

CREATIVITY IN THE NATURAL STATE

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# Deep Roots, High Hopes

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## Foundations of Arkansas' Creative Economy

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REGIONAL  
TECHNOLOGY  
STRATEGIES, INC.

## **Addendum**

Due to an oversight, St. Francis County was mistakenly omitted from this report. In terms of Table 7, in 2000, St. Francis County had 14 full-Time artists, designers, and performers a rate of 5.9 full time artists per 1,000 employed. St. Francis County's assets include the St. Francis County Museum, which offers visitors the opportunity to learn about the history of the county as well as East Arkansas Community College, the sponsor of the annual Ridgefest Fall Festival, which offers a wide range of entertainment to visitors to the Forest City campus. EACC offers students a wide range of arts electives and is in the process of constructing a Center for the Fine and Performing Arts.

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Regional Technology Strategies, Inc.

With Mt. Auburn Associates, Arkansas Arts Council, Arkansas Science &  
Technology Authority, Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges

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**Also available online at [www.rtsinc.org](http://www.rtsinc.org):**

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Volume II - Ducks, Documentaries & Design: Tales from Arkansas' Creative Economy

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We want to thank all these people and organizations whose efforts make Arkansas such a creative place to live and do business.

Finally, a grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation makes this publication and our work in Arkansas possible. We continue to be grateful for their support.

Stuart Rosenfeld, Project Director  
Regional Technology Strategies  
April 2008

## Project Advisory Panel

Ginger Beebe, First Lady of Arkansas

Linda Beene, University of Arkansas

David Belcher, University of Arkansas-  
Little Rock

Joyce Brooks, Guachoya Arts Council

Ed Clifford, Bentonville-Bella Vista  
Chamber of Commerce

Tobi Fairley Wells, T. Lamarr Interiors  
and T. Lamarr Fine Art

Ruth Hawkins, Arkansas State University

Ken Hubbell, Hubbell Associates

Arthur Hunt, The College of Aspiring Artists

Robert Hupp, Arkansas Repertory  
Theatre

Marla Johnson Norris, Aristotle

John Cain, KABF Radio

Don Munro, Munro Shoes

Denisa Pennington, Arkansas Dept of  
Economic Development

Dick Trammel, Arkansas State Board of  
Higher Education

Ex Officio Members

John Ahlen, Arkansas Science &  
Technology Authority

Edward Franklin, Arkansas Association of  
Two year Colleges

Joy Pennington, Arkansas Arts Council



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## Introduction

Creativity—according to the dictionary, “the use of the imagination or original ideas, especially in the production of an artistic work”—fuels the economy, stokes innovation, and feeds the soul. For too long, too much of the economic value of Arkansas’ creativity has gone unnoticed and underappreciated. Its cultural attractions, scenic beauty, and folk traditions have long attracted visitors who spend money, but beyond tourism, creative enterprises were not acknowledged to be a legitimate sector of the state’s economy. State support has always been directed at large industrial and commercial employers.

The previous report, *Growing Arkansas’ Creative Economy*, made the case for creativity as a force in the state’s economy on the basis of the numbers of people who are self-employed in industry sectors that meet the criteria of “creative,” which means that they compete primarily on the basis of the cultural or aesthetic content of their goods or services. In comparison to other clusters in the state, what we defined as the creative cluster is the third largest. Most economists project high growth for sectors such as gaming, digital media, and fashion, and places competing for jobs are beginning to recognize the importance of the arts and culture to their efforts. As one writer noted, “Rather than focusing obsessively on large firms or symbolic projects...or simply seeking to cut taxes and provide financial incentives to favor large companies, communities need to emphasize those things that lead individuals and companies to remain in a particular place of their own accord.”<sup>1</sup> Those things increasingly have to do with art, culture, and lifestyle.

*Deep Roots, High Hopes* attempts to determine what educational, physical, social, and financial assets must be developed to support a creative and cultural environment that will attract and keep

young people, entrepreneurs, talented professionals, and successful companies, and spur innovation by them. The report also examines where these assets reside and where they are in short supply, and which areas are reaping benefits from them, and which are not.

In Arkansas, as in most states, the companies and people that comprise the creative sectors are recognized *as sources of economic growth* neither in public policy nor the allocation of resources. Such support as these sectors enjoy comes mainly from state efforts to promote tourism, from innovative business ventures, and from the philanthropy of citizens, corporations, and foundations.

Arkansas has a real opportunity to plot a course that, building on its unique features and innate ingenuity, emphasizes creativity and uses it to best advantage in its schools, businesses, technologies, and communities.

Stuart Rosenfeld  
April 2008



## Deep Roots

**N**orthwest to southeast, from the Ozarks to the Delta, and from its northeastern-most tip to Texarkana, Arkansas is pregnant with cultural talent and enterprises. Its formidable creative identity is rooted in an innovative milieu of banjo and blues musicians, artists and authors, potters and poets, directors and designers, dance companies and film crews, and animators and architects, among others.

The businesses and entrepreneurs that comprise the state's creative cluster, the strengths of which were discussed in the 2007 report *Growing Arkansas' Creative Economy*, operate as a regional system that generates income and wealth by converting artistic, design, and cultural content into products and services. The components of the value chain by which this is accomplished variously supply or support the creative and cultural enterprises that convert aesthetic and cultural content into, or directly produce, as well as reproduce, disseminate, display, and sell such goods and services.

Augmenting the nearly 35,000 Arkansans employed in classifiable creative enterprises are scores of others operating under the radar screen in creative endeavors not easily identified or categorized. To tap the economic benefit of the existing creative core as well as the underlying stratum of as yet under-realized creative potential, the state must actively mine it for creative assets that can provide the foundation for new and existing creative enterprises.

That Arkansas possesses significant assets related to the development, expression, and experience of creativity and culture is clear. Its colleges and universities, numerous organizations, and hundreds of cultural venues and spaces fuel artistic and creative endeavors in every region of the state.

What is less clear is whether these creative assets are sufficiently connected to



local and regional economies to become drivers of economic as well as cultural activity. Some of the state's creative assets are being developed and built upon in ways that generate economic impact, but many are not. A primary goal of this phase of the study is to identify catalysts that can accelerate the pace at which Arkansas can be moved down the path to fuller realization of its creative economic potential.

How strong the creative assets that constitute the foundations of Arkansas' creative economy are, and whether they present areas of opportunity for specific creative sub-sectors or geographic sub

Elizabeth Smith, a professor at the University of Central Arkansas, teaches to a new generation of Arkansans. Photo Courtesy of UCA.

*To designate a company a “creative enterprise” thus presumes the prominence of aesthetics and distinctiveness as competitive advantages...*

regions, are among the questions addressed in this report.

### **Creative Economy Reprise**

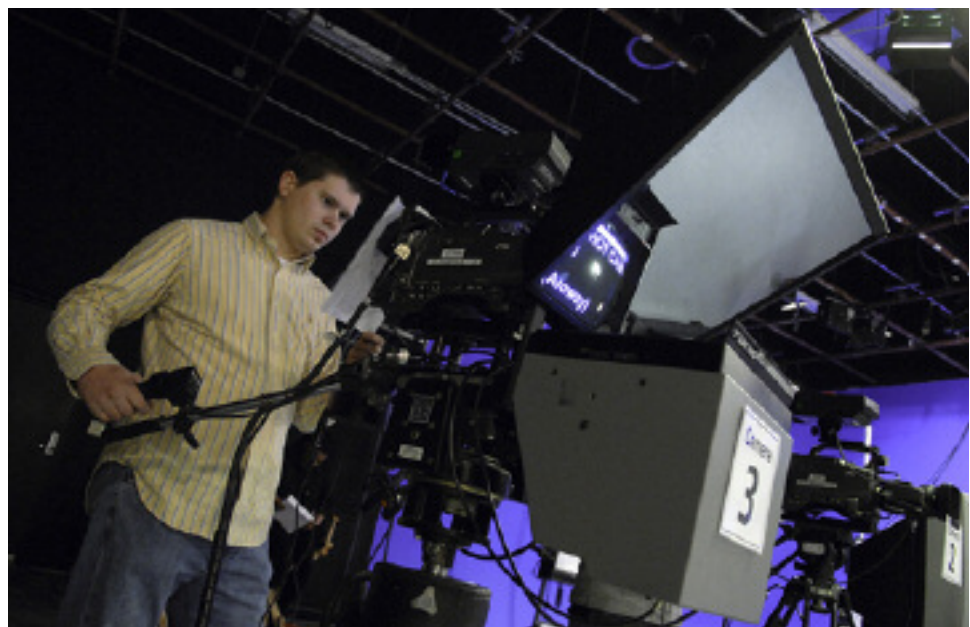
Our 2007 report showed Arkansas’ creative economy, when defined by industry classifications, to constitute one of its largest clusters. The cluster is composed of four sub-clusters: visual, literary, and performing arts; entertainment and new media; product and environmental design; and cultural heritage and preservation. In the National Governors Association’s 2007 analysis, only transportation/logistics and processed foods clusters led the creative cluster as a source of jobs. When the self-employed were included, nearly 35,000 citizens earned their livelihood by generating from creative endeavors more than one billion dollars in wages and self-employment income. Were all those who depend on creative activities as secondary income sources (for example, the vast majority of writers), those in sectors not *primarily* classified as “creative,” and those who under-report their incomes to be included, this total would undoubtedly be much higher.

The precise composition of the creative economy is not so easily ascertained. The

artist, musician, and writer are readily identified as doing “creative work,” if they choose to so classify themselves (and many do not). Landscape architects do routine as well as creative work. The artisan manufacturer is even harder to classify. Firms that make upscale fashion apparel or furniture and market to discriminating customers willing to pay a premium for appearance or expressiveness, for example, must also satisfy functional needs and meet production schedules and quality standards. To designate a company a “creative enterprise” thus presumes the prominence of aesthetics and distinctiveness as competitive advantages, which might be construed to be a more or less subjective assessment.

