Bookshelf

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The NonProfit Sector in Canada: Roles and Relationships

Keith Banting, ed.
Published by Queen's University School of Policy Studies and McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000

REVIEWED BY JAMES PHILLIPS
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Despite the recent greatly increased interest in the nonprofit sector in government and the policy community, with a few notable exceptions Canadian academics have been slow to see the sector as worth serious study. This volume of seven essays by a group of faculty and graduate students located in departments of political science, economics, social work, business administration, and public administration, and one scholar at the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy is, on that score alone, a welcome contribution. Covering disparate topics, it is also a collection of generally high quality, notable for the extent to which the studies in it are empirically based.

The volume begins with "The NonProfit Sector in Canada: An Introduction" by Keith Banting and Michael Hall. It very effectively covers a great deal of ground, dealing with current debates over the sector's social role "between state and market", with issues of definition (what does the sector comprise?), and with the scope of, and diversity within, the sector. It also provides a useful introduction to the changing landscape within which the sector operates, as governments retrench and demand more of the sector. While those familiar with both the Canadian data and the international debates will not find a great deal that is new here, the fact that all of this material has been gathered in one place and the policy debates placed in a Canadian context makes this introduction a substantial and very useful contribution. And the ultimate message is undeniable – there is an urgent need for much more knowledge about the Canadian nonprofit sector as major changes in its funding and organization are being enacted and contemplated.

The other six essays all discuss particular aspects of the sector. The first four deal, to a greater or lesser extent, with the impact on the nonprofit sector of changes in government policies and all demonstrate the intimate and intricate links between government and the nonprofit sector. In "Distinctive Trajectories: Homecare and the Voluntary Sector in Quebec and Ontario" Jane Jenson

and Susan Phillips compare home-care (medical and non-medical) delivery for the elderly in Ontario and Quebec. Both provinces have restructured this aspect of public health care in the last decade or so, to give it a larger role vis à vis institutional care, but they have done so differently. Quebec has retained a traditional model of public co-ordination and oversight with delivery by nonprofit organizations, while Ontario has adopted a "competitive bidding process", that is increasingly delivering services by for-profits with a much reduced role for public oversight. The irony of the latter, the authors argue, is that a government that stresses community over state is actually "undermining the service delivery which...volunteers want so much to give" (p. 59). Jenson and Phillips also note one common feature between the two jurisdictions: while there are significant differences in the way that home care is organized in the two provinces, in both, the voluntary sector finds itself having to do more with less, and in both the sector is suffering a crisis of capacity and confidence which shows no sign of abating.

This issue of government retrenchment is also a concern of "Religious Nonprofits: Social Service Provision by Congregations in Ontario" by Femida Handy and Ram Cnaan, although the article is about much more than that. The authors conducted an empirical study of social service provision by 46 congregations in three Ontario cities, and from it conclude that they provide an "impressive" range of services from dispensing food and shelter to the homeless to visiting hospitals and providing substance abuse programs. On the issue of motive, the authors are clear that the congregations they studied do not see themselves as "substitutes to government in providing social services" (p. 86), and make decisions about service provision based on their values and not as a response to government prompting. Yet, many congregations apparently believe that they are responding in some cases and to some extent to community needs that have been created by cutbacks. Thus the message is a complex one: the nonprofit sector will respond to retrenchment by filling some gaps but resists what might be termed wholesale co-option to the priorities of previously public social service provision. The very independence of thought and action that this study reveals, while laudable in one sense, clearly suggest that social needs will not be met simply by a government withdrawal and a call for the churches *(inter alia)*, to fill the gap.

