of service organizations that are as numerous and diverse as American pluralism.

A conservative estimate would count at least 800 national arts service organizations with at least an equal number of state, regional and/or local membership organizations that serve arts and cultural interests.<sup>1</sup> For example, many states have statewide advocacy groups for the arts as well as advocacy groups for arts education and statewide associations of museums. In addition, many American groups support foreign cultural institutions (e.g., the Friends of Covent Garden). Similarly, there are many groups of Afriends@ or guilds that support specific American cultural institutions.

Out of this multitude of arts and cultural service organizations, only a few are reasonably well known within the cultural community at large and only a handful are active in public policy-making processes at any level of government. There are no cultural interest groups that rise to a general level of public awareness such as the Sierra Club in the realm of environmental policy or the American Council on Education in higher education policy. Only the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) are generally regarded as being highly effective lobbying groups in Washington.

In terms of influencing, monitoring, and implementing public policy, service organizations are a crucial part of any policy community.<sup>2</sup> In terms of professional self-governance and development, service organizations perform key functions. And in terms of furthering avocational interests, fostering diverse community and cultural heritages, and building social capital, service organizations are important components of civil society. Despite the range, multitude, recent growth, and importance of service organizations in the arts and cultural sector, we have relatively little systematic knowledge about them.<sup>3</sup> Other than anecdote, we know little about when and why such associations are formed; nor do we understand why some groups become politically active while others do not. We lack organized information about how organizations maintain themselves, what kinds of benefits they provide their members, or the organizational resources they have to work with. We don't know how service organizations differ across the components of the arts and cultural sector--nonprofit, commercial, and informal. Similarly, we know relatively little about how the services and resources of ASO's vary by discipline, by organizational age, or type of members; nor do we have explanations for these variations.

Politically, there is little information about the political activities and advocacy strategies that arts service organizations employ or about the policy issues that concern them. We don't have a clear understanding of when or why ASOs become politically active and if this is an ongoing or an episodic activity. We do not fully understand the variety of ways in which ASOs channel the interaction between government and professions (or interests), between public policy and private policy, or how these associations generate social capital and how that capital is then applied in the various segments of civil society.

Our factual and descriptive understanding of this associational infrastructure is incomplete and fragmented, which, in turn, impairs our ability to explain both the cause and consequences of current conditions. We have relatively few case studies of arts service organizations in action - whether as organizational histories, attempts to influence policy decisions, or project and service assessment. While some ASO's collect extensive information on their members, this information is seldom comparable among ASOs and is often unavailable in a complete and raw form. In short,

when it comes to understanding the roles, functions, activities, variations, life-cycles, and effectiveness of arts and cultural service organizations, we confront a substantial but fragmented and spotty body of data that is analytically incoherent representing a field of interests that lacks mutual awareness and established networks of interaction.

While significant in themselves, such gaps in our knowledge and understanding are even more important-and troublesome--at a time when the cultural community faces numerous and new policy issues; environmental forces such as globalization, demographic and technological change that produce new challenges; and shifts in the roles of government and the private sector in the support, protection, and promotion of cultural activities in American society.

### The Importance of Associations and Interest Groups

In general, service organizations or interest groups were a notable feature of the American scene when Alexis deTocqueville was writing in the 1830s. Today, service associations are attracting new interest as generators of social capital, engines of civil society, and promoters of special interests. Such associations come in a variety of forms: from membership associations at the national, state, local or regional levels to operating organizations that deliver service-for-fees. National membership organizations themselves exist under a variety of names, including arts service organizations, professional and trade associations, unions, ethnically-specific social groups, interest-based affinity groups, and cause-motivated associations.