The value of the creative economy lies in the ability of creative enterprises to commoditize art and culture without forsaking the appeal to consumers’ values, tastes, and emotions that brings premium prices. To earn a living from their craft, independent writers need editors, publishers, printers, advertisers, book distributors, stores, and, as they develop reputations, agents. The scope and variety of enterprises beyond the casts required to produce a film are clearly evident in the lengthy lists of credits at

Universities offer degrees and programs in Mass Communications along with a host of other creative programs. Photo courtesy of UCA.



the close of commercially released movies. Add talent, employment, and advertising agencies and movie theatres and concessions to makeup and music, technical production crews with operators, gaffers, and best boys, set design, modeling, editing and special effects, food services, transportation, and security, and film and video become a powerful economic engine for which states now vigorously compete. Some visual artists rely on framers, and many sell through galleries, stores, and web sites and increasingly engage other companies to multiply their original compositions as giclees, prints, posters, and even t-shirts. Talented designers can produce extraordinary exteriors and interiors for new homes and offices, devise unusual packaging for products, and conceive memorable brand identities.

Economic development organizations can promote the growth of the creative economy by attracting and supporting these types of creative enterprises and creative people. But participants in regional meetings organized across Arkansas for this study lamented the continued emphasis on traditional recruitment and lack of economic development effort directed at the creative sector. "Our region is not thinking about our culture in economic terms," remarked one. Others, however, saw signs, at least, that some regions of the state are beginning to understand its potential.

Their value, of course, transcends the economic sphere, and the arts should be supported for their intrinsic value in enriching lives and enhancing communities, giving pleasure and providing emotional and learning experiences.<sup>2</sup> But this side of the arts, which is more widely understood and acknowledged, already attracts support from local arts councils, foundations, governments, and private donors.

We believe that recognizing the economic as well as intrinsic value justifies far more state support for and investment in the arts. Consumption patterns are changing,

an increasing segment of the population is making purchase decisions based not so much anymore on utility or even status, but on aesthetics, meaning, and self-expression. Corporations that recognize this are sponsoring museum shows and purchasing art not just as patrons of culture, but as good business policy.<sup>3</sup> Wal-Mart's comprehension of this is reflected in its move into designer goods, specialty foods, green design, and sponsorship of art exhibits.

### **Creative Assets— The Foundation of the Creative Economy**

It takes more than creative people to realize the full economic benefit of the creativity that resides in a state. Successful creative clusters enjoy a support structure of public and private sector institutions that provide education, training, technical and business assistance, venues for production, exhibition, and performance, and resources. Elements of a state's schools, colleges and universities, small business centers, extension services, cultural institutions, and other organizations that target creative businesses or people are part and parcel of a creative cluster. It requires an extensive support structure to develop a brand for the state and to distinguish its creative and customized products, that can create a "buzz" that generates market demand for goods "Made in Arkansas" that are a source of memories or meaning associated with places consumers might have lived, visited, or attended school or to which they can in some way relate.

Arkansas' "creative assets" can be usefully organized into six categories:

- **Associations** can be somewhat formal groups of compatible creative economy players variously designated guilds, councils, cooperatives, and arts centers as well more informal groups that come together or interact as clubs and networks. Most associations are membership based, event-

*Consumption patterns are changing, an increasing segment of the population is making purchase decisions based not so much anymore on utility or even status, but on aesthetics, meaning, and self-expression.*



oriented venues for networking, learning, and collaboration. Such mechanisms for developing “social capital” are at the heart of all successful industry clusters.

- **Education and training** aimed at cultivating creative economy talent is variously provided by public schools, dedicated private arts and craft schools, private programs and teachers, and educational programs and courses in the arts and design within institutions of higher education and supporting industries.
- **Events and performances** that showcase elements of the creative economy include scheduled theatre, festivals, shows, celebrations, exhibits, gallery openings, and readings, open as well as ticketed.
- **Places and spaces** such as museums, historic sites, public art, arboretums and gardens, and other locations in which creative economy assets are housed, created, or exhibited including geographic districts and neighborhoods with an arts focus, exhibition halls, film and music studios, incubators, and shared space for creative enterprises are in themselves creative economy assets.
- **Design talent** includes individuals and

organizations that add value to products and services through design including industrial, graphic, and digital media design as well as manufacturers that compete on the basis of design.

- **Resources** that support the creative economy include sources of funding, incentive programs, and information and technical assistance from private foundations, government agencies, and non-profits.

### Building on the State's Creative Assets

To gauge Arkansas' most significant creative assets, the study team compiled from background research, reviews of documents, and interviews with key informants a database of the state's key creative assets organized by type and sub-cluster. Information about a wide range of activities and assets, ranging from small-scale, local museums to festivals that attract thousands of visitors annually to the state, was collected. Next, to identify assets that might have been missed and bring some on-the-ground perspective and context to the analysis, the team held a series of meetings across the state to solicit local stakeholders' views of their regions' most significant assets.

By its nature, such a compilation cannot be claimed to be comprehensive or all-inclusive. Indeed, some of the assets it attempts to document are informal, only locally publicized, or embedded in other activities or businesses and therefore difficult to categorize. It nevertheless represents our best effort to assess the state's creative assets for the purpose of identifying patterns and opportunities therein.

The report draws heavily on information gleaned from regional focus groups and creative assets inventory to identify competitive strengths and challenges implicit in Arkansas' creative economy. It examines these specifically with respect to:

- each of the state's creative assets, namely, associations, education and

**Delta Made – Rural Heritage Development Initiative** In 2006, the Delta region was chosen to be one of two pilot sites for the National Trust for Historic Preservation sponsored Rural Heritage Development Initiative. Three partners in the Delta are collaborating to show how heritage and history can be the basis for economic revitalization: Main Street Arkansas, the Arkansas Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association, and the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas. One RHDl initiative, designated DeltaMade, is a regional branding and promotional program for locally made products that incorporate the Delta's culture and history. Twenty-five local crafts, food products, and other wares are being promoted as DeltaMade in 16 Arkansas retail locations to enable tourists to take home a little piece of Arkansas and at the same time make a real difference to the viability of many of the Delta's small home-grown businesses.

**Local Motion Gallery of Arts** Established in 2004, Local Motion is the first fine arts gallery in Texarkana that promotes the work of local artists. In fact, it's the first fine arts gallery Texarkana has had for many years. As its name suggests, Local Motion is driven by a strong sense of place. Its founding artists noticed a dual need: that Southwest Arkansans usually have to leave the area in order to buy and experience art, and Southwest Arkansan artists usually have to leave the area in order to sell and show their art. Why, they reasoned, should we not be selling the best of Arkansas to Arkansans? Their rootedness to their home place is also expressed through their artistic themes, such as a layout that asked their artists to paint landmarks of Texarkana, and future ones that may include the colors of Arkansas, or Arkansan landmarks or landscapes. At present, Local Motion is run entirely as a collective, on the volunteer labor of its artist members.

training, events and performances, places and spaces, design talent, and resources;

- the state's five economic development regions: northwest, northeast, central, southeast, and southwest;
- and key sub-clusters: visual, literary, and performing arts; entertainment and new media; product and environmental design; and cultural heritage and preservation.

Arkansas is vying with communities across the United States to make itself synonymous with creativity. To lay claim to "creative clusterhood" and distinguish itself from other places, it must find and

develop its niches. Some of that buzz is already emanating from the creative centers being developed in the Delta and Ozarks. Other regions continue to look for their creative centers. Not every community can develop a local creative cluster, but most have some creative or cultural assets that, accorded the requisite support and resources, can make a significant contribution to the local culture and economy.

*The final report in this four part series, to be published later in 2008, will suggest local and state policies for increasing and better distributing the economic and social benefits of creative enterprises and people.*

## Cultural Assets: The Building Blocks of Arkansas Creative Economy

To generate markets, showcase products, build reputation, and foster growth, a creative economy needs a solid base that includes (1) educational programs that cultivate new and enhance existing talent, (2) associations that provide a social infrastructure for networking, learning, and sharing, (3) scheduled events and performance series that attract and expose audiences to elements of the creative economy, (4) places and spaces in which to house, display, and sell those elements, and (5) resources and services that support the development of creative enterprises and activities of creative workers. That Arkansas possesses such a base is manifested in creative endeavors being pursued throughout the state, from the Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute to the Ozark Foot-hills Filmfest, Ozark Stageworks, and “I Believe in McGehee” theatre company.

The building blocks of the assets (Table 1) are roughly organized according to the sub-cluster they best fit: visual, literary, and performing arts; entertainment and new media; product and environmental design; and cultural heritage and restoration. We elaborate, and where possible, estimate the assets. But because many of the state, association, and web-based databases that supplement the document reviews, focus groups, and interviews on which this report draws are web-based, voluntary, or membership-based, they are likely to miss many who choose not to join, advertise, or otherwise be included.

### Learning the Skills: Education and Training in Art and Design

A creative economy emerges and is sustained by individuals who variously

Table 1. **Asset Categories**

Category	Description
Organizations	Formal support networks and groups such as guilds, councils, associations, and arts centers as well as informal clubs, networks, and organizations.
Education and Training	Programs and instruction aimed at developing or enhancing creative talent variously offered by public and private arts and craft schools, private teachers, and within educational institutions and supporting industries.
Events and Performances	Activities such as scheduled theatre, festivals, shows, celebrations, exhibits, gallery openings, and readings, open as well as ticketed, that showcase the creative economy.
Places and Spaces	Locations such as museums, historic sites, gardens, arts districts, neighborhoods, exhibition halls, film and music studios, incubators, and shared space in which creative assets and enterprises can be created, housed, and displayed.
Design Talent	Individuals and organizations that add value to products and services through design including industrial, graphic, and digital media design as well as manufacturers that compete on the basis of design.
Resources	Support such as sources of funding, incentive programs, and information or assistance provided by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private foundations.



develop an interest in and gain an appreciation for the arts that they express as audiences and patrons or who acquire arts-based skills and knowledge that they impart to others as teachers or apply to the production of creative assets or development of creative enterprises. A wide range of certificate and degree programs in the arts and design are offered by Arkansas' educational institutions, which also afford aspiring and active artists and designers alike access to resources, services, and connections and provide venues for exhibition and performance that make the state's creative assets more accessible to the general population.