The issue of nonprofits earning their incomes from for-profit activity is one of the key challenges facing the nonprofit sector and is dealt with in "After Government Cuts: Insights from Two Ontario 'Enterprising NonProfits'" by Raymond Dart and Brenda Zimmerman. The article asks both how commercial enterprises work in nonprofits and what effects those enterprises have on the organizations. Using two case studies, it looks at the financial risks to nonprofits, the effect on charitable giving, the impact of the charitable mission on the ability to run the for-profit enterprise, and the effect of commercial enterprise

on the reputation and mission of the nonprofits. The two conclusions I found most provocative are, first, that commercial enterprise is no panacea; it is financially and organizationally challenging even when the risks are rewarded with extra revenue and even when, as in the cases studied, the mission is not significantly affected. Second, the authors suggest that when we look at the ways nonprofits are organized and run, the for-profit/nonprofit dichotomy is not as stark in practice as in theory – there is something of a continuum between the two. That is, "core mission programs" were increasingly being influenced by "elements of commercialization", while commercial enterprise was invariably carried out with "some kind of mission-related, pro-social underpinning" (p. 145).

The last of the group of four articles dealing in some way with the government-nonprofit relationship is by Susan Phillips and Katherine Graham: "Hand-in-Hand: When Accountability Meets Collaboration in the Voluntary Sector". In fact, government plays a subsidiary role in this paper, which begins by discussing the causes and nature of the increased demands for accountability in the sector and the separate but related recent phenomenon of collaboration (of various kinds) between organizations. It then links the two, noting their "shared roots" (p. 159), in particular the extent to which state restructuring has created the demand for more accountability and more collaboration. Having laid this groundwork in a thorough and thoughtful review, the principal research questions, answered through eight case studies, are then posed – how is collaboration "made to work" and how is accountability "addressed within it"? (p. 165) Among the many conclusions the authors draw, three are, in my view, particularly worthy of note. One is that no matter how formal accountability regimes become (and they will inevitably become more so as collaborations increase), successful accountability continues, and will continue, to rely on "self-regulation and self-adherence to mutual expectations and standards" (p. 177). Second, there is something of a contradiction between accountability and collaboration. As the authors put it, they require organizations "to become at once more risk-taking and more rule-following" (p. 185). Third, to the extent to which collaborations of various kinds are brought about with the encouragement, even at the direction, of retrenching governments, they can produce poor alliances with problems that affect the capacity of both organizations to deliver their services. There is of course an irony here similar to that noted in reference to the article on home care; a government supposedly committed to community responsibility rather than publicly-provided social welfare adopts policies that reduce the autonomy of voluntary organizations and their capacity to do their work.

The final two essays in the volume are a little different from the first four. "The NonProfit Sector in Manitoba: A Baseline Survey", by Laura Brown, Elizabeth Troutt, and Attah Boame is, as its title suggest, a study of the entire sector in one province, albeit a study conducted through a relatively small sample of organizations. Remarkably, it is the only such provincial study for Canada, and

very useful for that fact alone. It is principally interested in laying out the extent to which the sector is dependent on government funding and how much autonomy it has. But the authors also analyze the makeup of the sector by type of service provided (education is the largest at 32 per cent followed by leisure at 28 per cent), the use of volunteer labour by type of service, and expenditures. On the principal questions, the authors report that, excluding religious groups, on average 39 per cent of the sector's funding comes from government (or did in 1997), and that the figure for charities was higher (46 per cent) than for noncharities (35 per cent). The importance of government funding is highlighted by the fact that although about a third of the sector does not receive any government funding, about half of the organizations surveyed relied on government for at least half of their funding. On the related issue of autonomy, the authors report an interesting finding: that those who run nonprofit organizations believe that volunteers are the principal source of influence within their organizations and that "perceived governmental influence is relatively low" (p. 215). While this article raises as many questions as it answers, e.g., how real are such perceptions of volunteer influence, to what extent have government funding decisions since 1997 changed both the composition of the sector and the government's influence within it, it is a very welcome addition to the literature on the size and nature of the sector.