If membership associations become politically active, they are commonly called interest groups. These politically active ASOs, then become arts interest groups (or AIGs). As political scientists Baumgartner and Leech observe about interest groups in general:

AGroups are at the heart of the political process; they are central to the process of representation...They motivate people in elections; they channel participation through neighborhoods, schools, ethnic groups, and in professions; they disseminate information from political elites to the mass public; they are active at every level of government in providing information, in speaking for affected constituencies, and in debating the merits of proposed policy changes; they work in almost every conceivable way to affect the government.. Groups are basic to the practice of politics..@<sup>4</sup>

Groups that are inactive politically are sometimes referred to as nascent interest groups. While it is generally the case that arts interest groups are ASOs, many ASOs do not engage in political activity and hence are not AIGs. AIGs are integral elements of the cultural policy community and crucial participants in the process of cultural-policy making. Nascent AIGs are also important because, as the political situation and the character of public issues change, they may become politically involved. In addition, all ASOs play an important role in the self-governance and internal communications of professional and avocational groups. Hence they have an important role in group self-governance and private policy-making.

The last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a dramatic expansion of interest group organization and political activity. During these decades, virtually every interest -B whether economically, socially or ideologically motivated -- organized itself into a membership organization. Many of these associations became engaged in advocacy and lobbying activities and thus evolved into interest groups. Likewise, the number of lobbyists-for-hire working independently or out of the Washington offices of law firms, public relations firms, and political consulting firms has grown tremendously. At the same time, the repertoire of political action tactics and targets proliferated to include direct and indirect lobbying; election and media campaigns; inside, outside, and coalition strategies; grassroots and elite foci; legislative, presidential, bureaucratic and judicial targets; research, monitoring, and policy development activities as well as advocacy and lobbying. These developments are also reflected in the associations of the arts and culture sector.

### Arts Service Organizations: Preliminary Dimensions

The associational infrastructure includes membership associations and other kinds of organizations that provide support services for the arts and cultural sector. Our focus here is on national membership organizations which will be discussed in more detail shortly. While we

recognize that these are only one part of the associational infrastructure for the arts and culture, this initial focus seems justified because national membership organizations are perhaps the most politically active components of this infrastructure. As such, national membership organizations are an important part of the public policy discussion in ways that seem unlikely for other infrastructure components.

**The Components of the Associational Infrastructure.** In generally, the associational infrastructure for the arts and culture consists of organizations that provide services and supports for individuals, groups, and institutions engaged in the arts and culture. Sometimes these organizations serve a membership, othertimes they serve customers or clients whether on a fee-paying or a volunteer basis. All of these organizations provide some sort of service. Membership organizations clearly serve their members through the provision of a variety of services. Arts and cultural membership organizations exist across the geographical horizon-national, state, regional, and local. Other elements of the associational infrastructure may provides services but lack members or have members who are organized for the explicit purpose of providing services to the arts and culture. Some organizations specialize in specific, professional services such as consulting firms, conservation services, research institutes, educational and training institutions, and volunteer lawyers for the arts. Hence these organizations provide services but are frequently not membership organizations. Similarly, other organizations-which may or may not involve members-provide financial support services, such as fundraising guilds, community art funds, trustee groups, and booster clubs. Here again, the purpose of the organizations is not to represent the interests of its members but rather to coordinate the provision of services by its members to artists and cultural institutions and businesses. Still other associations are comprised of members who provide equipment or other support services essential to cultural producers such as associations of musical instrument manufacturers or of craft suppliers.

**Membership Services.** Membership associations provide a variety of services to their members. Common services include job postings and professional credentialling services; professional development and technical assistance programs; conferences and forums; publications; calendar information on programs and projects of members; legal and insurance services; political/policy representation; information gathering and research; public education efforts; and contacts with other service, funding, and representational organizations. The political activities of associations include advocacy and lobbying, professional self-governance, coalition-building, issue identification, and political monitoring, to name some of the most common. Some groups are politically active in many ways and on many issues. Others are politically inactive; and yet others are only narrowly or reluctantly engaged in political activities

