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The professionalization of arts management in the United States: are we there yet?

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ABSTRACT

Many academics and practitioners treat the field of arts management as a sub-field of traditional business management, a managerial aspect of the arts disciplines it serves, or a specialization within non-profit management. These conceptions treat arts management as an intellectual offshoot of other fields, undermining the need for arts management to have its own body of literature, common discourse, and set of theories and practices that are considered universal.

Through the lens of professionalization this article demonstrates that, while the field of arts management is not fully professionalized, it is on the pathway to professionalization as a field in its own right. Wilensky (1964) offers five broad criteria for the professionalization of a field from the perspective of practitioners. This article uses Wilensky, one of the most cited sources on how to identify a professionalizing field, to examine the ways in which arts management in the United States has met, is partially meeting, or has yet to meet each criterion. The article concludes with an articulation of the ways in which arts management may completely meet partially-met criteria and begin to meet the criteria that has yet to be addressed within the field.

KEY WORDS

Professionalization, sociology of knowledge, arts management

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