



MASS culture MOBILISATION culturelle



FUTURE OF ARTS WORK Project Summary and Bibliography

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October 24, 2021

LESAGEARTS
MANAGEMENT

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This project was a partnership with Mass Culture and LeSage Arts Management with the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

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Additional Thank You's and Acknowledgements: Canada Council for the Arts.

Jeanne would like to personally thank Jane Marsland and Peter Herrndorf for their time and wisdom; the Future of Arts Work working group and team for rolling with never ending left turns; Robin and Mass Culture for being open to supporting the idea and displaying endless patience through the constant changes/shifts/reimaginings; and Co-Author Dr. Shawn Newman for diving in headfirst to put shape to the work.

And thank you to the artists, arts leaders, Board members, and cultural workers who have risen to the great and important challenge of keeping this sector whole in this challenging time.

Mass Culture's Guiding Principles

The project will uphold Mass Culture's Guiding Principles in the work, including: mutual respect, access, decent work, reconciliation & relationship development, relations, stability and integrity. For more information info@massculture.ca.

For citation purposes, please use: LeSage, J. 2021. "Future of Arts Work: Project Summary and Bibliography." Toronto: Mass Culture.

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Introduction

This report summarizes the overall work done to date on the *Future of Arts Work* project, and a detailed bibliography on four key areas.

The Research Question...in the Before Times

This project was originally pitched and devised by Jeanne LeSage prior to the pandemic, with the original supposition and research question:

What is the best approach for Canadian arts and culture organizations to structure its Human Systems/People strategies?

The inspiration behind approaching this work came from ongoing discussions in the sector that leaders have shared that current organizational structures, internal processes and systems in the arts and culture sector do NOT currently support strategic needs to deliver the organization's Mission. And a new wave of leadership (away from founders and long-standing leaders) are coming into organizations that are neither efficient, effective or innovative - something has been 'lost' in the recent generations. So then, ***why are we as a sector so good at innovating our art and programs, but NOT at creating innovative internal structures and process?***

Arts Organizations are struggling under traditional 'organizational development & structural' challenges related to:

- *Informal or unclear reporting structures*
- *Ever shifting decision making processes*
- *Internal Communication challenges*
- *Unclear Roles and Responsibilities*
- *Performance Management tied to Strategic Priorities*
- *Employee turnover / employee engagement*
- *Alignment with an organizational Mission/Vision/Values and STRATEGY*

There is also a need to change to respond to external factors in its ecosystem – from changes in audience behaviours, economic forces and particularly in the current paradigm, the digital transformation that is very much changing society as we know it. Artists and arts organizations need to quickly pivot in

everything from their artistic programming, marketing, resource development and operations – all the while trying to continue to build capacity and ‘professionalize’ their organizations. What is often under-resourced and undercapitalized in our sector are the Human Resources and Organizational Development functions¹.

The first phase of the work is to properly define the most critical needs for artists and arts organizations when it comes to an HR response to digital. The approach will be a blend of working closely with the artists and arts organizations in the sector to clarify THEIR needs and researching best practices and external expertise. The direction of the project will be led by the sector, but the project partners will provide the framework to create that space for dialogue.

The core of this project is addressing the key question:

What is the best approach for Canadian arts and culture organizations to structure its Human Systems/People strategies to respond to the digital age?

This project is to serve as the first phase of a larger initiative looking at addressing a tangible response to this question. This first phase has the objective of clarifying the exact needs and ‘pinch points’ of the sector in this areas (as dictated BY the sector), research the best existing resources (innovative HR models) and interview the best thinkers in and out of sector (digital HR thinkers, workplace strategists) – and from that create a report of the findings of the research, recommendations of next steps, and a framework for a larger body of work and study to continue the work.

To frame the conversations, certain questions or ‘provocations’ will be put to the sector to address the question, such as:

- ***What is the very future of work itself?*** Will jobs be the same in the future in the digital age?
 - o What does the 21st Century Arts and Culture workplace look like in the digital age? (remote workers, collaborative work, non-hierarchical org structures, less brick and mortar?)
 - o Economists such as Daniel Susskind and Andrew McAfee – have written about the Future of Work – how would we apply their ideas about the future of work itself in the arts and culture sector? i.e. anxiety over Automation, loss of jobs and how this

¹ [**Working definition of O.D.: - wide-reaching efforts to create change and improve company wide effectiveness through areas such as People, Processes, Systems, Purpose*]

impacts the overall economy – and ultimately what is the HUMAN response to this?