Learning and appreciation are developed and reinforced in the public schools. Arkansas has maintained a stronger emphasis on the arts. It is one of only three states in the nation to require an arts teacher in every school and arts class for every student, and has since 1986 required a half credit in the arts for high school graduation. To meet these statutory requirements, the education system employs 239 high school arts teachers and 1,026 elementary and middle school arts teachers. Public school arts education is supplemented by some 100 teachers who offer private lessons in music, dance, or art.

Arkansas is also one of the few states that offer a state-wide high school that combines math and science with the arts. Pre-eminent among the state's efforts to combine the arts with technology in its high schools are the EAST Initiative, which facilitates the teaching of math and science by affording students access to digital arts media, and My Community, which makes available to students tools for documentary film making through which they can learn about their communities and culture.

Arkansas' community college system is emerging as a potentially powerful asset of its creative economy. Although the state's community colleges have always offered the arts as part of their liberal arts and transfer curricula, a growing appreciation for their potential economic



value is leading these institutions to explore ways to integrate the arts and design into their employment and entrepreneurial missions.

Northwest Arkansas, Phillips, Arkansas State University at Beebe, and Rich Mountain and Oauchita are among the community colleges that offer arts and crafts oriented instruction as well as, increasingly, programs in graphic arts, animation, and design. Two-year programs are offered in the visual arts, but not in creative writing, which is not considered a legitimate career track for two-year students (although writing courses are offered by two-year institutions in the northwest and southwest regions). Arkansas State University at Beebe, Rich Mountain Community College, and Oauchita Community College have become active members of CraftNet, an international alliance of community colleges that is seeking to build stronger rural economies through the application of crafts.

All regions of the state have four-year programs in visual arts, creative writing, and graphic arts. Although the state's 17 degree programs in visual arts greatly exceed the two in writing, one of the latter, the creative writing and creative translation program at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, is among the most

Aja Nia Hearne, senior violinist in rehearsal for "Ain't Nobody Gonna Turn Me Roun'", a Parkview Black History presentation in the William J. Clinton Presidential Center. Parkview's orchestra, choral and theatre programs presented this original script tracing slave songs through history to the Civil Rights' Movement.

*Learning and appreciation are developed and reinforced in the public schools.*

Figure 1. **Number of Four-Year Colleges (21) with Degree Programs in Creative Fields**

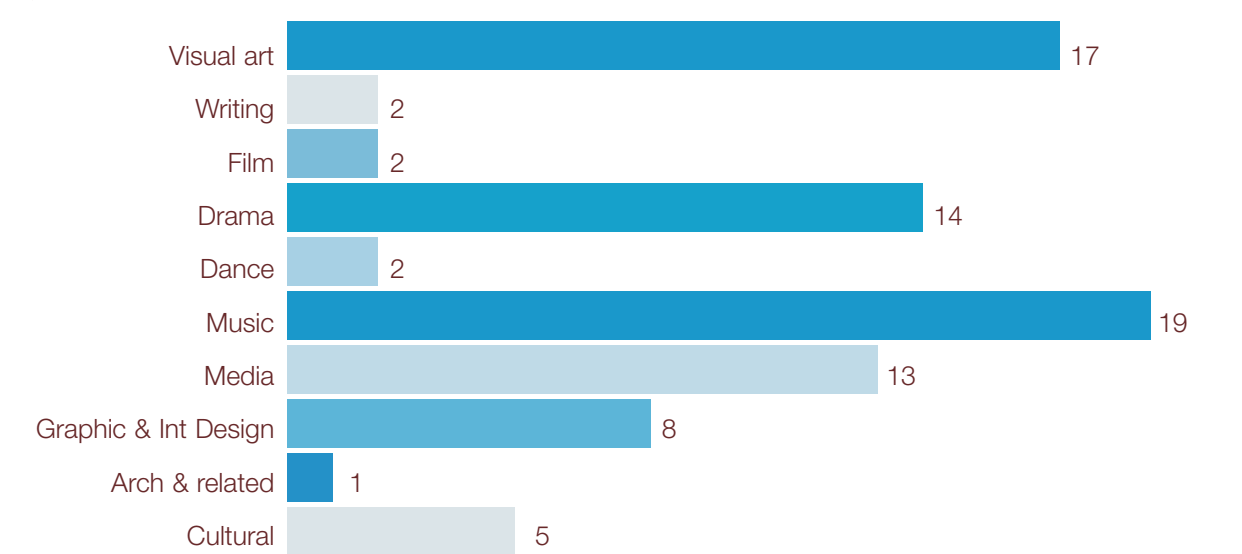
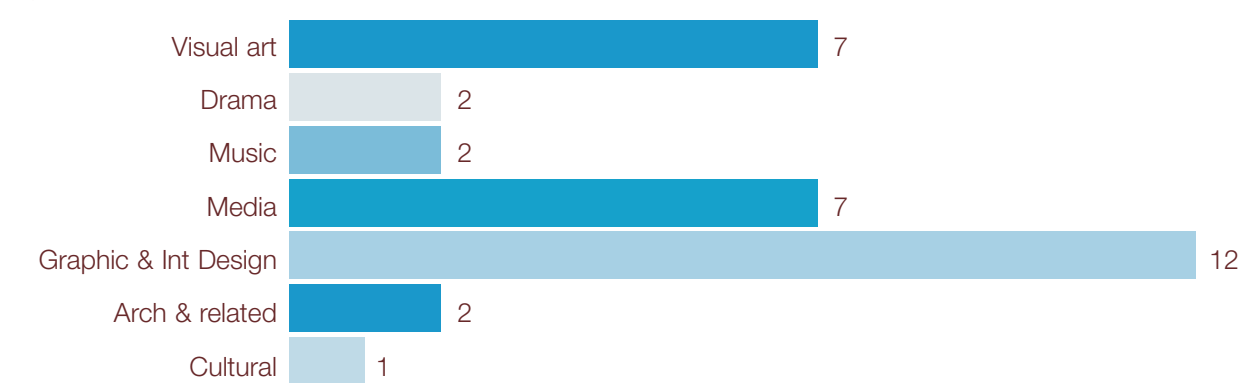


Figure 2. **Number of Two-Year Colleges (23) with Degree Programs in Creative Fields**



*The state has developed a particularly strong reputation in creative writing...*

innovative and highly regarded in the country. Few schools have degree programs in the crafts, although many two-year colleges offer selected non-credit courses.

Arkansas’ educational systems support all of the sub-clusters of the creative economy to varying degrees, and the **visual, literary, and performing arts** sub-cluster to a considerable degree. Most of the state’s colleges offer arts, writing, and some performing arts degrees or credentials, some quite highly regarded nationally. The state has developed a particularly strong reputation in creative writing, the writing program at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville,

for example, having garnered national awards. Literary publications include South Arkansas Community College’s *Between the Lines*, the University of Arkansas-Monticello’s *Foliate Oak*, and Arkansas Tech University in Russellville’s award-winning *Nebo*.

Collectively, these institutions awarded 224 baccalaureates in 2007, this relatively low number probably reflecting low demand, possibly because the degrees have less market value than degrees in other fields. More important on a resume might be the reputation and connections of the instructor and opportunities afforded by the school to show, perform, or publish.



The Parkview Mime Troupe pose in front of the bridge adjacent to the William J. Clinton Presidential Library while performing for THEA Paves the Way, a fund raiser supporting college scholarships for high school artists.

A number of excellent private schools and art centers offer shorter programs that address the needs of those seeking to learn or improve a craft technique, not acquire a degree, supplement the system of programs in educational institutions. The Rosemary Rhea Regional Arts Center in Magnolia, Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock, Eureka Springs School for the Arts, and Art Ventures Watercolor Holidays in Conway offer courses in selected disciplines.

The **entertainment and new media** sub-cluster is served by university programs in radio and television and digital media. In 2007, 57 baccalaureate degrees were awarded in radio television and 344 degrees plus a handful of certificates in

mass media or multimedia, 23 of them in John Brown University's relatively new but increasingly popular program in digital arts/media.

Approximately 30 students are enrolled in each of the three tracks (film and video, graphic, and design) of the strong multi-



Historic 1886 Crescent Hotel and Spa in Eureka Springs.

Table 2. **Certificates and Degrees Awarded by Institutions of Higher Education in Arkansas, 2006-2007**

Sub-cluster	Assoc./Certificate	Bachelors	Masters
Visual, literary, and performing arts	40	435	29
Entertainment and new media	11	401	25
Product and environmental design	69	208	9
Cultural heritage and preservation	0	5	0

Source: Summary of Degrees/Certificates Awarded by Arkansas Institutions of Higher Education, Arkansas of Higher Education web site, 2008.

\*Degrees that are embedded in other categories such as liberal arts, multidisciplinary studies, or education are not included in the totals.



Parkview's orchestra performing at the Pulaski County Court House for the "Medieval Feast," an annual collaboration between the Parkview orchestra, choral and theatre programs.



media program offered by the University of Southern Arkansas' two-year branch in Magnolia. About half those who graduate from these programs remain in Arkansas. Student projects in Arkansas State University at Beebe's strong set of accredited courses in desktop publishing and computer animation took first, second, and two third place awards for multimedia or website design in a national competition (that includes four-year colleges) conducted by Phi Beta Lambda (Future Business Leaders of America) in 2007.

Excepting architecture, formal educational programs for the **product and environmental design** sub-cluster are fewer. Architecture generated 53 baccalaureate degrees in 2007, landscape design 149, all awarded by the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville: 135 bachelors and nine masters degrees in landscape architecture awarded by the college of agriculture involved design courses, but the degree holders are not primarily design-

ers. Associate degrees or certificates awarded by community colleges include 40 in graphic design and 10 in web design. A for-profit school, the ITT Technical Institute in Little Rock, also offers a range of baccalaureate and associate degree programs in the new media and design fields, including the fields of graphic, industrial, fashion, or interior design; animation; 25 desktop publishing; and web site design.

