

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

---

Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National  
Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts  
and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996)

---

4-1979

## Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979): Report 03

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_II\\_28](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_28)

---

### Recommended Citation

"Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979): Report 03" (1979). *Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979)*. Paper 14.  
[https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_II\\_28/14](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_28/14)

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons-group@uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons-group@uri.edu).

NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR  
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON  
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the  
National Council on the Arts

REPORT: Implementation of Panel Study Recommendations

DATE: April, 1979

Report: Implementation of Panel Study Recommendations

Summary of Results

The recommendations of the Endowment panel study, described in the March, 1979 Report: A Study of the Panel System at the National Endowment for the Arts, were approved for implementation by the Chairman of the Arts Endowment on August 30, 1978.

This study recommended that Endowment panels be restructured, in each Program, into

a policy panel of 12-15, and

grant panels, as needed, whose duties would be limited to application review, and specific recommendations arising out of application review

with linkage, specific and structured, between them.

The new structure, whose implementation is now virtually complete, provides Endowment panels with

1. More expertise and broader representation from the field, bringing the range of professional experience, and the diversity of aesthetic, regional, cultural, and minority viewpoints required for decision-making on the Endowment's expanding range of applications.
  - a. The restructuring has brought many new panelists into the Endowment decision-making process. Under the former system, the Endowment Programs under study\* were advised yearly by about 385 panelists. Under the new system, these Programs will be advised yearly by about 475 panelists, at about the same cost as before (see tables on pp. 6-7).

\* The panel study examined panel structure in all Programs under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Chairman for Programs.

b. The former rotation policy replaced about 46% of all Endowment panelists each year. The new rotation policy should raise that total to about 58%.

c. A larger group of panelists makes it possible to provide representation for a broader range of backgrounds and more kinds of specific expertise for review of various kinds of applications. At this time with some grant panels still in the process of formation, 26% of Endowment panelists are minorities; 39% are women; each panel, as always, is composed of panelists from different regions of the country.

2. More first-hand information about applicants and grantees is brought to the review of applications by this larger group of panelists, and the expanding network in the field that develops as panelists rotate off.
3. The Endowment's application workload, which has grown rapidly, can be divided among more participants.
4. Through linkage between policy and grant panels, the new structure can absorb the contributions of a larger number of participants, while maintaining continuity.
5. More time is provided in all Programs for policy discussion, needed as the Endowment develops its long-range planning. Such policy discussion is informed by the policy panelists' past and present participation in application review.

The new panel structure provides these advantages without increasing the total cost of Endowment panels; rather, the new structure enables each Program to make use of its limited administrative funds in a more cost-effective way.

The table on p. 6 provides a rough comparison between the past and present systems, by comparing the total number of "panelist-days" under each. "Panelist-days" (computed for each Program by multiplying the number of panels, meetings, meeting-days, and panelists required) provide a simple and useful standard for comparison between two systems in which several factors vary.

As the totals on p. 6 indicate, the new system should not be more expensive - viewed Endowment-wide - than the old. In the case of the two Programs (Architecture and Media Arts) which had no policy panels in the past, the new figures naturally show a substantial increase, as does Opera-Musical Theater, as it moves to full Program status. These increases, however, are balanced by decreases elsewhere. More important, the Endowment obtains the benefits of increased information from the field, broader representation and more time for policy discussion.

The Arts Endowment panel system is a process which has evolved to meet the needs of the agency and the field it serves. It is unique in several respects among peer review systems advising government agencies:

1. Recommendations on applications for grants go directly from the panels to the National Council on the Arts.

Much time, thought, and preparation precedes those panel recommendations:

- a. pre-panel information gathering, which may involve on-site visits, pre-screening of tapes, slides, or portfolios, or the reading

of manuscripts by panelists or consultants;\*

- b. previewing of applications by the panelists before the panel meeting;
  - c. discussion - often extensive - among experts at the panel meeting.
2. Endowment panels must reach a consensus, based on discussion among experts of different viewpoints, on every application.

In the arts, where decisions on the quality of an individual's work are by nature more subjective than judgments on the merits of scientific or academic proposals; and where applications from organizations involve several other considerations beside quality (administrative capability, significance of the project to the community, budgetary questions), recommendations on applications for grants require the thoughtful exchange of ideas and information on the panel level.

The table on p. 8 of this report details the number of hours spent by panels in application review in each Endowment Program, before those recommendations are sent to the National Council on the Arts.