The final article in the volume, Audrey Kobayashi's "Advocacy from the Margins: The Role of Minority Ethnocultural Associations in Affecting Public Policy in Canada" is in some respects the one disappointing contribution. The paper is a study of what the author perceives as the failure of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council sufficiently to influence federal government policymaking. Starting from the premise that multiculturalism is "nearly empty as a public policy" (p. 235), most of the essay details what Kobayashi sees as the Council's failure to have its agenda realized, a failure she lays squarely at the door of the federal government. Whatever the merits of her arguments, there is very little here about the nonprofit sector, beyond the fact that the Council is a nonprofit organization. But if that qualifies as an article about the sector, so must myriad studies of policymaking or, indeed, of the operations of any particular nonprofit group. It might have been interesting to see the author engage the (largely American) literature which sees the health of "civil society" to be largely dependent on the existence of a vigorous third sector. If Kobayashi's account is correct, this may be a case study of the inadequacies of reliance on such organizations to achieve broader social goals.

This last *caveat* aside, this collection is an excellent one, and should be required reading for all (it is to be hoped, an increasing number), interested in the nature of the Canadian nonprofit sector and how it is faring in a period of government retrenchment.

Ethical Decision-Making in Fund Raising

By Marilyn Fischer
Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000, ISBN 0-471-29843-3

REVIEWED BY JANE GARTHSON
*Mills Garthson & Associates, Toronto**

Marilyn Fischer has written a must-read book for every fundraiser who is striving to be trustworthy and to act with integrity. As she says in Chapter One of *Ethical Decision-Making in Fund Raising*, this book is also for those who appreciate philanthropy as a way of creating and enriching community life. What is more, every professional and volunteer fundraiser will improve his or her success by reading this book, although it includes none of the tips and techniques that are the basis of most fundraising books.

Unlike some other recent books on nonprofit ethics, this book is not about the scandals that cause our voluntary sector to lose public trust and respect. It takes a positive approach, and tells positive stories, throughout. Also, the author specifies that she is not writing for saints. The intended audience is people of ordinary decency and ordinary courage and it is designed to help them build on their existing and undoubtedly considerable skills.

The main achievement of *Ethical Decision-Making in Fund Raising* is education in the "gift economy", a metaphor for philanthropy. Fischer gives examples from various cultures and eras of the application of the gift economy. A return is not given directly to the individual giver, but to accept a gift is to accept the obligation to reciprocate, to become a giver. In an age when people travel, we see convoluted loops of gifts and benefits across communities and of course across generations. We may give as we age in memory of a gift, such as encouragement from a special teacher when we were young, or knowing that the benefits of our gift will be received by our descendants.

Her descriptions will resonate with those who consider that nonprofits raise friends and only through friends raise money or volunteer time. Friendship cannot be bought or sold in the marketplace. Our donors and volunteer friends sustain a circle of giving to allow nonprofits to carry out their missions.

Fischer describes some fundraising as a parody of market transactions, e.g., some charities encourage donations through coffee mugs and other products of much less value than the gift. Our philanthropy cannot survive if it is based on direct exchanges of tangible assets. Fundraisers will have much more success by helping people create the communities they want.

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Fischer does not make light of the difficulties in doing this, given the unintended effects of some gifts, value conflicts, and other challenges. Her other main achievement is the inclusion of an ethical decision-making model specific to the voluntary sector, with explanations, stories, case studies and discussion questions. She recommends considering alternative solutions to problems in terms of mission, relationships and personal integrity. For each of these three areas, Fischer provides questions to help the decision-maker identify and focus on the ethical dimensions of the decision. The decision-maker is expected to develop and analyze several optional solutions.

Her Ethical Decision-Making chart would be strengthened by the addition of a row dealing with impact on stakeholders, since there may be a direct harm, or risk of harm, to them which goes beyond relationships. It is always helpful to be conscious of who benefits from each option.