- **What is the future of arts organizations?** If CRA/funder constructs didn't require NFPs and charities – what type of organization would be the best response to the digital age?
- Can a digital transformation of our HR & OD approaches bridge the gap of **intergenerational issues** in the workplace?
- How can a framework of **Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility** be embedded in the digital response to Arts HR?
- How can we capture the **learning of all past DSF recipients** (and other learnings) to align overall skills gaps for individuals in the sector to live in the digital age?
 - o F/U How keep the arts workforce updated on an ongoing basis?
I.e. after this wave of exploration and review of systems - how do we keep it up and internalize the change?
- On the **operational side**, should there be a digital platform providing basic HR services that is affordable to arts organizations? Should we also look at these tactical solutions?

Research Question...Revisited

As the project began to get underway, COVID-19 and the global pandemic took hold in March 2020, which put an immediate pause on all in the sector, and all efforts, energies and resources shifting to the initial emergency response - public safety, lockdown of venues and workplaces, immediate financial reconfiguring, and finding ways to both keep artists and staff employed and connecting with audiences. And then in May 2020, the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis began a period of protest, awareness and acknowledgement of generations of inequity across society and in our sector. It was decided to continue to pursue this work - as the Research question is still compelling, especially with organizations being faced with these important questions and any prior vulnerabilities being laid bare by the pandemic. Organizations now, even more than ever, need to be effective in their people strategies. Thus a slightly amended research question came into view:

What is the best approach for Canadian arts and culture organizations to structure its Human Systems/People strategies to respond to the current realities facing the arts sector? (COVID, Social Justice, Equity)

From this the project team proceeded to:

- Begin secondary research to create an extended reading list/bibliography in these areas
- Led a session as part of Mass Culture's "Study Date"
- Then resulting in a refine of the topics to focus on Board Governance Innovation

Secondary Research

As the research team began to scan secondary research in the areas of Organizational Development and People Systems in the arts and culture sector, the resources were organized in four key areas:

- The Future Arts Institution
- The Future Arts Worker
- The Future Arts Workplace
- The Future Arts Sector

To frame out the research, each area was fleshed out to identify what could be included in each section, what the 'future' world could look like if this area changed, and some starting subtopics.

1. The Future Arts Institution

"Imagine a future where the arts sector re-imagines the required institutional structures (and still be able to get funding/contributed revenue): nonprofit, for profit, co-ops, joint ventures. What do Boards look like?" Topics such as:

- a. Shared leadership and shared decision-making models (beyond the two-headed AD/ED model).
- b. Future leaders reflect the demographics of the country?
- c. Organizational Structures, Leadership and Decision Making Models
- d. Nonprofit governance - boards
- e. What does strategic planning look like in these new worlds?

2. The Future Arts Worker

“Imagine a future where arts ‘workers’ do not have job titles or defined job descriptions. Where there is an equal role for organizations and workers to shape what they do in the organization and how they develop in the sector.”

- a. Uncertainty of future operations and programming in a pandemic - and the impacts on staffing and HR Planning.
- b. Everchanging Job Roles - will this need to be the new reality?
- c. The Overwhelmed and the Underutilized:
 - i. For those on payroll and working, but remotely
 - ii. For those on payroll - with a diminished purpose, and nothing to do
 - iii. And those suddenly unemployed, undeployed, and without purpose (especially artists, contract workers)

3. The Future Arts Workplace

“Imagine a future where staff continue to work just a few days in the office, and work from home more. Where there is not a fixed office space for all staff to work at all times. Where staff can work in other cities. Where staff with dependents/family can work alternative schedules.”

- a. Staff Performance Management
- b. Project Management and Communication models.
- c. Remote and hybrid working arrangements
- d. Dependent care projects

4. The Future Arts Sector

“Imagine a Future where arts organizations do as much as is possible with the “MARKET” cost of getting things done. Enough staff, enough budget, enough resources. Staff (and ARTISTS!) are paid at market rates appropriate to their city’s living costs. Does this mean doing less?”

a. Precarity of the arts worker - and as it relates to the pipeline of artists and arts workers

What this research review will NOT be:

- *Will not cover Health and Safety in this scope - many other efforts in this area - safe reopening, audience issues, H&S, PPE.
- Won't cover artistic offerings and programming models (but the HR component will need to respond to new programming models)
- Won't cover overall funding structures (except as it relates to new models)
- Won't be COVID crisis response - focus on future innovations.

The research team began a process to find the research and resources now available in each of these areas. A full Reading list / Bibliography can be found [HERE](#).