The National Council respects the advice that emerges from this process and approves the vast majority of panel recommendations.

3. Arts Endowment panels are unique, too, in the strong role they play in the development of policy in their

\* Pre-panel information-gathering procedures at the Arts Endowment are discussed in a separate report: Pre-panel Information-Gathering: Methods and Budget, April, 1979.

individual Programs. The advice of panels will also be needed to update and monitor the agency's five-year plan.

The Arts Endowment's panel system will undoubtedly continue to evolve to meet changing conditions. The Endowment's administration is confident that the changes recently implemented have strengthened the panel system, enabled it to meet its responsibilities to a broadening arts community, and to take on new tasks as the agency plans for the future.

TABLE I: Cost-Effectiveness: Comparison of New and Previous Systems

Compared below are numbers of panels, meetings, panelists, and length of meetings under the new and previous panel systems.

To simplify this comparison, these data are summarized as "panelist-days" (computed by multiplying the factors (panels, meetings, panelists, days) in each case.

Explanations for these figures may be found in the descriptions of panel restructuring in the individual Programs.

<u>New System</u>		<u>Previous System</u>
ARCHITECTURE:	154 panelist days	68 panelist days
DANCE:	227	299
EXPANSION ARTS:	177	221
FOLK ARTS:	156	117
LITERATURE:	183	194
MEDIA ARTS:	137	125
MUSEUMS:	158	229
MUSIC:	362	520
OPERA-M. T.:	164	48
THEATER:	133	161
VISUAL ARTS:	207	183
TOTALS	<u>2,058</u>	<u>2,173</u>

Without assigning dollar amounts to either system, it should be clear that the new system, with a slightly lower panelist day total, should not be more expensive to operate than the previous system.



TABLE II: Comparison of Total Numbers of Panelists  
New System vs. Previous System

<u>New System</u>		<u>Previous System</u>
ARCHITECTURE:	53	34
DANCE:	35	23
EXPANSION ARTS:	48	17
FOLK ARTS:	12	9
LITERATURE:	30	18
MEDIA ARTS:	64	64
MUSEUMS:	37	38*
MUSIC:	67	89
OPERA-M. T.:	29	12
THEATER:	35	19
VISUAL ARTS:	63	63
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	473	386

\* 22 panelists + 16 consultants who functioned as grant panelists.

TABLE III: Days spent by Panels in Application Review\*, 1978

ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND DESIGN:	17
DANCE:	15
EXPANSION ARTS:	10
FOLK ARTS:	10
LITERATURE:	6**
MEDIA ARTS:	20
MUSEUMS:	15
MUSIC:	26
THEATER:	6
VISUAL ARTS:	30
TOTAL	<hr/> 155 days

A total of 155 days was spent in 1978 by Endowment panels in the review of applications.

\* The above figures refer only to full meetings of the panel; pre-panel review (i.e., pre-screening) is not included here. It should be noted that many of these "days" begin at 9:00 a.m. and proceed late into the night.

\*\* Fellowships for Creative Writers, offered in alternate years only, was not reviewed in 1978. Final review of these fellowship applications takes an additional three days.

## Implementation

The implementation of the panel study recommendations was accomplished during the months between September, 1978 and the present, after extensive consultation with staff and panels in all Programs. New panels have already met in Architecture, Dance, Expansion Arts, Literature, Media Arts, Museums, Opera-Musical Theater, and Theater. Restructuring in the Music Program is currently in progress; panels in Folk Arts and Visual Arts required no extensive changes. Special Projects is in the process of Program reorganization at this time; discussion of panel structure here would be premature.

A range of variations on the general model recommended by the panel study (and discussed in detail in the March, 1979 report) was anticipated when those recommendations were approved for implementation. Each field has different needs, methods, and priorities. As the following pages indicate, many Programs also had individual problems which panel restructuring had to address.

The panel study, undertaken in April, 1978 to address recognized Endowment-wide problems found each Program at a different point in its development. The Architecture Program, which had always depended on ad hoc panels for application review, found itself in need of a standing policy panel; the Theater Program, accustomed to reviewing both applications and guidelines with the same standing panel, needed to consider the advantages of somewhat more specialization. Each Program's panel structure was adjusted to meet its particular needs.

In general, a balance had to be found in each Program between the need for the broadest possible representation from the field, and the need for continuity (between policy and grant panels, from one year to the next). These individual differences are expressed in the varying sizes of the grant panels from Program to Program and in the differing ratios of policy to grant panelists on each.