Each of her three decision considerations is given an entire chapter, again with various historical, religious and cultural references. Fischer makes this information readable and directly relevant to fundraising in our time. For example, Aristotle wrote on generosity, but noted that Athenians were expected to use reason "to give to the right people, the right amounts, at the right time". To do otherwise he described as wasteful rather than generous; every fundraiser will know of such inappropriate giving. I see it every time a new fund, created the day after a natural disaster, receives lots of donations when it has no structure, no accountability and no record of successful disaster relief; a similar gift to an established and credible NGO would usually do much more good.

Although I had read about the legendary Jane Addams before, I found Fischer's presentation of her concerns and achievements particularly helpful.

Fischer does such a good job of helping us think about philanthropy and about making ethical decisions that readers have an excellent context by the time they reach the sections on specific issues. The balance of *Ethical Decision-Making in Fund Raising* provides very useful instruction about relations with givers, privacy and confidentiality, conflicts of interest, corporate philanthropy and diversity. If new areas become hot topics in the future, the introduction and decision-making framework will be just as applicable to them.

Fischer is a consultant with the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (Association of Fundraising Professionals), and has written the book partly to encourage consideration of ethics at association events and among association members. Those who subscribe to their Code of Ethics or other such generally accepted codes relevant to fundraising will find the book's guidance consistent with the codes but not focussed exclusively on them.

Fischer does not give any "right answers" for her many case studies and discussion questions. Discussion groups or workshops may wish to share their

group answers with ethics specialists or NSFRE's Ethics Committee and have further discussion of any differences of opinion.

Fischer says the book is to help us understand, not put us into high gear for our next fund raiser. However, I found that *Ethical Decision-Making in Fund Raising* was inspiring and exhilarating, and have been recommending it to everyone involved with fundraising in any way. I sincerely hope that all key leaders in the voluntary sector, including board members and CEOs, read this book and improve their oversight of resource development, and their personal effectiveness in raising funds for their causes.

Benchmarks of Excellence for the Voluntary Sector

Participant's Workbook: $20
Facilitator's Guide: $30

*DEVELOPED AND WRITTEN BY: LINDA MOLLENHAUER**
Published by: *ALS Society of Canada*
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REVIEWED BY ROSE VAN ROTTERDAM
Editorial Co-ordinator, The Philanthropist

One of the critical challenges for voluntary sector organizations in Canada is meeting the increasing demands for higher performance and greater accountability.

Under the lead organization ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Society Canada), a project was undertaken a couple of years ago to identify benchmarks of excellence for the charitable sector. With funding from Health Canada the project was intended to answer questions such as What does an excellent organization look like? What needs to be in place for an organization to be fully accountable and optimize resources? How can staff and volunteers develop a better understanding of all the components of a healthy organization and a sense of how they are inter-related?

The result is a self-assessment and strategic planning tool *Benchmarks of Excellence* that helps organizations to understand the characteristics of excellent organizations and to measure themselves against those benchmarks. The

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resource has two components – a Participant's Workbook, and a Facilitator's Guide that includes an organizational performance assessment questionnaire.

Benchmarks was developed and written by Linda Mollenhauer, an independent consultant and former President and CEO of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. She provides some insights into what has been learned and some of her experiences since the project was launched in the fall of 1999.

Benchmarks of Excellence has been used by 25 charitable, not-for-profit organizations, both large and small, from across Canada, as an evaluation tool. These organizations have measured their performance against the *Benchmarks of Excellence* and then used that information to build organizational excellence. Others have taken advantage of *Benchmarks* as an educational tool to help board and staff better understand the characteristics that distinguish excellent charitable not-for-profit organizations.

We have learned that there is an extraordinary level of excellent performance in our sector, but we don't brag about it enough.

We have also found a few consistent areas of challenge in those who participated in the assessment process. One of the most typical struggles is to properly articulate, measure and demonstrate results – making the distinction between activities and the results of those activities.

Another consistent challenge is to make the vision, mission and value statement, "code of ethics" and strategic plan a living document. Most organizations have created the documents but few use them effectively to help them navigate the steady stream of decision-making and issues.