Mass One “Study Date” - May 2020

Mass Culture organized a series of “Study Dates” to engage attendees with the current research topics and how they related to the very new reality put in place by the pandemic. The structure of this Future of Arts Work study date included:

- An invitation to attendees in video address / web link, plus a survey
- Plenary led by Jeanne LeSage
- Panel Discussion with Co-Leaders of Why Not Theatre
- Breakout Rooms to Brainstorm key areas of the Future of Arts Work research topics

This session was meant to be both a chance to engage with the sector about the immediate needs in grappling with the pandemic, and feeding into this overall project.

A. Public Invitation from Author Jeanne LeSage

As part of the design of the Study Dates, author Jeanne LeSage created a video invitation to attendees to invite them to think about the key theme for the sessions:

“So Now What? How Do We Work in a Post-COVID Reality?”

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our arts workplaces changed overnight. Many are still in the midst of the immediate crisis response and busy keeping the sector, our artists and our arts organizations “whole” as we emerge. In this session, I invite you to step back and think about the future. As a sector, we have been grappling with responding to changes in our environment to varying degrees and at varying paces: digital disruption, arts worker precarity, changing economic models and audience patterns... Let’s review what has changed, what continues to be a challenge, and what we should change in future arts workplaces.

What PEOPLE SYSTEMS do organizations need to be resilient and innovative to adapt to environmental changes? From organizational entities to leadership structures, team communication and individual work engagement - what needs to change in the ecosystem and in the way we work?

The structure of the session included:

- Sharing of learnings and frameworks from a larger research project on the Future of Arts Work (Plenary Presentation);
- “Notes from the Field” on how organizations managed to pivot overnight (if they had to), and what it means for them in the future (Panel);

-
- Stories from Participants, through an advance collection of stories & insights and in breakout sessions and sharing moments (Participation).

B. Plenary Presentation from Jeanne LeSage

The plenary presentation was designed to provide some selected foundational pieces to frame the discussion with participants, and including information about:

- The Sector Context
- Organizational Development defined and frameworks
- Organizational Structures defined and frameworks
- Organizational Culture
- The Role of Institutions
- Bill Sharpe's Three Horizons - as it relates to Pandemic planning.

The question was then posed to participants - Can we imagine Arts Institutions, Organizational Structures, and Organizational Cultures that match the needs of the Sector in the Future?

C. Advance Survey for Participants

In advance of the Mass Culture date, a short survey was sent to registered participants to ask them questions about how their workplaces had changed in the midst of the lockdown.

“LeSage Arts Management would like to hear from you! Tell us a bit about your own organization, collective or group in how you changed HOW YOU WORK after COVID sent us into social distancing. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our arts workplaces changed overnight. Many are still in the midst of the immediate crisis response and busy keeping the sector, our artists and our arts organizations “whole” as we emerge. In this session, I invite you to step back and think about the future. Let’s review what has changed, what continues to be a challenge, and what we should change in future arts workplaces. Information collected here will be seen only by Jeanne LeSage of LeSage Arts Management (LeSageArts.com), and will be brought forward in summary form as part of a larger research project with Mass Culture (massculture.ca).”

For a PDF of the survey questions, please see [Appendix B](#) in this document.

This was not meant to be representative of the sector at large, but to bring together the experiences of these participants for this session. 22 complete responses were received from May 26 - 29, 2020.

What we heard from the survey:

What changed for you?

For respondents offices and venues closed, shows were cancelled and moved to digital - with a pause/stop on further business and advancing shows. Offices were made virtual overnight, quickly adapting technology to support communications and operations - Zoom, Google Hangouts, FaceTime, Slack, Monday.com, online banking. There was an immediate gathering of the sector to come together to problem solve - town halls, roundtables, working groups - for short term and long term challenges.

The Overwhelmed and the UnderUtilized in the sector - in a moment - some folks in the sector are extremely busy in triage and crisis management mode building myriad scenarios, while others are left with no work, or prospect of future work - and feeling that they have no purpose and fearful of their future careers.

"The hustle is immediately different. Reaching out to connect is different and there are not enough hours in a day. I had to slow down and check in with the frenzy that was coming ..."

What are your immediate challenges?

Crisis management, communication, "managing the day", Work/Life balance, The Art and Programs, the sector and new approaches to planning.

"...finding immediate programming to retain a sense of purpose and to deliver to our audiences programming."

"Grapp[ling] with the entirety of what was happening"

What have been the positives?

Adapting quickly, securing safety of constituents, new ways for staff to engage in their work, less time commuting/more time with family, setting priorities for program offerings in an intentional way - and finding new ways to connect in the sector across the country.

"...identifying collective struggles and common ground, open conversations about privilege and the uneven effects of this pandemic, allowing more self-compassion and trust in myself and my work"

"Maybe more equitable. We are all GOING to make mistakes so the playing field was levelled for a bit."