Even fewer programs specifically target the **cultural heritage and preservation** sub-cluster. One program in historic restoration graduated five in 2007. Most of those employed in this sub-cluster likely graduated from more generic liberal arts programs in arts and culture.

Except for those who want to teach, degrees and certificates tend to be less important in the creative cluster than in other clusters, the skills, ideas, and contacts acquired in the process often being more highly valued than whatever credentials are awarded. It's not unusual for students to enroll in only those courses that especially appeal to them or are taught by a particular person. Consequently, community colleges also offer a wide range of non-credit courses in the business and practice of art as well as in design, and universities and cooperative extension offer courses through continuing education. All of these purveyors of knowledge and instruction in the arts play a major role in bringing art and culture to Arkansas communities.

### Networking for Fun and Profit: Associations and Organizations

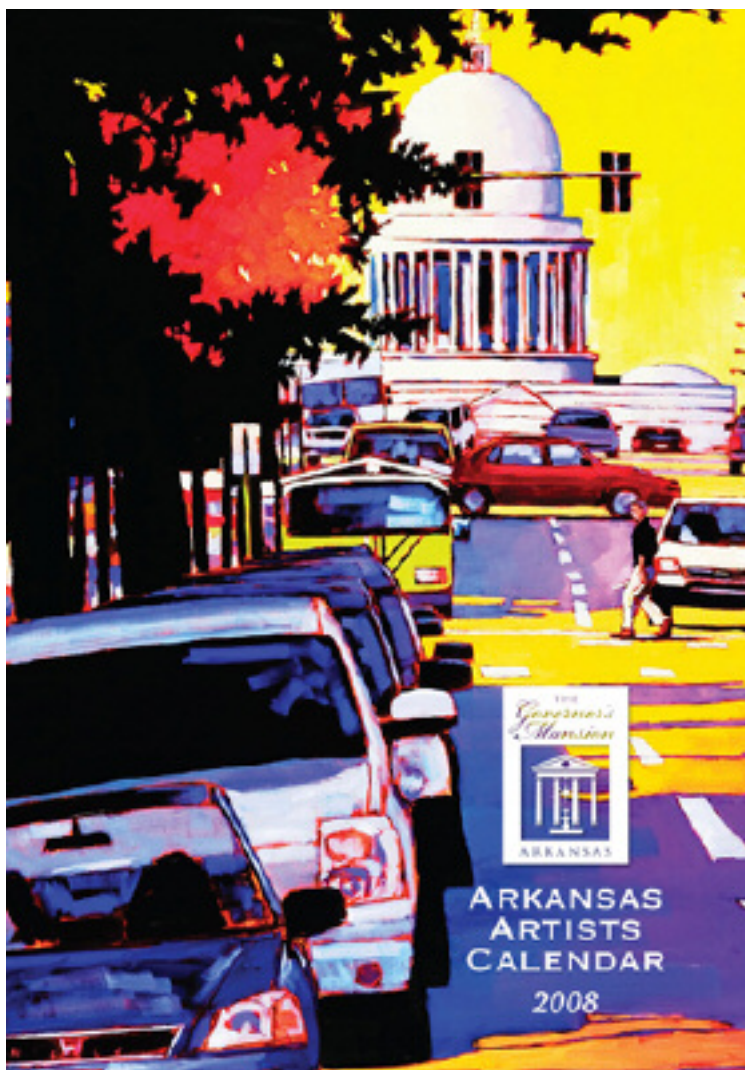
Creative economy enterprises, tending to be quite small and flexible, rely more heavily on networking than on vertical integration to achieve scale. With the disappearance of large studios, for example, networks have come to define the music and film industries, which are increasingly populated by large numbers of small specialty companies and freelancers. Many artists, artisans, and designers pre-

fer to work autonomously or, if not alone, in small, intimate groups. But creatives, however much they might cherish their privacy and independence, need each other as sources of innovation, validation, and information, and as business associates. They benefit from shared space and resources and leverage their collective production to attract greater numbers of customers. “No market relies more heavily on social networks than the exchange of cultural goods.”<sup>4</sup>

Whereas artists and craftspeople have traditionally pursued mutual support and market visibility through guilds, cooperatives, collectives, and networks (the Arkansas Arts Council, for example, hosts a website, <http://www.arkansasarts.com/programs/registry>, that connects prospective customers with a registry of 390 artists throughout the state), designers and performers have tended to rely on more informal venues such as eating and drinking establishments, gallery openings, and bookstores that regularly attract individuals with creative occupations and interests. Both formal and informal associational infrastructures are thus critical assets of Arkansas’ creative economy.

**The visual, literary, and performing arts** sub-cluster exhibits the strongest associative behavior at the local level. Formal structures such as councils, guilds, and clubs are visible and measurable. Writers, for example, who rely heavily on peer critique and feedback, are particularly well organized in Arkansas:

- Started in 1931, The Poets Roundtable has ten branches that host workshops, an annual National Poetry Day celebration, and monthly contests throughout the state.
- Members of Fiction Writers of Central Arkansas meet monthly, publish a newsletter, and generally support each other’s efforts to publish.
- The Ozark Poets and Writers Collective in Fayetteville, Arkansas conducts monthly readings.



- Twenty-five-member White County Creative Writers in Searcy meets monthly and hosts workshops and social events.

Other statewide writers’ groups include the Arkansas Writers’ Association, Arkansas Literary Society, the Arkansas Literary Forum at Henderson State University, and Arkansas’ Pioneer Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

Visual and crafts arts are represented by 41 listed arts councils plus numerous guilds and centers that display art and host special events, speakers, and meetings. Visual arts-specific organizations are concentrated in the northern half of the state. Lawrence County China painters is

Cover of 2008 Arkansas Artists Calendar book, produced by the Governor’s Mansion Association.

*“No market relies more heavily on social networks than the exchange of cultural goods.”*

-Elizabeth Currid

*Arkansas is rich in cultural events and scheduled activities that present and promote both static and performance-based arts-related products...*

representative of organizations that are highly specific to a discipline and area, the Arkansas Craft Guild with memberships that are statewide and less focused. Bella Vista is among Arkansas' 27 web-listed quilters guilds. A striking characteristic of these organizations is that so many are dues-based, suggesting sufficient interest among the state's practitioners of the visual arts to support more membership-based activities.

Some 25 associations are active in music and dance. However, many more are locally organized and informal choral groups, choirs, and shape-note singers that meet regularly to socialize, make music, and in some instances perform regionally or record.

**Product and environmental design and entertainment and new media** are organized primarily through national industry or professional organizations. The more than 500-member Arkansas branch of the American Institute of Architects is staffed in Little Rock, but has volunteer regional section chairs in East Arkansas, Fort Smith, and the Northwest. The U.S. Green Building Council, which also has regional branches, has offices in Little Rock as well, and AIGA, the Association for Professional Design, lists Arkansas State University as an institutional hub. These associations host monthly meetings, workshops, and other events that bring architects and designers together. The American Society of Interior Designers, a national association that represents primarily commercial designers, has a state branch in Little Rock that hosts events. Other regional or national associations that offer the advantage of broader connections crucial to the innovation process, but with less impact on local networking, include the Association of Professional Landscape Designers, American Association of Webmasters, and Southwest Theatre and Film Association.

All of these organizations host a wide-ranging variety of events that members and their friends are encouraged to exploit as forums for interaction, sharing,

and learning, and some provide such useful services as information about events, venues, both physical and web-based, for product exposition, and access to or active distribution of resources.

The **cultural heritage and preservation** sub-cluster is served by fewer organizations. But it includes the approximately 140-member Arkansas Museums Association, founded in 1966, encourages "interaction and cooperation" among members through professional development initiatives and the publication of newsletters and hosting of conferences.

### **Showcasing Creativity: Events and Performances**

That Arkansas is rich in cultural events and scheduled activities that present and promote both static and performance-based arts-related products is clearly evident from a review of anecdotal evidence and listings published on state and local web sites and maintained in databases. Some of these events attract people nationwide; others, such as scheduled art walks, square and contra dances, bookstore readings, pub music, and the "events" that always accompany Eureka Springs' Lucky 13 Starlight outdoor cinema (e.g., flea market, slumber party, musicians, dinner, parade), are primarily targeted at residents but also intended to entice visitors to stay a little longer.

The more than 600 special events compiled by the state in 2006 included the following:

- 62 arts and crafts fairs;
- 14 antique shows;
- 17 agriculture, food, and culinary arts festivals;
- 8 literary festivals;
- 65 music and dance festivals;
- 6 film festivals;
- 5 design shows (fashion and furnishings); and
- 46 ethnic, heritage, and preservation festivals.



The 224 community celebrations and 226 seasonal events hosted in 2006 by Arkansas communities around their history or holidays nearly all included various forms of music, arts, and crafts. That same year, these communities were the venue for 10 concert 172 performance series.

Some 135 events including more than 60 arts and craft festivals are readily associated with the **visual, literary, and performing arts** sub-cluster, and the many community and heritage celebrations are increasingly including arts and crafts exhibitors. Conway's Toad Suck Daze festival, for example, commemorates a long-vanished eponymous tavern at which steamboat crews gathered to "suck on a bottle 'til they swelled up like toads." The inclusion of arts and crafts makes the festival part of the asset base for the arts, and a wide range of other activities part of the asset base for the other sub-clusters; who could imagine, for example, an Arkansan crafts or heritage-related festival that did not include music?

Preeminent among the scheduled events associated with the **entertainment and new media** sub-cluster are six film festivals (music, dance, and theatre performances are considered to be associated with the visual, literary, and performing

arts sub-cluster). These widely-advertised, statewide festivals, albeit small in number, include several important, well-known and well-attended events such as those held in Hot Springs, that add considerably to Arkansas' growing reputation as a venue for creative independent and studio filmmaking. But there are also numerous local events such as the Lucky 13 Starlight Outdoor Cinema in Eureka Springs, billed as "good, clean, weird, family entertainment," that shows movies weekly on a wall adjoining a parking lot.