The *Benchmarks of Excellence* product has been significantly enriched by the experience of the last 15 months. It continues to be improved and to strive for excellence.

Benchmarks was developed by the voluntary sector *for* the voluntary sector. It is based on extensive research, intensive interviews and a lot of input and discussion by a host of senior executives and experts in the voluntary sector. It encourages charitable not-for-profit organizations to aim for excellence, not just survival. It allows the board, volunteers and staff members the rare opportunity to celebrate success and strengths, as well as focus on what needs fixing.

Some consider building up to, and undertaking organizational assessments and strategic planning exercises, an arduous adventure. However, with a tool like *Benchmarks of Excellence* to guide organizations step-by-step through the process leading toward excellence, they may just find it an exciting and productive journey.

Leaders Who Make a Difference: Textbook and Inspiration

By Burt Nanus and Stephen M. Dobbs

Reviewed by SUZANNE LAWSON
Executive Director, ALS and Vice-Chair Joint Table on Awareness, Voluntary Sector Initiative

I am strangely drawn to books about leadership since I long ago set aside the belief that leaders have specific traits that one can simply adopt and success will ensue. I like to explore differing thoughts about the nature of leadership, the requirements of excellence in leadership, and examples of how the burden and delight of leadership are taken up in specific instances. This book, a collaboration between two people who come from different perspectives to the topic, has given me much to mull over.

Burt Nanus has long been known as a writer in the nonprofit arena. One of his best efforts was as co-author of *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*. He works as a consultant and speaker on visionary leadership. Stephen Dobbs has been a leader within many nonprofits, particularly within the foundation network. At a conference in 1997 for the Larger Community Foundations Group, Dobbs was in attendance and Nanus was the speaker/facilitator. A conversation there about the lack of solid practical resources for leaders in the voluntary sector led them eventually to write this book. In this one act of decision, they demonstrated some of the qualities that they indicate in the book are essential for leadership: the requirement to be "resourceful, innovative, and cooperative".

As a textbook, *Leaders Who Make a Difference* lives up well to its subtitle: Essential Strategies for Meeting the Nonprofit Challenge. But before entering the arena of writing about essential strategies for leaders, the authors first set the stage by outlining their definition of leadership, the issues that currently challenge leaders in nonprofits, roles that leaders take, and the qualities that contemporary leaders require. In all these initial sections, they demonstrate and reiterate the differences between nonprofit leadership and corporate or political leadership, a fine distinction often, which most other authors on this subject pay little attention to. Within these initial sections are some great "ahas!" (or at least poignant reminders) for the reader, especially those who are currently in leadership positions.

Their definition: "a leader of a nonprofit organization is a person who marshals the people, capital, and intellectual resources of the organization to move it in the right direction". Not "his/her" direction, but the "right" direction. As the discussion deepens, Nanus and Dobbs are saying that a leader's job is also to discern, to find, the right direction through marshalling all the resources around to assist in that discernment. Although many of us are called to be both leaders

and managers in our nonprofit organizations, they make a sharp differentiation between a manager and a leader, by indicating that very different qualities are required of each function and that, rarely if ever, is that mix found in the same individual. Those of us who are in organizations where we are expected to do both, or where we ourselves expect to be able to do both, now have real explanations for why we are so tired! Leaders build for the future, are "pathfinders", are flexible and entrepreneurial, searching for ways to shatter constraints; managers want things orderly, and focus on the present. The authors contend that the functions need to be kept very separate, and more so in nonprofits then in other types of organization.

It helps us to understand and be affirmed in the complexity of the role as nonprofit leader vis à vis leaders in other sectors. The authors say that:

- Leading unpaid people towards the mission of the organization requires much more inspirational leadership, much more passion and persuasion than is required in the corporate sector;
- Our work is more value-laden, and therefore complex, because it seeks as an end point, the common good;
- Working with a nonprofit board is a more critical part of a leader's success than is working with the corporate board;
- The sheer number of people to be led in most nonprofit organizations is far higher than those being led in government agencies and corporations with similar budgets, and these numbers of people are far more dispersed.