**Locating the Universe of Service Organizations.** Consonant with the expansive meaning of the arts and cultural sector, we do not restrict ourselves to associations that represent interests of the non-profit artworld, but rather consider the entire arts sector: commercial and informal as well as nonprofit. Generically, these groups will be referred to as arts service organizations (ASOs). ASOs are generally incorporated as nonprofit organizations. Many are 501c3 organizations (charitable), but others may formally be 501c4 (advocacy groups), 501c5 (labor unions), 501c6 (business leagues) or 501c7 (social and recreational clubs). A preliminary estimate finds that 42% of the national membership organizations in the arts and culture represent members located in the nonprofit sector, 38% in the commercial sector, 17% in the informal or avocational sector, with the remaining 3% drawing members from both the nonprofit and commercial sectors or representing public cultural organizations. From an artistic perspective, these associations cluster in the following manner:

- Live Performing Arts 37%
- Electronic Performing Arts 20%
- Visual Arts and Museums 15%
- Arts and Crafts 7%
- Cultural Heritage 5%
- Design and Graphic Arts 5%
- All Others Combined 11%

In its 1986-1990 planning document, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) defined service organizations for the nonprofit arts world as those that "exist not to produce, present, or preserve art, but to help others do so...[by providing] information, opportunities to communicate, advocacy, public education, professional and volunteer training, and...various forms of technical, managerial, and support services..." It went on to explain that "the term service organizations covers a heterogeneous assortment of enterprises, some field-specific, some function-specific, and some interdisciplinary."<sup>5</sup> Unions were also identified as another set of service groups that were primarily concerned with collective bargaining activities concerning "bread and butter issues" such as compensation, benefits and retirement, and working conditions.<sup>6</sup>

**Historical Development.** Today, organizations and individuals across the arts sector are better organized, have secured more resources, and become more adept at political action than they were fifty years ago. However, different segments of the arts and cultural sector became organized and politically active at different times. For example, one of the most historic of artistic professions, architecture, formed a professional association--the American Institute of Architects (AIA)--in 1857. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, companies and workers in commercial arts industries such as movies, Broadway theatre, recordings, and publishing formed professional and trade associations to promote and protect their economic interests. These associations grew and evolved with the industries themselves and seem to have become more politically active in the post-war period, both in efforts to influence public policy and to protect (perhaps even expand) the scope of their self-governance.

On the whole, the nonprofit arts sector came later to organizing and to engaging in political action. Although a few associations formed in the first half of the century (notably the American Association of Museums in 1906 and the American Symphony Orchestra League in 1942), the period of significant expansion occurred in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>7</sup> A number of factors would seem to go into explaining this timing. Before the late 1960s, the potential membership in particular fields and occupations may have been too small to elicit organizational efforts or to exert much political influence, particularly at the national level. Until the arts boom of the 1960 and 1970s increased the scale and magnitude of the potential financial, professional, and political stakes of these interests and linked them to the fate of the NEA, the direct effects of public policy decisions were relatively small and infrequent. In addition, organizations and individuals in the nonprofit arts were notoriously independent-minded, difficult to organize, and historically wary of engagement with government and politics.

Historically, the linkage between the NEA and the development and political activity of ASOs and AIGs representing the nonprofit art-world has been integral and multi-faceted. The NEA acted as a "patron of political action",<sup>8</sup> providing financial support and enhancing professional status for existing and developing ASOs. It was even instrumental in the creation of a number of associations. In some cases, ASOs became "third party" agents of the federal agency to administer programs in professional development, technical assistance, and/or field-wide innovation. Alternatively, the periodic authorization hearings and the annual appropriations hearings for the NEA became a catalyst and focal point for the political activity of many ASOs. In contrast, there is little evidence of such close linkages between service and trade organizations representing the interests of the commercial or avocational arts and federal agencies or policies. Furthermore, the patterns of interaction between government and service organizations outside the nonprofit subsector appears to be more distant, and may also be more conflictual and more episodic.