"I felt a sense of the community together like I never have."

What do you miss?

Interacting with people in person, the structure of the work day, space, networking/connections

What changes would you keep?

Keeping online delivery of work, examining modes of communication, working from home, greater autonomy for staff on projects, the speediness of change, positive working conditions, and collaborations.

"We need to resist the devaluation of artistic and cultural labour, and insist on fair and dignified working conditions for everyone - crisis or no crisis."

"Organizational respect for work/life boundaries, policies and organizational cultures that recognize not everyone is at 100% capacity 100% of the time, meaningful and robust participation options for disabled, chronically ill, and d/Deaf colleagues."

"We need to use the opportunity to figure out how to work smarter and more collaboratively."

"Would really like to see the closer relationships the community has built with government and funders carried on."

SUMMARY

- What will you do? Your Mission and Your Offerings
- We, The People - We Miss Each Other, We want and need to come back together - that is who we are.
- Things that normally happen really slowly, then happened REALLY FAST. Change and adaptation did happen.
- Communication is absolutely key - COVID or no COVID - being mindful of how to communicate, what you need to say, with who, WITH INTENTION
- Collaboration in the sector is going to be crucial to continue.
- Working conditions can't continue to be ignored - work/life balance, precarity

- COVID as a way to ignite change - look to non-european descendants for Board, leadership and HR leadership

Euro descendant leadership -

“There is colonized setup, colonial values, lack of empathy, kindness and compassion towards IBPOC and other equity seeking groups. Post Covid demands for all leadership to introspect into their skills and values. It is time that leaders from the dominant Euro descendant community step down and make way for people who look different, talk different and also think different. Human Resources is a big question in today’s capitalistic society. This especially exists in the Arts, ESPECIALLY at leadership and Board levels and especially Euro descendant people who lead HR initiatives.

I am hoping that post COVID ignites a sense of change in everyone. The future of the arts is not Eurocentric/Eurodescendant. This survey creator and anyone associated with this survey needs to ensure that IBPOC individuals are hired, trained, mentored and Eurodescendant leaders are replaced.”

Summary

- *The Overwhelmed and the Underutilized*
- We, The People - We Miss Each Other, We want and need to come back together - that is who we are.
- Things that normally happen really slowly happened REALLY FAST. Change and adaptation did happen.
- Communication is absolutely key - COVID or no COVID - being mindful of how to communicate, what you need to say, with who, WITH INTENTION
- Collaboration in the sector is going to be crucial to continue.
- Working conditions can’t continue to be ignored - work/life balance, precarity
- COVID as a way to ignite change - look to non-european descendants for Board, leadership and HR leadership

So, the Burning Questions

- Back to: ***The Overwhelmed and the Underutilized*** - how can we equalize this?
- How much should we keep doing?
- What is the Future Job, and Future Arts Worker

-
- What is the future Arts Organization?
 - In Person and Space

D. Notes from the Field - a Conversation with Why Not Theatre

As part of the session, the leaders of Why Not Theatre were asked to take part in a panel to discuss how their organization has approached the major changes arts organizations are grappling with. Founded by Ravi Jain, Why Not Theatre is driven by a social-action and diversity mandate, and has structured its organization with a shared-leadership model between Ravi Jain (Artistic Director), Kelly Read (Executive Producer), and Owais Lightwala (Managing Director). In this discussion and Q&A Jain, Read, and Lightwala introduce the origins and values of Why Not Theatre and explain their shared leadership model. A full recording of the presentation can be found on Mass Culture's website [LINK](#).

E. Breakout Rooms

The final portion of the Study Day was breakout rooms designed as a chance for participants to discuss discuss and ideate Future Vision of arts work in the following areas:

- Arts Worker
- Office Space
- Arts Sector
- Institutions
- Leadership

Each room had a facilitator, and a set of Google slide decks using Edward de Bono's "Six Thinking Hats" as a framework for brainstorming². Within this system, different hats are used to prompt participants into analyzing a specific research question using the following lenses: 1) Intuition and emotions, 2) Positive-thinking, 3) Negative-thinking, 4) Creativity, 5) Objectivity, and 6) Synthesis and organization.

Samples:

² Bono, Edward de. *Six Thinking Hats*. Revised Edition. London: Penguin Books, 1999.

 YELLOW HAT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope • Optimism Wear the yellow hat to think positively. Consider all the benefits of the circumstances.						
ALIGNMENT	Equity	Inclusive	Opportunity	ACCESS	Engagement	AGILITY
INNOVATION	SUSTAINABILITY	Multi-faceted	agency	Purpose	IMAGINATION	ACCOUNTABILITY
FEARLESSNES S	LESS BARRIERS	Emergence	YOUTH	EMPOWERMENT	REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER	RESPONSIVENESS
Openess	Insight	Empowerment	CREATIVITY	INNOVATION	resilience	Flexibility


RED HAT

- Passion
- Intuition
- Emotions

 Wear the red hat to look at the problem using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion.