Of the 172 performance venues identified in the inventory, fewer than half are formal such as auditoriums, performance halls, or campus facilities. Ninety-four are small, informal spaces—66 clubs, nine coffeehouses, and 24 restaurants—that are open and accessible to a wide range of consumers.

**Product and environmental design** are represented by the fewest regular events, five design shows for fashion and furnishings. This number does not include, however, narrowly targeted shows sponsored by, for example, state chapters of national associations that represent architects or interior designers.

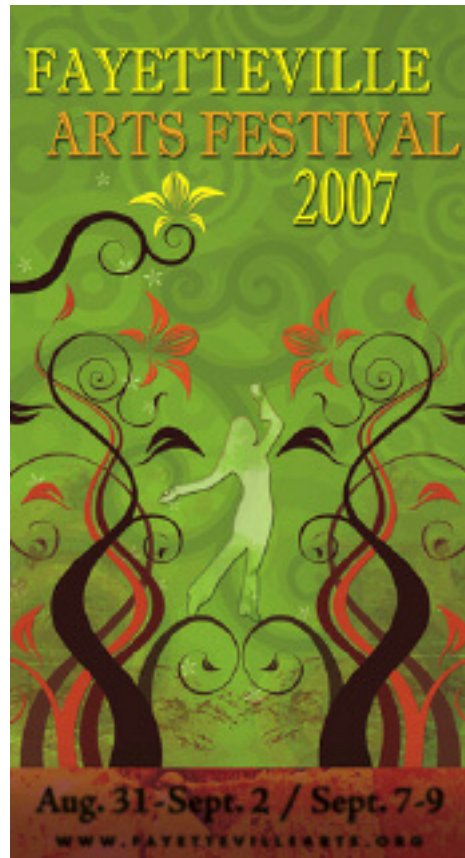
The greatest number of special events is

*...who could imagine, for example, an Arkansan crafts or heritage-related festival that did not include music?*



The Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock houses a distinctive collection of visual art, including a world-class collection of unique works on paper.

Downtown Arts Festival in Fayetteville



Walton Arts Center. The Walton Arts Center includes two theaters, an amphitheater, and a plaza in addition to the gallery pictured here.



**Petit Jean State Park, Morrilton** Named for the sweetheart of an early French explorer of Arkansas, whose sad romance became an Arkansas legend, Petit Jean State Park features architecture that endures as a legacy to the craftsmanship and conservation achievements of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The park includes three National Historic Districts and contains more than 80 trails, buildings, and bridges. The most prominent architectural structure, Mather Lodge, stretches along the bluff of scenic Cedar Creek Canyon. The bluffs, waterfalls, and vistas of Petit Jean Mountain inspired the creation of Arkansas' first state park, and along with it Arkansas' state park system.

generated by the **cultural heritage and preservation** sub-cluster. Most of the 246 ethnic and heritage festivals, 224 community festivals, and 226 seasonal celebrations included crafts, music, literary arts, and artisan foods. The *Ghosts of the Past* living history candlelight tour through the Gillett town site, for example, brings to life nearly 300 years of Arkansas history in music, dancing, and stories of the spirit. Pocahontas' *Black History Month* includes quilting, foods, a tour of the underground railroad, community potluck, and speakers, and Scott's *Homespun Day* is a journey back in time with crafters from the Ozark Folk Center who spin, weave, and dye in the manner of the area's pioneer past.

### Creative Environments: Places and Spaces

The places and spaces in which Arkansas' creative assets are created, housed, experienced, shown, or sold include galleries, bookstores, boutiques, art centers, museums, music studios, radio stations, and theatres as well as viewable public art such as can be found in parks or adorning buildings. Hospitals, dentists' offices, restaurants and clubs, and corporate lobbies often display private art to impart a desired mood or atmosphere (Mercy Medical Center in Rogers, for example, displays photographic art to create a calming, healing environment).

Because most people interested in making art, whether for livelihood, avocation, or hobby, are interested as well in experiencing art created by others, communities rich in creative enterprises tend also to be rich in the **visual, literary, and performing arts**. A web search found 88 art galleries throughout the state, more than half concentrated in just three cities: Little Rock, Hot Springs, and Eureka Springs.

Viewing and making intersect, for example, in foundation-supported programs that place art in public schools with the dual goals of inspiring students to develop their own by exposing them to the



**Art and Design for Healing:** When the Washington Regional Medical Center, a not-for-profit, community-owned and locally governed hospital in Fayetteville, opened its new state-of-the-art facility in 2002, its planners wanted to avoid the standard institutional hospital appearance. The Center preserved features of its former site, which featured a log farmhouse, spring-fed natural pond, two creeks, and large hardwood trees to create a tranquil healing environment that includes an open atrium that spills out into a landscaped courtyard with a flowing water, landscaped walking paths with seating areas around the perimeter of the building, a walking/jogging path, and a meditation labyrinth adjacent to a natural pond. Then the Center turned to local art to create an even warmer and more nurturing internal environment, one that would put patients and visitors at ease and aid the healing process. Bill Rogers, Director of the Washington Regional Foundation, turned to the region's artists to create that soothing atmosphere. A committee representing the hospital, art community, and board selected and purchased art and placed it throughout the public areas of the hospital. This both recognized and showed the region's art and contributed to the recovery process. The hospital's art collection runs the gamut of pastels, wood carvings, sandstone sculptures, fabric art, stone art, and oils.

talents of established Arkansas artists. Campus-situated fine art galleries open to the public include Southern Arkansas University's Brinson Fine Arts Building in Monticello, Ouachita Baptist's Hammons Gallery in Arkadelphia, and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's Fine Arts Center. Even communities from which all sub-clusters of the creative economy are absent can use creative assets such as street art to enhance their attractiveness to residents and firms, as Fort Smith has done with outdoor sculptures and Forest City and Pine Bluff with downtown murals.

Supplementing dedicated spaces are the many clubs, bookstores, coffeehouses, and restaurants in the state that provide venues for new and emerging artists to exhibit and sell their work, new and less-well known poets to read their work, and musicians to perform. Patrons in such hybrid establishments as Hot Springs' Golden Leaves Book Store and Eureka Springs' Mud Street Café, surrounded by the products of creativity, experience art as a seamless part of their environment. Local art hanging in a downtown coffeehouse and local musicians who can be heard over dinner afford people who might not take the time to visit a gallery or attend a concert the experience of an environment of art and creativity. Exhibiting and performing in these informal settings is a way for emerging artists to



"Birdsong," an example of art exhibited in Washington Regional Medical Center in Rogers.

gauge public response and establish a reputation, or for people with other careers to express and share their artistic but secondary talents.

Arkansas' **entertainment and new media** sub-cluster is quite well represented by five film and 80 recording studios that support the 96 film companies and plethora of independent producers and musicians that provide a foundation for professionals and amateurs intent on making music and producing films. These and 21 studios that are open to the public encourage and enable non-professionals' engagement with art as well as provide resources and outlets for the work of full-time musicians and filmmakers.

**Product and environmental design** manifested in private spaces is not readily catalogued. Banks and professional offices often invest in design to generate a



Little Rock's EMOBA Black History Museum educates Arkansans about Black artists' contributions to the state's culture and promotes pride in the heritage of Arkansas' black communities.

positive corporate image, hospitals and doctors offices, as noted earlier, to create a calming environment that reduces patient anxiety, and manufacturing plants to brighten the work environment and improve productivity.

The **cultural heritage and preservation** sub-cluster is defined largely by place. El Dorado's, Van Buren's, Morrilton's, and Hot Springs' downtown districts, Batesville's commercial district, Helena's older homes, and all of Eureka Springs are historically preserved and designated cultural heritage spaces. In Leslie, Serenity Farm Bread's bakers demonstrate for visitors ancient techniques for making hand-shaped, wood-fired bread that is shipped all over

the United States, and a restored 1928 Esso station in Mena has been turned into a museum and historic site that attracts large numbers of tourists. Small museums like these that celebrate and commemorate particular aspects of local creative and cultural life dot the state—there are 119 of them—and complement its many fine major museums of fine art and culture.

Nearly every county in Arkansas has some sort of museum dedicated to its heritage. That by far the majority of Arkansas' museums fall into the area studies and local culture category (see Table 3) reflects a level of local pride and interest in the heritage of individual communities that clearly constitutes a creative asset.

Table 3. **Museums in Arkansas**

Military	8
Music	3
Science and Industry	16
Visual Arts	13
Area Studies and Local Culture	105
Other or Multidisciplinary	5

### **Distinguishing Features: Design Capabilities**

With traditional manufacturing in Arkansas, as elsewhere in the South, increasingly moving production offshore, some companies are turning to design to develop niches less susceptible to global competition. The key is to identify products,

such as the furniture and accessories made by Stone County Iron Works and Ozark Cedar and Forged Iron in Mountain View, purses by LindaLu bags in Little Rock, or the graters by Microplane in Russellville, that embody designs and features that are more important to consumers than price. Arkansas manufacturers employed 183 people self-classified as “designers” according to the 2000 census, but that number omits the larger number of companies that contract out for design or rely on their owners or engineers to provide design for their own products.

To gauge the importance of and potential for design, we conducted an online survey of the state’s manufacturers. Respondents represented a wide range of manufacturing sectors, from those like custom furniture for which design is a necessity to those that would seem to be turning out standardized products such as corrugated boxes. Of 78 respondents:

- 57 percent stated that aesthetics of design is integral to or significant for their competitiveness;
- two in five stated that at least half their sales are attributable to design characteristics;
- about two thirds stated that design ideas are customer-driven;
- almost three in four stated that creativity is important when hiring employees, only one in ten that it is not important;
- 42 percent expect to increase their investment in design within the next three years;
- 57 percent assign specific design responsibilities to staff or outside consultants, two-thirds of whom are full-time designers;
- almost half use external design consultants, three in five from in-state;
- only 11.5 percent stated that they worked with state colleges and universities on design issues.