Avocational, informal, and other types of "unincorporated" arts interests formed groups throughout the 20th century. Economic interests were frequently **not** the incentive to organize. Instead, the desire was for social solidarity prompted by

- ethnic heritage (e.g., Chinese Music Society of North American; the Slovak Writers and Artists Association, or the Irish-American Cultural Society)
- craft skill (e.g., Colonial Coverlet Guild of America, Woodworking Association of North America, or the Embroider's Guild of America)
- interest in the work of a particular artist (e.g., American Beethoven Society, James Joyce Society); or
- avocational interests (e.g., American Bonsai Society, Sweet Adelines International, United

Square Dancers of America)

More recently, cause-related groups have formed to pursue or prevent public action on specific cultural issues such as freedom of expression, repatriation of cultural property, violence in the media, and diversity/multiculturalism.

**Membership.** The members of these associations may be individuals, organizations, or (in the case of peak associations) other associations. **Individual members** may be members of a professional or occupational group (e.g., the American Association of Museum Directors or Actors Equity). They may be individuals with a shared personal interest or a common heritage (e.g., Association of Museum Volunteers, the Wagner Society, or the Ethnic Cultural Preservation Council). They may be citizens with a commitment to a common cause (e.g., National Council on Television Violence, or the Deaf Artists of America, or the American Booksellers for Free Expression).

**Organizational members** may be nonprofit arts and cultural organizations such as museums (American Association of Museums), orchestras (American Symphony Orchestra League), or public television stations. They may be corporations in the cultural industries such as motion picture production studios (Motion Picture Academy of America), commercial art galleries, or for-profit publishing houses. Organizational members might be embedded groups, clubs (e.g., National Federation of Music Clubs), or informal groups with similar concerns or activities (e.g., SPEBSQSA Barbershop Quartets). Or they may be public agencies (e.g., National Assembly of State Arts Agencies)

Individual as well as organizational members of national service organizations may be located anywhere in the arts and cultural sector: nonprofit, for-profit, informal, or public. The members of some associations are located in just one subsector (e.g., the Association of Talent Agents represents for-profit professionals, while the American Needlework Guild includes individual hobbyists and craftspeople). Alternatively, a given association may draw members from any combination of these locations. For example, Americans for the Arts includes both individual and organizational members; its organizational members include both nonprofit and public organizations as does the American Association of Museums.

Collectively, these different organizing trajectories and membership groupings provide a representational, informational, and policy-making support system for the arts and cultural sector. However, accurate and comprehensive information about the range and variety of this associational infrastructure is not readily available. Without such baseline information, our knowledge of and ability to project about the uses, effectiveness, and potential of these associations and the interests that they represent is severely limited. Although we know that ASOs can play an important role in the evolution of a profession and in professional self-governance, we don't fully understand how this occurs or why certain organizations develop certain programs, self-governance mechanisms, and services rather than others. We can observe that not all ASOs are structured in the same way (e.g., some have local or regional chapters and others only operate at the national level), but we don't understand very much about the ramifications of these differences). In recent years, many ASOs have experienced changes in leadership, such that one can almost discern a generational turnover. Yet we understand little about the character and effects of differences in leadership style, authority, or context. Nor do we have a clear idea how service organizations can effect leadership succession in their member organizations influence that might range from providing professional networks and recruitment pipelines to technical assistance in succession planning.

Potentially, these are all important subjects not only because these associations have and continue to play a significant role in the operation of American society but because they may be of special importance in an era that both seeks to reinvigorate civil society and that seems inclined toward privatization and private action mechanisms. Furthermore, the growing importance of informational resources and communication channels for the Information Society would seem to make ASO's potentially more strategic organizations than ever before.