As well, the authors note that there is a need for each of us, as leaders in nonprofits, to be focussed on conditions inside the organization and outside the organization, on present operations and on future possibilities, a dizzying but essential whirligig which we need to constantly jump on and hold onto tightly.

The detailed sections of the book then build on these directions and definitions, outlining ways for leaders to increase their skills as visionaries and strategists, as politicians and campaigners, as coaches, and as change agents. Each of the sections of the book begins with a success story, a leader of a nonprofit who was able, through a variety of actions, to lead a transformation within the organization. (These stories are sometimes fascinating, and sometimes seemingly irrelevant, not to the topic, but to one's own experience. While I diligently read the first few, I soon found myself skimming the later ones, eagerly wanting to move towards the good hard advice that followed. You may do the same, and perhaps begin the skipping earlier.)

The meaty textbook aspect of *Leaders Who Make a Difference* is found in these very practical chapters focussing on the skills and roles mentioned above. Nanus and Dobbs know their stuff. They encapsulate other writers' work, even

their own previous work, so that readers feel knowledgeable about trends or summaries they had not previously paid attention to (probably because they were buried in the books at the bedside that one ought to read sometime!). But they can also serve as reminders of important perceptions and wisdom in the burgeoning field of material about leadership. These parts should *not* be skimmed!

And, in the latter sections of each of these chapters, the book turns into an abridged series of "how tos". Not all of these how tos are equally compelling, but I suspect that we are drawn to those that relate to the areas where we feel our own inadequacy, or where we need to pick up ideas quickly for the next project that needs to be undertaken within our organizations. Because ALS Canada, my own organization, is entering a strategic planning exercise, I paid particular attention to the chapter on the Leader as Strategist. I picked up some hints, was cautioned about some pitfalls, and yet felt totally able to decide that this or that particular suggestion would not work at this time within our organization.

That personal response to the wealth of knowledge that is in these pages makes me suggest to you that this is a book that will often be returned to by diligent, progressive leaders. I, at least, will want to pick this book up many times in the future to have a refresher course in certain of the leadership roles when the need arises either to pull up my socks or to become a passionate advocate for a particular kind of change.

Besides the essential and valuable "how to" textbook elements mentioned, *Leaders Who Make a Difference* has the capacity to inspire. I found wonderful words about leadership that are either original to the authors or come from others' work that they have valued. Some of these affirm the calling we have to leadership; others articulate what we know but could never have found the words to describe. Let me share some pithy phrases that will certainly be on transparencies for several of my next conference speeches or training sessions:

> Far too many nonprofit organizations seem to be more concerned with producing an impressive planning document than with ensuring the quality of the strategic thinking that goes into it. (114)
>
> The condition of a nonprofit organization at any given time is the result of an unending struggle between continuity and change. (122)
>
> It is up to the leader to identify the need for change and create a sense of urgency for it. (137)
>
> The art of involving people in change processes is like that of directing an orchestra—that is, it requires knowing what role each person should play and how people can interact most effectively with each other to achieve what needs to be accomplished. (138)

> The leader...is not so much the designer of the organization as the one who sets the tone and direction and shapes and fosters a shared organizational culture. (154)

Amidst the jewels in this work are a few drawbacks of which the reader should be aware. There is, for instance, not much attention given to organizations that spread beyond a single geographic community. The added complexity of this reality needs attention and is often disregarded in books about leadership and organizational development. As well, there is some but not enough attention paid to shared leadership between volunteers and staff. More often than not, the leader is perceived to be the CEO or senior staff person, and the senior volunteer is seen as an ally of the real leader, rather than a partner in the leadership function. While there is some wisdom to assigning this role to the staff person, the one who is there over several years and is paid to do the job, there certainly would be several volunteer chairs of boards or presidents who would be somewhat shocked to feel themselves valued at a very different level in many sections of the book. But these are minor quibbles, and may simply be asking too much of one book.