ROUND 1

ROUND 2

The following text includes a description of the breakout sessions and key points that were documented as part of group discussions. Identifying information about participants had been stripped from the documentation prior to this analysis so this text only captures notes made by the participants and/or facilitators. It should be noted that this meeting took place in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and

at the start of the George Floyd/ Black Lives Matter protests, both of which may have influenced discussion.

Overall, most groups noted that anti-racism, equity and flattened or collaborative decision-making processes were priorities in their visions of the future. Intentional change-making based on data collection, small experimentation, testing, and gradual implementation were also noted across most of the discussions. While there was generally hope and excitement about the vision put forward by the prompts, participants also regularly expressed anxiety about uncertainty, overwork, and fair compensation, as well as organizational resistance to changes.

For those that are interested to read further, a fuller summary of the content from the breakout sessions is available upon request.

A New Focus to the Project

Building upon the extended Bibliography, the content and sector discussion of the Mass Culture study date, and the ongoing and ever-shifting pandemic response needs in the sector, the scope and size of the potential areas of study grew to a remarkable but untenable level for this phase and scope of work in the project. A quick glance at the Bibliography and Reading List brings this into view very quickly. And the 'conversation' and needs of the sector was changing at a rapid pace to stay in step with the changing realities faced by arts organizations. A topic that began to emerge as one that merited discussion, and the focus of the next phase of study in this project was narrowed to the examination of Board Governance Innovation, and is outlined in the following paper → [LINK](#).

In the spirit of open source research that Mass Culture has embodied - we welcome practitioners, students, researchers, and others to pick up on any or all of the areas explored here in the Future of Arts Work and similarly pick an area of focus to continue the study. We have made the supporting materials and documents publicly available for anyone wishing to do so.

Appendices and Notes

Appendix A - Future of Arts Work Bibliography and Reading List

[LINK](#) to Document

Appendix B - Mass One Study Date - Mini Survey Questions

11/25/2020

So Now What? Working in a Post-COVID World - Google Forms



LAM

So Now What? Working in a Post-COVID World

Questions Responses 22

Section 1 of 2

So Now What? Working in a Post-COVID World



LeSage Arts Management would like to hear from you! Tell us a bit about your own organization, collective or group in how you changed HOW YOU WORK after COVID sent us into social distancing.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our arts workplaces changed overnight. Many are still in the midst of the immediate crisis response and busy keeping the sector, our artists and our arts organizations "whole" as we emerge. In this session, I invite you to step back and think about the future. Let's review what has changed, what continues to be a challenge, and what we should change in future arts workplaces. Information collected here will be seen only by Jeanne LeSage of LeSage Arts Management (LeSageArts.com), and will be brought forward in summary form as part of a larger research project with

Email address *

Valid email address

This form is collecting email addresses. [Change settings](#)

Contact Name (Seen only by Jeanne LeSage, unless you agree otherwise below) *

Short answer text

11/25/2020

So Now What? Working in a Post-COVID World - Google Forms

YOUR STORY

TELL US YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STORY! When public health put in place Social Distancing measures and the need to stay home - what types of changes did you need to make in your organization or collective or group? Note we would like to distinguish about how you deliver ART/PROGRAMS, from how you work on the BUSINESS side. This survey focusses on the BUSINESS side.

Yes - I agree to allow Jeanne LeSage and LeSage Arts Management to capture the information *
I enter here to contribute to the "Future of Arts Work" research project and for presentation at the May 29, 2020 "Mass One" session.

- No, I do not agree for this information to be used as noted above
- Yes, I agree for this information to be used, but "anonymized" without my organization's name.
- Yes, I agree for this information to be used, and for my organization's name to be used

Name of Organization *

Short answer text

Regarding how you do your BUSINESS, - what had to change ASAP after COVID?

Long answer text

When you think about the changes you made above - what were the immediate CHALLENGES?

Long answer text

When you think about the changes you made above - what was GOOD about these changes?

11/25/2020

So Now What? Working in a Post-COVID World - Google Forms

In how you are currently working - what do you miss about how you used to work pre-COVID?

Long answer text

If we were given the all clear to come together again (in the office, in the studios, on the stages) - what changes would you keep?

Long answer text

Anything else you want to add about the Future of HOW WE WORK in the arts?

Long answer text