### Music: A Field Example

The foregoing discussion of the various dimensions and varieties of national membership

organizations in the arts and culture is both complex and relatively conceptual. Therefore, we have provided an illustrative grouping--or map--of the associational terrain in the area of music. This "music map" is only illustrative not comprehensive at this point. Nevertheless, we think it begins to demonstrate the rich network of kinds of groups that comprise the associational infrastructure of just one artistic discipline: music. These examples draw from the worlds of commercial music, popular music, nonprofit professional music, and community as well as avocational music activities.

#### I. MUSICAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- American Symphony Orchestra League
- Chorus America
- Chamber Music America
- Association of American Male Choruses
- Association of Concert Bands
- American Music Festival Association
- The Sweet Adelines

#### II. INDIVIDUAL MUSIC PROFESSIONALS AND PERFORMERS

- American Bandmasters Association
- American Composers Alliance
- American Guild of Organists
- International Guild of Symphony, Opera, and Ballet Musicians
- American Federation of Musicians of U.S. and Canada
- National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians
- National Association of Negro Musicians
- National Flute Association
- Music Women International
- Conductors Guild
- Nashville Songwriters Association International
- Amateur Chamber Music Players

#### III. ALLIED MUSIC PROFESSIONALS AND BUSINESS GROUPS

- Music Critics Association of North America
- American Music Therapy Association
- Music Publishers Association of the United States
- National Association of Band Instrument Manufacturers
- National Sheet Music Society
- Piano Manufacturers Association International
- Society of Professional Audio Recording Services
- American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers
- American Society of Music Copyists
- Independent Music Retailers Association
- National Association of Accompanists and Coaches
- Recording Industry of America
- National Council of Music Importers and Exporters

#### IV. MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING GROUPS

- Music Educators National Conference
- National Association of Schools of Music
- Organization of American Kodaly Educators
- National Guild of Piano Teachers
- American String Teachers Association
- International Association of Jazz Educators

#### V. GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CERTAIN TYPES OF MUSIC

- American Society for Jewish Music
- Gospel Music Association
- Rhythm and Blues Rock and Roll Society
- Society for Asian Music
- National Academy for Popular Music
- International Computer Music Association
- Bohemian Ragtime Society

#### VI. MUSICAL INTERESTS ASSOCIATIONS

- American Beethoven Society
- Bruckner Society of America
- International Association of Jazz Record Collectors
- National Federation of Music Clubs
- Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of BarberShop Quartet Singing In America
- Catgut Acoustical Society

#### VII. IDENTITY-BASED MUSIC GROUPS (e.g., race, gender, religious denomination, ethnicity)

- National Black Music Caucus
- National Association of Negro Musicians
- Women Band Directors International
- International Alliance of Women in Music
- American Women Composers
- Associated Male Choruses of America
- Christian Instrumentalists and Directors Association
- Fellowship of American Baptist Musicians
- Presbyterian Association of Musicians
- Chinese Music Society of North America
- Norwegian Singers Association

#### VIII. MUSIC RESEARCH GROUPS

- Council for Research in Music Education
- International Association for Research in Vietnamese Music

#### IX. UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGIATE MUSICAL ASSOCIATIONS

- College Music Society
- Intercollegiate Men's Chorus
- National Association of Music Executives in State Universities

As this preliminary associational map for music indicates, there are many kinds of national membership groups in the music field--nearly 70 in this illustrative listing alone. Various kinds of musical performing groups--from orchestras and choruses to concert bands and chamber music groups--have specific national associations. Similarly, individual musicians have formed a set of national associations that may focus on the players of a particular instrument (e.g., flute, organ, trombone, violin, etc); on directors of musical ensembles (e.g., bandmasters or conductors); or that limit membership on the bases of gender, religious affiliation, or race.

Another cluster of associations represent business and/or occupational groups that support, sustain, and supply the performance and presentation of music, such as equipment and supply manufacturers, copyists, coaches, and critics. Relatedly, various associations represent facets of music education and training. And a handful of associations involve those who provide research services for the music field.