Arkansas manufacturers employ design in a variety of ways (see Figure 3), most

**Agritourism in Pumpkin Hollow.** Agritourism, defined as any activity, enterprise or business which is designed to increase farm and community income through combining the essential elements of the tourism and agriculture industries, is embodied in Piggott’s Pumpkin Hollow. Pumpkin Hollow, or Dalton Farms as it’s known commercially, is a fully operational farm that affords visitors the experience of farm life as well as a host of fun activities. The largest commercial gourd grower in the entire Southeast, the farm harvests pumpkins and gourds of all kinds and sizes ranging from small ones used in jewelry to large ones that end up as birdhouses. At its core, though, Pumpkin Hollow is about creating a fun environment for visitors to the farm in the fall, who encounter a corn maze, haunted Halloween adventures, hayrides, and some of the most unique pumpkins in Arkansas. In 2006, more than 12,000 visitors (roughly half from outside the state), including more than 4,000 students, visited Pumpkin Hollow. Owners Darrel and Ellen Dalton are investigating the possibility of restoring the farmhouse to show a new generation of Arkansans what life on the farm was really like.

frequently in products (63%) or graphics (51%). One in ten respondents use design for interior and exhibition space, almost two in ten for branding.

The responses suggest that Arkansas’ manufacturers clearly believe in design. A majority of respondents perceived their competitiveness to hinge on design (see Figure 4), and nearly half attributed more than half their sales to design (see Figure 5) and expected to increase their investments in design over the next three years. A further indication of the importance

Revolutionary Designs, located in Hatfield, is one of many Arkansas manufacturers that uses design as a way to compete effectively in a global marketplace.



Photo courtesy of Dan Broun.

Figure 3. **What Forms of Design Do You Use**

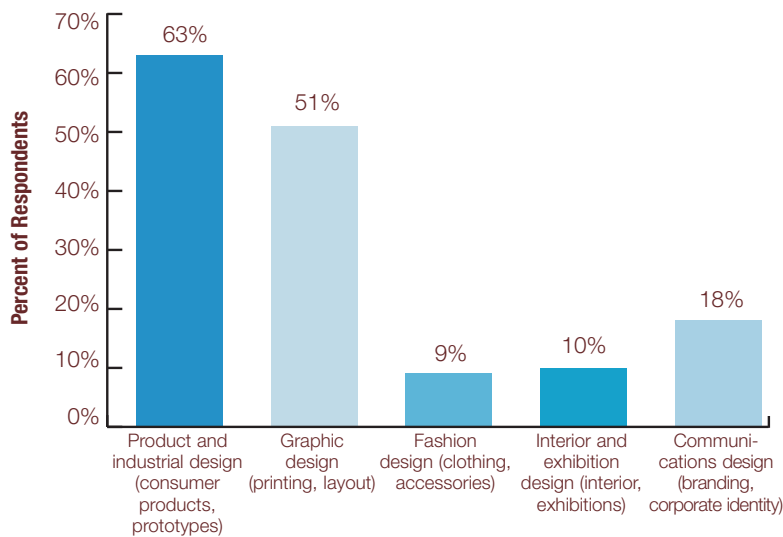


Figure 4. **How Important is Aesthetic Design to Your Competitiveness**

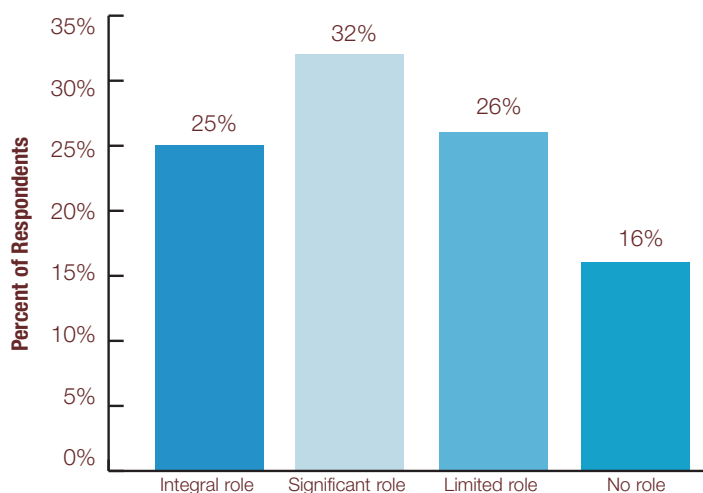
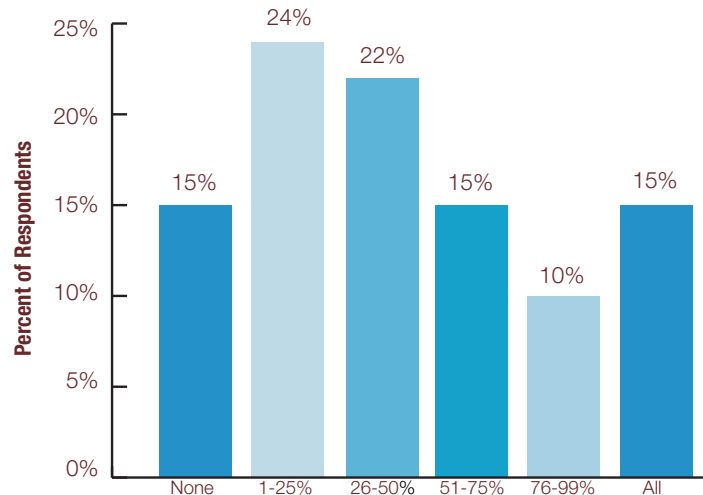


Figure 5. **About What Percent of Your Product Sales are Due to Design**



these firms attach to design is the premium they place on creativity in prospective employees. Creativity was cited as an important or very important skill in prospective employees by more than 75 percent of the respondents. Only ten respondents perceived design to play no role in product sales, and only six regarded creativity to be unimportant in prospective employees.

Customers were cited by 64 percent of respondents as the most or second most important source of design ideas, internal staff by 49 percent of respondents. More than half the firms surveyed assign specific design responsibilities, including graphic design (51 percent), to staff or outside consultants. Most of these firms (63 percent) employ full-time designers, with 46 percent contracting with outside firms. Five of the 26 firms that use full-time employees in design capacities also contract out for design services. Mentioned by the one in nine respondents that indicated that they worked with state colleges and universities on design issues were the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, Black River Technical College, and North Arkansas Community and Technical College.

### **Making It Happen: Accessing Resources**

Historically, artists and performers have had to rely on public and foundation grants to support their work as cultural goods rather than business products, and there has been little attention to programs to help them convert their talents into successful business operations. If artists and other creative endeavors are to be viewed as viable business entities with growth potential, they will need the capital, information, and business assistance that enables them to become profitable in addition to support for their cultural contributions to their communities and society.

State resources fall into two categories: grants for the arts from foundations and

**Supporting the Arts.** The non-profit THEA Foundation, founded in 2001, advocates the importance of art for the development of youth and encourages the participation of young people in art. The Foundation has awarded nearly \$800,000 in scholarships to high school students in the visual and performing arts. Together with the William J. Clinton Foundation, THEA has placed fine art donated by 140 artists in 152 public schools across the state. The Foundation hopes that through the experience our students will have an opportunity to gain insights about themselves and the world that might not be possible otherwise. In some schools, the students' own art is displayed as a way to get them excited about it and see it in a new light. THEA also runs actors and dance workshops and partners with North Little Rock to offer art classes in the East End neighborhood.

public agencies, and business capital and services from public and private sources. Save for a few community foundations and services with regional priorities, most of these resources are available statewide.

Arkansas is home to 15 foundations that support the **visual, literary, and performing arts** sub-cluster. In addition, state and national government agencies and many national foundations, such as Rockefeller, Pew Charitable Trust, Ford, and Kellogg, make grants for the arts. Grants from national foundations tend to be highly competitive and depend on the size of the field and funders' annual budgets and priorities. State support is somewhat more stable, albeit also subject to budgets and priorities.

The Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, funds, on a competitive basis, art organizations, outreach projects, artists on tour, in-school artists residencies, arts curriculum projects, and individual artist fellowships, and makes mini-grants to school-based projects for the professional development of arts teachers. It also manages [www.arkansasartists.com](http://www.arkansasartists.com), a web site that promotes many of the state's best-known artists and connects them to tourists, collectors, and other customers. Federal and government business assistance programs are available to creative enterprises, but typically they are unfamiliar with the special needs of artists, especially the self-employed and, conversely, arts are unaware of the potential sources of support.

The **entertainment and new media** sub-

cluster relies, like more traditional sectors, on private investment, banks, "angel" investors, and venture capital funds. But it also enjoys support from the Arkansas Film Commission, a variety of state programs in the schools, and some foundations. The **product and environmental design** companies are more apt to operate in a more conventional fashion, be better known by banks and more familiar with government programs, and have greater access.

The **cultural heritage and preservation** sub-cluster is supported largely by government funds and agencies, and most importantly, the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts, as well as state and national foundations, are other major sources of funding.

Agencies that deliver business services, although available to creative cluster businesses, are limited by lack of knowledge of the sub-clusters and lack awareness of and familiarity with their needs. The state's cooperative extension service is perhaps the strongest source of support, although oriented towards smaller cities and rural areas. Arkansas' cooperative extension has an excellent grasp of the significance of cultural and creative businesses, and helps communities develop plans and infrastructure and farms and agricultural producers develop niche products and exploit possibilities for agritourism.

The Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts contributes to the documentation of Arkansas' cultural history through its Arkansas Memory Project. Be-

*Arkansas' cooperative extension has an excellent grasp of the significance of cultural and creative businesses, and helps communities develop plans and infrastructure*

gun in 1998, the student-produced archive of Arkansas history research and teaching materials includes official documents, publications, maps, letters, narratives, recordings, photographs, art, and other artifacts.

The product and environmental design sub-cluster is served by the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority, mainly through its manufacturing extension arm, Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions, which has the resources to help manufacturers take advantage of artistic design if

the extension agents can match them with expertise. Most other industries in the creative economy including digital media, sound studios, architecture, advertising, and broadcasting compete in the usual way for services from small business development centers and market development and small business loans, subject to the strength of their business plans and growth potential. The major gap is self-employed and freelance operators, who might not qualify as a “business.”