Because of my connection with the Voluntary Sector Initiative in Canada, as Co-Chair of the Joint Table on Awareness, I was most inspired by some of the thinking the authors had done on the overall impact on society of voluntary organizations. These thoughts call leaders to see beyond their own organizational successes, woes and challenges, and to understand the part they can play in the full life of our society. The authors speak of the primary purpose of nonprofits as the need to "maximize the social goods they produce for both society and the people who participate in them". And, in fact, they challenge us small thinkers by saying that "contribution to the social good is the single most important measure of success of nonprofit organizations". I would guess that not too many of us get up in the morning with that thought on our minds.

Social capital is, however, not the most enticing aspect of nonprofits' task that the authors outline. They speak of the organizational capital that needs to be in place in order for the social capital to be developed. What they include as examples of organizational capital are: experienced and competent management, leadership and staff; trained volunteers and loyal donors; well-staffed facilities; repositories of supplies for the community (such as food banks, blood banks etc.); organizational structures, information systems, and networks of like-minded individuals and nonprofits; special collections (such as in art galleries, data banks); and favourable organizational images or reputations that engender trust and attract volunteers. (40–1)

Now that is important work for leaders...to see beyond the single or multi-layered organization towards the real social good that can be provided through the appropriate use of their skills in leadership. I suspect we wouldn't need to be focussing on building awareness of the impact of the voluntary sector if the

politicians, corporate leaders, the volunteer leaders we work with, and even we ourselves as leaders, understood what we already provide and are challenged to continue to improve!

Leaders Who Make a Difference is clearly a book that, at minimum, deserves a place in that pile of books beside your bed that you should read sometime soon. It also makes sense to move it from that pile to the honoured place in the office beside the dictionary and thesaurus, so that it can be dipped into on a fairly frequent basis. We as leaders need all the help we can get in these complex and challenging times. Dobbs and Nanus can give us much.

Transforming Fundraising. A Practical Guide to Evaluating and Strengthening Fundraising to Grow with Change

By Judith E. Nichols

REVIEWED BY DAVID BOYD-THOMAS
Member, Voluntary Sector Initiative Working Group on Funding

At last, a practical and pragmatic volume dedicated to a critical area of fundraising management: program assessment. But this important new volume for the nonprofit market ought to stress its subtitle as it falls short of the mark in terms of delivering a complete transformation guide for all aspects of fundraising – especially volunteer management. It is, however, chock full of worksheets, checklists, exhibits and a resource guide addressing the steps necessary to undertake a "development assessment process" for not-for-profit organizations of all sizes. This slim volume may be deceptive in its 176-page brevity as it covers the assessment waterfront but this is by design as Nichols points out that "few of us have the luxury of stopping our day-to-day responsibilities as we step back to analyze our organizations".

Divided into four parts, Nichols' development assessment process takes us through understanding, analysis, information gathering, and reporting. Even though not-for-profit organizations regularly set fundraising goals, too often through sheer pressure to get the dollars in, or lack of resources, they do not take the time to measure the progress of their development programs, or they evaluate these programs with the wrong criteria. As a result, staff, senior executives, and boards may be disappointed with the results. Even worse, people in the organization may think they are doing a good job in raising funds when a much greater potential could have been realized.

Nichols has taken what some may consider a rather unorthodox position considering that she is a consultant; she believes the development assessment process should be undertaken by the organization's own staff and she summarizes the benefits of doing so, stating:

> By opening up a dialogue among key players and structuring information gathering for more accurate decision making, the development assessment process encourages staff and volunteers to take an active role in development planning.

This volume will be especially welcome both to seasoned fundraisers and volunteers as well as those newer to the profession in that it compellingly articulates a clear and succinct process for program evaluation and assessment and moves from the general theoretical level to specific practical application quite rapidly.