Finally, we see three clusters of music associations that coalesce around what the interest group literature calls "solidarity" benefits--an affinity for a particular type of music, an interest in the work of a particular composer, or identity-based social support or collegiality.

Of course, this is only a preliminary and incomplete "music map." A more comprehensive survey would categorize all the relevant national membership associations as to type of members as well as by motivation for establishment. Further study might examine the relative size, activities and resources of these groups; explore interconnections between groups; analyze how their issue concerns overlap and diverge.

Clearly, the location and identification of this set of national music associations reveals a richer, deeper, and more diverse associational infrastructure than we have heretofore recognized. Subsequently, this first step leads to the possibility of more detailed examination and analysis. Furthermore, developing such associational maps for each art discipline and cultural industry is likely to reveal that different disciplines exhibit different contours. Certainly different associations exhibit different patterns of organizational activity. Exploring these discoveries will, in turn, accord us a much better basis for understanding the role that associations play in the professional, political, cultural, and civil life of their members as well as the nation as a whole.

#### The Policy-making Role of ASOs and AIGs

The cohesiveness, coordination, and effectiveness of these associations as members of a policy community has been weakened by deep and numerous fracture lines that have established niche interests according to discipline, function, and sub-sector.<sup>9</sup> Even a cursory survey reveals few peak associations across the subsectors, disconnects between the advocacy activities of groups at different levels of the political system, and relatively few explicitly shared issue concerns.

Furthermore, our basic information about the political activities of ASO's is characterized by significant gaps. Let us briefly discuss four of the major dimensions of this inadequacy.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Possible Political Activities Across the Entire Policy-Making Process.**

Historically, AIGs in the nonprofit artworld have focused on the middle phases of the public policy-making process, i.e., budgeting and program administration. Although much of this effort has been pursued separately by each AIG, in recent years, the government affairs directors of many of these associations have banded together into a loose advocacy coalition called the Congressional Arts Group (CAG). Many of these arts groups also collaborate in organizing an annual Arts Advocacy Day focussed on members of Congress.

As the arts policy paradigm shifts into a cultural policy paradigm, AIGs (as well as other ASOs) are likely to be called upon by their members to further develop a capacity to participate effectively in the beginning and end phases of the public policy-making process. That is, to engage in issue and option development as well as agenda-setting at the beginning; and to engage in policy assessment and program evaluation both as a demonstration of accountability and as a prompt to subsequent program revision and policy innovation.

In order to rise to this challenge, the cultural policy community must expand and deepen its informational resources and its intellectual infrastructure. AIGs and ASOs, together with policy scholars and analysts as well as interested foundations, have an important part to play in constructing the intellectual infrastructure necessary to generate the ideas, mechanisms, and information that will shape and legitimate cultural policies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Furthermore, as the full spectrum of cultural policy issues becomes more apparent, ASOs will also need to expand their governmental monitoring activities. They may seek to do this through staff expansion individually or find ways to combine their efforts in ad hoc or enduring advocacy coalitions. Furthermore, any such advocacy coalition may also seek allies outside the arts, in other cultural areas such as historic preservation, tourism, the humanities, archives and libraries, and educational and cultural exchanges.

**The Variety of Possible Government-ASO Interactions.** It is commonplace to equate the political activities of interest groups with lobbying. In reality, however, lobbying is only one of a number of government-ASO interactions that occur or that can be developed--as can be seen from the following list:

- 1) ASOs act as third-party implementors of public policies designed and/or funded by government agencies.
- 2) ASOs act as a source of expertise and information for government policy and decision-making.