## The Creative Economy, Region by Region

Arkansas is a robustly diverse but historically economically poor, state that only recently has begun to generate better paying jobs and new wealth. The state is far from poor, however, in its arts and cultural heritage. Each of its geographic regions has, over time, developed and preserved its unique history, culture, and even quirks. The music of the Delta, for example, differs markedly from that heard in the Ozarks, and opportunities for design in the state's urbanizing regions are vastly different than in its rural, agricultural areas. But even as these distinctions shape the forms creativity takes and the way it does and could influence community and the economy, the increased mobility of talent and ease of access to information are erasing hard geographic boundaries, and traditional differences among the state's regions are diminishing.

To determine where the creative economy clusters and distinguish the forms it takes and how it is supported in various parts of Arkansas, we used the five geographic regions designated by the Arkansas Department of Economic Development. Each of these regions includes multiple counties and is anchored by one or two cities or towns of varying sizes. These include:

- Northeast region (13 counties): Jonesboro and Mountain View

- Central region (11 counties): Little Rock
- Southeast region (14 counties): Pine Bluff
- Northwest region (16 counties): Fayetteville and Fort Smith
- Southwest region (18 counties): Texarkana, El Dorado, and Camden.

The Northwest, by far the state's fastest growing region, has the smallest African-American but largest Latino population (see Tables 1 and 2). The Southeast, which has lost population, has the largest number of African-Americans and the highest poverty and unemployment rates. As the synopses in this chapter reveal, each region has creative assets, but place and circumstance shape the economic and social outcomes associated with them.

Table 4. **Population Distribution by Region, 2006**

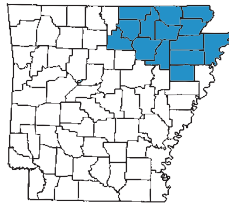
Region	Population	% White	% Black	% Latino
Central	760,468	75	22	4
Northeast	377,563	88	10	3
Northwest	823,922	94	2	8
Southeast	317,810	57	41	2
Southwest	531,109	79	17	5
Statewide	2,810,872	81	16	5

Table 5. **Population Growth, Unemployment, and Poverty by Region**

Region	Percent Change in Population 2000-2006	Percent Unemployment Rate, 2006	Percent in Poverty 2004	Percent Non-Metro
Central	5	5	15	27
Northeast	1	6	18	70
Northwest	14	4	13	45
Southeast	-4	8	21	51
Southwest	2	6	17	51
Statewide	5	5	16	45

*The national perception of Arkansas' creative heritage is rooted chiefly in the Ozark Mountains...*

### **The Northeast: Variety Fuels Creativity**



The national perception of Arkansas' creative heritage is rooted chiefly in the Ozark Mountains, part of the Northeast Arkansas economic development region that is to a large extent distinguished by the crafts and music associated with the Ozarks. But Northeast Arkansas offers even more variety than the popular traditional activities associated with Mountain View's Ozark Folk Life Center. Want to live where it seems every other citizen plays a stringed instrument? Consider making Batesville your home. Want to catch up on the latest quirky literary sensation, or perhaps even shake John Grisham's hand? Head for Blytheville. You might catch some of country music's biggest stars performing in Jonesboro, and while you're up in the area check out some of the world-class crafts available in Mountain View or enjoy a bevy of musical groups picking out new tunes on the courthouse square.

### **Regional Overview**

The Northeast region stretches from the Mississippi River in the east to the thriving population centers of the easternmost reaches of northwest Arkansas. Encompassed by this large area are several distinct sub-regions, each with its own economic and creative profile. Jonesboro, the state's fifth largest city, is home to Arkansas State University, which drives much of the cultural activity in the surrounding communities. Culturally distinct Batesville is the largest community in the Ozark region, and Mountain View, home to many of Arkansas' traditional arts and crafts, is drawing growing numbers of retirees from around the country. The rural areas that lie between these communities remain sparsely populated.

With 361,266 residents, 31 percent of whom live in the two county metropolitan area of Jonesboro, the Northeast is Arkan-

sas' second smallest economic development region. It is also one of the least racially diverse. Eighty-eight percent of the region's population is white. Its African-American population is concentrated in the eastern part, Cross, Jackson, and Mississippi counties having 64 percent of the region's African American, but only 22 percent of its total, population. Although several counties saw more robust growth, Craighead, Greene, and Stone recording increases of four percent or more, overall the region's population remained relatively stagnant, increasing by less than one percent from 2000 to 2004.

Long considered one of the poorest regions in the nation, the area known as the Ozarks has seen conditions improve over the past half-century. Although the Northeast, with poverty and unemployment rates of 17.5 percent and 6.2 percent respectively, remains Arkansas' second poorest region, it has seen some signs of progress. Median family income in Stone County, for example, increased from only 31 percent of the national median in 1959 to 56 percent in 1999 - still low, but progress nevertheless.

The region's economy is fairly diversified, with several counties more manufacturing-dependent than other parts of the state—Mississippi County, for instance, has a thriving steel industry—and tourism a major contributor in other parts of the region, particularly the Ozarks, which attracts visitors by virtue both of the natural beauty of the area and the strong base of traditional crafts. Two counties, Sharp and Stone, are retiree counties as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: “an over-sixty population that has grown by more than 15 percent due to immigration.” The draw for retirees is much the same as for tourists, natural amenities and a growing affinity for the arts.

We use, among other measures, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service's “Bohemian Index,” which registers the number of individuals employed as artists and in related occu-



pations, to assess the extent of the creative economy in each region. The number of artists per 1,000 employed persons in each county of the Northeast region, very likely an undercount owing to reasons cited earlier, is reported in Table 6.

### Educational Institutions

A network of community colleges and four-year institutions is playing an increasingly important role in the economy of the Northeast region:

- **Arkansas State University** in Jonesboro, the region's only public four-year university and the fourth largest institution of higher education in the state, offers through its Department of Fine Arts both bachelor's and master's degrees in music, theater, and art. The university is instrumental, through its degree in arts education, in educating future teachers of the arts, and is also exploring non-traditional types of creative endeavor as reflected in its multi-disciplinary bachelor of science in digital media and design degree, which includes courses in the School of Fine Arts and communications school.
- Another significant contributor to the economy of the Northeast region, is the private, four-year **Lyon College**, which offers undergraduate degrees in the arts and is working closely with local music groups. Lyon also actively supports the Ozark FilmFest, which is becoming known nationally known not only for its annual promotion of new films but also for its educational outreach to the region's high school students.
- Several of the region's two-year colleges offer courses in the arts. **Ozarka College**, in Melbourne, awards an associate degree in the culinary arts to students who acquire the requisite practical skills in operating and working in a restaurant and catering operation. In 2007, the college opened a new dining room to afford

**Table 6. Full-Time Artists, Designers, and Performers in the Northeast Region by County, 2000**

County	Number	Number Per 1,000 Employed
Clay County	19	2.5
Craighead County	244	6.1
Cross County	14	1.7
Fulton County	10	2.2
Greene County	71	4.2
Independence County	107	7.0
Izard County	53	10.8
Jackson County	26	3.7
Lawrence County	57	7.9
Mississippi County	55	2.7
Poinsett County	22	2.1
Randolph County	45	5.9
Stone County	30	6.9

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2006  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/CreativeClassCodes>

students hands-on experience in the art of food preparation.

- Educational offerings in the Northeast region are not limited to post-secondary institutions' formal degree programs. From mid-April to October, for example, **Mountain View's Ozark Folk Center** offers classes in traditional crafts and music as well as an annual one-week program at the Ozark Folk School that immerses individuals in these traditional art forms, and Pocohantas' private Studio for the Arts offers area residents arts programs in dance and theater and operates a theater that stages productions yearround.
- Finally, several regional arts councils sponsor arts programs, many aimed at young people. **Jonesboro's Foundation for the Arts**, for example, offers an extensive arts and dance program that includes spring 2008 classes in ballet and hip-hop as well as in traditional crafts.

*...one of the best venues for music is the lawn outside the Mountain View courthouse, on which, on many evenings, locals and visitors alike set up lawn chairs and listen to pickers and musicians...*

### Festivals and Events

The Northeast region, like Arkansas generally, hosts events and festivals throughout the year. Not included in the following 46 are numerous one-time promotional events.

- Nine arts and crafts shows
- Five culinary festivals
- One dance festival
- Two film festivals
- Ten festivals that celebrate the region's history and culture
- Six community celebrations
- Three music festivals

As certain festivals have evolved, organizers have taken steps to preserve some emphasis on their roots. When the Arkansas Folk Festival, for example, recently shifted its focus away from the state's traditional crafts and arts, a compensatory move was made to maintain as part of the festival the showcasing of products made in Arkansas.

### Places and Spaces

The Northeast region, especially through its institutions of higher learning, has many different venues for the exposition of creative endeavors. Jonesboro's campus-situated Fowler Center, for example, has hosted performances by the Memphis and Arkansas Symphonies, Vienna Piano Trio, and Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers, and its 11,000-seat convocation center has been nearly filled by Nelly, Kelly Clarkson, and Trace Adkins and other national touring acts. Smaller performance venues abound as well. Historic theaters in Blytheville and Jonesboro as well as Batesville's Lyon College and Mountain View's Ozark Folk Center host community performances and smaller touring acts. In fact, one of the best venues for music is the lawn outside the Mountain View courthouse, on which, on many evenings, locals and visitors alike set up lawn chairs and listen

to pickers and musicians from around the region play traditional music.

The region's performance venues are complemented by a number of galleries including Arkansas State University's Bradbury Gallery located at the Fowler Center, which the university estimates hosts more than 360 arts events every year including the nationally recognized Delta National Small Prints Exhibition. The region is home as well to many private galleries at which local artists can exhibit their work. Show openings of Jonesboro's Sara Howell Gallery, which features national as well as local artists, are a highlight of the region's artistic calendar, and the Arkansas Craft Guild, also in Jonesboro, operates a gallery that showcases homemade crafts from the around the state.