Because she is so well-known among North American fundraising professionals, Nichols' personal asides are among the book's strongest features. Although in and of itself the development assessment process as she outlines it will not "transform" fundraising, it will serve as a catalyst to help not-for-profit organizations engaged in fundraising to evaluate effectively and reposition their efforts if necessary to ultimately improve organizational effectiveness and service to society.

International Fund Raising for Not-for-Profits, A Country-by-Country Profile

Edited by Thomas Harris

REVIEWED BY JILLIAN McINNIS*

This book is weighty in both size and substance but don't let that overwhelm you. *International Fund Raising for Not-for-Profits* makes interesting reading and, since every chapter can be read on its own, the book is easily broken into manageable sections. As a reference manual, it will be useful to both those with experience in a particular market and those who are contemplating moving into an altogether new market.

This volume begins by addressing the need for reference materials to help us to navigate effectively as fundraisers on an international basis. Harris sets out in the Preface that this volume is a first edition and may act to stimulate

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*Jillian McInnis has worked in the fund development field for approximately 15 years, specializing in international development. Since 1992, she has worked on multi-million-dollar gifts throughout the Asia Pacific region and in Europe for the University of British Columbia. She also works on major domestic gifts for the University. Along with several other international projects, Jillian is responsible for the development activity at the Liu Centre for the Study of Global Issues, an initiative led by Lloyd Axworthy. Prior to her work at UBC, Jillian was the Director of Development for Vancouver Opera and the Associate Director of Marketing and Communications for the National Arts Centre.

nationals of other countries to undertake the work necessary for future additions and submissions.

I must confess early in this review that I have not worked in most of the countries that this book covers; however I do have direct working experience of major gift solicitation in several of the countries included in the volume. There was a good deal of resonance when I came to those chapters dealing with countries where I have a fair bit of experience.

It seemed a natural start to flip to the Cs and look to the contribution made by Allan Arlett on Canada. The Canadian entry was very engaging and informative and I lingered there much longer than I would have expected. Eventually, however, I forged on to read the chapters on France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Singapore and the United States – all countries I have some experience with – before venturing even further afield. There is much to be learned in this volume: it is an informational and cultural road map for fundraisers and should raise the cultural awareness of those pursuing major gifts in the countries discussed.

The beauty of this volume is that the submissions are from nationals working within the countries themselves. Harris has drawn on the experience of qualified experts in well-structured country-specific chapters in a highly effective way. There is a standard format to each of the submissions. Each contains salient information that allows readers to absorb some statistical material and at the same time begin to understand some of the unique country and cultural differences. This volume is a conscious attempt not to homogenize those differences.

I suggest that you read this volume cover to cover. I also suggest that you consider and use it as a quick reference tool. I pointed out earlier that it is weighty but I should add that the information is well presented, easily understood, and quickly absorbed. This volume will also assist the fundraiser to work effectively in other countries and cultures. Works such as this one are only as good as their contributors and my perception is that these contributions are quite exceptional.

As with any book dealing with statistical information, that information will become dated, new trends will develop, and the need for subsequent editions will become more pressing.

It may be that there could be some debate about some of the statements within this volume, however it would be difficult to argue that it is not an essentially strong foundation of fundraising knowledge about each of the countries included. For example, each country submission has a Bibliography and several very useful addresses. Several of these addresses were already familiar

to me and have proven most useful in my own work. There is also an Annotated Bibliography that Harris provides in addition to those that are country-specific.

Certainly at UBC, as we continue exploring potential new development markets, we will frequently refer to this volume. If it does stimulate further submissions and subsequent future editions they, too, will be of much interest.

In essence, *International Fund Raising for Not-for-Profits* by Thomas Harris (ed.) should be considered a major gift. In his acknowledgments, Harris speaks eloquently in praise of all who made the book possible. He also pinpoints his co-ordinates on board "L'Esprit Libre" at 6°25?E 43°01?N perhaps in recognition that he has provided a navigational tool that will serve many well in their fundraising voyages to increasingly less distant lands.