- 3) Government policies, decisions, application requirements, judicial decisions, and regulations set parameters and condition that influence how ASOs function.
- 4) ASOs can act to avoid government action--seeking either to prevent government action by engaging in self-regulation or to present a non-public means of implementing public programs.
- 5) ASOs can monitor and evaluate the performance of government actors and organizations.
- 6) ASOs may be advocates for and constituency supporters of government agencies and programs.
- 7) Government can provide financial support for ASOs.
- 8) ASOs can monitor conditions and concerns of their members, identify potential public policy issues, and bring these conditions, concerns, and issues to the attention of government actors.
- 9) ASOs may challenge government actions, policies, and decisions in the courts or organize protests against them in the streets.
- 10) Some interest groups may engage in campaign activities to influence the election of particular public officials.
- 11) ASOs may engage in public education and media campaigns to stimulate citizen efforts to influence government officials and decisions.

All of these are possible Government-ASO interactions. But we know very little about the range of these interactions. Although may be able to identify instances of these types of interactions, we lack detailed case studies. Hence, we don't know why some relationships develop rather than others or under what circumstances. For example, ASOs representing the commercial arts (e.g., film, television, recordings) seem to have been quite effective at preventing government action through the initiation of voluntary rating and labelling systems<sup>11</sup>. Are there comparable instances concerning the nonprofit arts? How prevalent are such avoidance tactics and when don't they work? Alternatively, we know that in the past decade, ASOs representing the nonprofit arts have engaged in a number of media campaigns using public service announcements. How effective have these been? When are they used and when not? In short, exploring each of the government-ASO interactions listed above-- as well as making comparisons across types of interactions and circumstances of their use and effectiveness -- is a veritable research agenda in itself.

**Types of Political Action Strategies.** Political scientists have at least three primary strategies that interest groups may pursue politically.<sup>12</sup> These are

1. Inside Strategy--working within government to effect public policy thru such activities as testifying to Congress, contacting agency personnel, serving on public advisory boards, participating in litigation over policy, presenting research and information to government officials, or contacting members of Congress individually.
2. Outside Strategy--engaging in activities outside government in an effort to influence public officials thru such activities as talking with the press, organizing letter-writing campaigns, holding press conferences, protesting, engaging in media campaigns, and publicizing the votes of candidates.
3. Advocacy Coalition Strategy --banding together with other interest groups to pursue shared policy interests and concerns through combining organizational resources and capabilities in coordinated political action activities.

What we know about concentrates on legislative lobbying -B mostly as it concerns the appropriations and reauthorization for the Arts Endowment. On the one hand, this leaves us with little information on the political activities and advocacy efforts of ASOs concerning other federal cultural agencies. It also limits our knowledge about the involvement of ASOs in other decisionmaking and policy-making forums such as the courts, the presidency, state and local government institutions, and international bodies. Although the cultural community has employed media campaigns, we have little research on the content or effectiveness of these efforts. Similarly, our understanding of the utilities and uses of ASO information-gathering and research activities is rudimentary, as is our assessment of the political effectiveness of such information.

Nor does this focus on lobbying for the NEA tell us much about relatively recent shifts in political strategy and tactics. During the last decade of the "culture wars", ASOs (which

traditionally relied on an inside political strategy) have also sometimes engaged in both an outside strategy and an advocacy coalition strategy. What prompted this change in strategy? and how effective was each strategy? What political action strategies are used for other kinds of cultural policy issues cultural property and cultural trade issues? for art education policy? for broadcast regulations? for alleged censorship? for intellectual property concerns?

**Political Action Tactics.** Comparative studies of interest group activities in different policy arenas have discerned a broad repertoire of political action tactics that can be used. Baumgartner and Leech have identified nearly a dozen commonly used political tactics.<sup>13</sup> Reid enumerates seven advocacy tactics that employ a combined total of 25 types of political action.<sup>14</sup> It appears that different types of interest groups tend to use different political action tactics and also that interest groups also vary their tactics according to the type of policy issue under discussion. In other areas of interest group study, such information is accumulated both through case studies and through mail surveys of interest groups. Neither source of information is currently available with regard to arts and cultural policy issues or service organizations. However, it is hoped that both case studies and a survey will be part of the future research plan of the "Mapping the Association Infrastructure for the Arts and Culture" Project.

### **Concluding Comments**

Taken together, ASOs and AIGs across the arts sector constitute an informational, representational, and private policy-making support system for the arts and culture sector. Yet despite its importance, its potential, and its rapid growth in the past two to three decades, we know relatively little about it holistically or about various components and activities. Certainly as a key component of the cultural policy system and the cultural policy community, our sketchy knowledge and understanding of ASOs and CIGs diminishes our ability to analyze cultural policy issues and processes. Our lack of knowledge also impairs the ability of policymakers to make well-informed policy and of arts practitioners to influence public policy. Clearly, the research and analysis opportunities concerning the associational infrastructure for the arts and culture are rich with potential. Furthermore, applying the knowledge gained through such research efforts is likely to be a valuable asset in the development and effectiveness of a cultural policy community.

### ***Endnotes***

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1. Unless otherwise referenced, the information about arts and cultural service organizations in this article is drawn from the ongoing research project, "Mapping the Associational Infrastructure for the Arts and Culture." The initial stage of this project is co-directed by Margaret J. Wyszomirski and Joni M. Cherbo at the Arts Policy and Administration Program at Ohio State University and has been partially funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation. For more information, see the APA Program website at [www.osu.edu/arted/apa](http://www.osu.edu/arted/apa)

2. Margaret J. Wyszomirski, "Policy Communities and Policy Influence: Securing a Government Role in Cultural Policy for the 21st Century," in The Politics of Culture edited by Gigi Bradford, Michael Gary, and Glenn Wallach, (New York: The New Press, 2000), pp. 94-107.

3. A call for better understanding and research about arts service

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organizations was part of the research agenda articulated by the American Assembly in its 1997 report, The Arts and the Public Purpose.

4. Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech, Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 188.

5. National Endowment for the Arts, Five-Year Planning Document, 1986-1990, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1984), p. 109.

6. Ibid., p. 112.

7. On the development and activities of ASO's representing nonprofit arts organizations, see Margaret Jane Wyszomirski, "The Politics of Arts Policy: Subgovernment to Issue Network," in America's Commitment to Culture, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 47-76. Also see Joseph Wesley Zeigler, "Friendly Persuasion: The Arts Arrive on Capital Hill", American Arts, July 1983, pp. 22-26.

8. The term "patrons of political action" comes from Jack L. Walker Jr., "The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America," The American Political Science Review, Vol. 77, No. 2 (1983), pp. 390-406.

9. Margaret J. Wyszomirski, "Political Communities..."

10. The identification of these gaps among arts and cultural interest groups has been based on a reading of general interest groups research, notably, Jeffrey M. Berry, The Interest Group Society, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984); Jack L. Walker, Mobilizing Interest Groups in America, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991); Robert H. Salisbury, "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups," Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. 13 (1969), pp. 1-32; Kay Lehman Schlozman and John T. Tierney, Organized Interest and American Democracy, (New York: Harper and Row, 1986); and Norman J. Ornstein and Shirley Elder, Interest Groups, Lobbying and Policymaking (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1978).

11. Joni M. Cherbo, "The Associational Infrastructure for the Culture Industries: Private Policy Making in Arts Service Organizations," presented at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual conference of Social Theory, Politics, and the Arts, October 12-15, 2000.

12. Ken Kollman, Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Paul A. Sabatier, "An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy

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Change and the Role of Policy Oriented Learning Therein," Policy Studies, Vol. 21 (1988), pp. 129-168. Also see Baumgartner and Leech, Basic Interests.

13. Baumgartner and Leech, Basic Interests, espec. Chapter 8.

14. Elizabeth J. Reid, "Nonprofit Advocacy and Political Participation," Paper presented at the conference on "Nonprofit Organizations and the Government: The Challenge of Civil Society," at the Urban Institute Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, Washington, DC, June 8-9, 1998.