Less formal venues include The Community Gallery, located in a bank in Clinton and open during banking hours, which enjoys the support of the North Central Arkansas Foundation for the Arts and Education, and Mountain View's annual Off the Beaten Path Studio Tour affords shoppers an opportunity to visit some of the state's greatest craftspeople who choose to exhibit their wares in the comfort of their own studios.

Recognized as one of the nation's premier independent bookstores, That Bookstore in Blytheville, one of the few establishments visited by noted author John Grisham on his book tours, hosts literary events that attract readers from throughout the region and beyond.

### Associational Infrastructure

Numerous arts councils and organizations coordinate volunteers and generally support creative endeavors throughout the region. Among the most active is The Foundation for the Arts in Jonesboro, which sponsors one of the most comprehensive dance programs in the state. The Batesville Symphony League, which has made that community a haven for string

musicians, variously sponsors the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Lyon Community Orchestra, and North Arkansas Youth Orchestra.

A goal of many of these organizations is to encourage the pursuit of creativity and creative occupations by the region's youth. Extensive youth programs are offered by the Foundation for the Arts, and many young people learn about filmmaking in year-round programs sponsored by the Ozark FilmFest.

Less formal collectives organized by many of the region's artists include the Arkansas Craft Guild, which brings artisans throughout the Ozarks together to promote shows and other events, and was instrumental in reserving a portion of the annual Arkansas Craft Festival to "Made in Arkansas" products. The Guild-sponsored Educational Support Association promotes the learning of traditional crafts by school age children in the region.

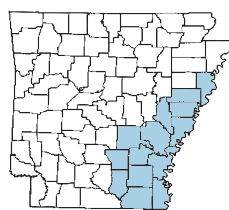
### Museums and Cultural Centers

The Ozark Folk Center is perhaps the most prominent, but by no means the only, cultural center in the Northeast region. Among the region's 22 museums and historic sites are Osceola's Mississippi County Heritage Center, which traces the history of that county, Fairfield Bay's Log Cabin Museum (a bona fide 1850 log cabin), and the Veterans Military Museum in Hardy.

### Looking Ahead

Although northeast Arkansas clearly possesses significant creative assets, interviews and focus groups with area residents identified several challenges that must be met if the region is to realize the full economic potential of its creative economy. Notwithstanding impressive strides in terms of income growth, the legacy of persistent poverty continues to pervade the region. Limits to the disposable income that can be spent on the arts restricts the further expansion of the cre-

ative economy and drives local artists to seek markets and venues for their work outside the region. Interviewees also cited limited philanthropic resources. Foundations are important sources of support for community artistic endeavors, and increasing the dollars spent in support of the arts could make a significant difference in communities throughout the region. Finally, community representatives believed that local governments should be forthcoming with greater financial support for the arts, or at least greater recognition of the importance of creative enterprise to the economy of the Northeast region.



### The Southeast: Can a Rich Cultural Heritage Lift a Poor Economy?

Southeast Arkansas, widely referred to as the Delta, possesses a rich cultural heritage. One of the South's leading cultural centers in the early decades of the twentieth century, Helena boasted a famous opera house that hosted John Philip Sousa's band and Jenny Lind as well as Shakespearean companies. With the ascendancy of the blues in the region, the King Biscuit Radio Hour spread the gospel from famed Helena radio station KFFA. In keeping with its roots, the Southeast region today is looking to its creative assets, among them its many museums and festivals, to stimulate a slow-moving economy.

### Regional Overview

With high unemployment and seven of the Arkansas' 17 persistently poor counties, the Southeast is the poorest region in one of America's poorest states. Not surprisingly, it is the only region that has lost population over the past six years. Economically, the region is fairly diverse. Five counties depend on a diminishing

*Foundations are important sources of support for community artistic endeavors, and increasing the dollars spent in support of the arts could make a significant difference in communities throughout the region.*



The Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie in Stuttgart depicts the history of agriculture and pioneers who farmed the area.

manufacturing sector (30 percent or more employed) and four have agricultural economies.<sup>5</sup>

The region's population is almost evenly split among its four metropolitan and nine non-metro counties.<sup>6</sup> The Southeast is by far the state's most ethnically diverse region, and many of its most

important cultural assets are tied to the African-American community that accounts for two-fifths of its population.

Table 7 provides a measure of the region's creative economy using the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service's "Bohemian Index."

### Educational Institutions

One of the region's most important creative assets, the state-supported, historically black University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB), offers degrees in art, music, and journalism as well as courses in art and graphic design. Local cultural activities and artists are the focus of a university museum and gallery. The latter recently featured a multimedia retrospective on Pine Bluff native and internationally renowned jazz artist Clark Terry.

Watercolor painter Henri Linton heads UAPB's art department and is the driving force behind much of the school's creative outreach. The university's annual black-tie Chancellor's Benefit for the Arts, which raises funds to support its arts and cultural activities and emphasizes the importance of the creative economy to the region, draws luminaries from all over southeast Arkansas. The region's other four-year institution, the University of Arkansas at Monticello, also offers degrees in the arts and sponsors arts events on campus.

The region's four, two-year community colleges do not offer degrees in the fine arts, but most offer degrees in graphic design and related disciplines.

### Events and Venues: The Delta Blues and More

The Warfield Concert Series features everything from symphonies to pop artists, yet mention Southeast Arkansas, and most people think of the blues. Some of the region's strongest creative assets build on this indigenous musical tradition. For 22 years, Helena has played host to the Arkansas Blues and

Table 7. **Full-Time Artists, Designers, and Performers in the Southeast Region by County, 2000**

County	Number	Number Per 1,000 Employed
Arkansas County	48	5.2
Ashley County	40	4.2
Bradley County	13	2.8
Chicot County	31	6.3
Cleveland County	20	5.5
Crittenden County	114	5.5
Desha County	0	0.0
Drew County	44	5.5
Jefferson County	210	6.3
Lee County	3	0.8
Lincoln County	10	2.2
Monroe County	6	1.6
Phillips County	20	2.2
Sharp County	39	6.5
Arkansas		6.9

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2006  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/CreativeClassCodes>

Heritage Festival, formerly the King Biscuit Music Festival after the sponsor of the KFFA blues radio show that is in its sixty-seventh year of broadcast. One of the signature events on the national blues calendar, the festival draws visitors from around the world who want to see the blues performed in its birthplace. Pine Bluff hosts a yearly Jazz Fest named for native son Clark Terry that builds on his and others' jazz roots, as well as a juried barbecue competition, Smoke on the Water, that features music that complements the region's delicacies, and Helena is home to the annual Arkansas Delta Family Gospel Festival that brings nationally renowned acts to the Delta community.

Gospel music and church musicians are among the region's most significant creative assets. Many churches employ full-time ministers of music who organize choirs, hold concerts, and generally promote their faith through music. A large proportion of Arkansas' African-American churches, for which music is an integral part of the ministry, are concentrated in the Southeast region. More than 40 percent of the Arkansas churches of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, one of the largest predominantly African-American denominations in the country, are in the Southeast, 11 churches in Pine Bluff alone.<sup>7</sup> The influence of gospel music and church musicians is clear with respect to congregations, but difficult to

**Delta Wolf Trap in West Memphis** Delta Wolf Trap is a collaboration between performing artists and early childhood education professionals that uses the arts as a way to engage children and their families in learning and in creative expression. The Delta region was chosen by stART smART, a program that support arts-in-education programs for young children, as one of three pilot sites in the country. Delta Wolf Trap serves east Arkansas, west Tennessee, and north Mississippi, and makes use of drama, music, and movement in order to get children interested in learning and involve their families and teachers in the children's artistic and educational development. The goal is for the arts to become a new way of teaching, learning, and knowing.

measure outside church halls in the larger context of the creative economy.

College and university facilities are among the region's primary performance venues. Most of the Warfield Concert Series events, for example, are held in Phillips Community College's 1,200-seat Fine Arts Arena.

But music is not the only cultural asset around which southeast Arkansans like to gather. The thousands of migratory birds that flock to the flooded timberlands around Stuttgart, Arkansas are joined every Thanksgiving by more than 30,000 people flocking to the World's Championship Duck Calling Contest and Wings Over The Prairie Festival. Among the creative enterprises that target the

*Gospel music and church musicians are among the region's most significant creative assets.*



Delta Cultural Center in Helena.



*Efforts to capitalize on the Delta brand include the region's Rural Heritage Development Initiative, which is championing a new venture called Arkansas DeltaMade.*

influx of hunters is Rich N' Tone Calls, which manufactures handcrafted duck calls that are marketed throughout the country. The popularity of these meticulously designed creations is due not only to their quality, but also to the fact that they are manufactured in the city recognized to be the nation's premier waterfowl destination. Stuttgart is also home to Mack's Prairie Winds, one of the largest outdoor retailers in the country, which operates in addition to its large retail store an extensive mail order business.

#### **Places and Spaces: Showing off the Region's Past and Present**

Proportionally, the Southeast region is home to more "museums, historical sites, and similar institutions" than the state as a whole.<sup>8</sup> The Delta Cultural Center is but one; most counties include small historical museums and, as in much of Arkansas, other unique places that emphasize more off-the-beaten-path elements of life in the Delta. Pine Bluff's Band Museum features more than 700 vintage instruments, some nearly 300 years old; Stuttgart's Agricultural Museum highlights the region's dependence on farming through exhibits that show how the region's early settlers made their living off the land; and local artists display their work in the Guachoya Cultural Arts Center and other galleries and exhibit halls scattered throughout the region. Also in Pine Bluff is the Arts and Science Center of Southeast Arkansas, in which can be found exhibits of local and international art alongside displays that explain scientific studies in terms that children can understand.

Common to all these museums is the promotion of the Delta's rich cultural heritage. Efforts to capitalize on the Delta brand include the region's Rural Heritage Development Initiative, which is championing a new venture called Arkansas DeltaMade. Among the products and establishments that carry the DeltaMade label to indicate that they are produced

locally are Pasquale's (hand-rolled) Tamales of Helena ("So good you'll suck the shuck"), Mollie's Originals (handcrafted purses made in Helena), and Miller's Mud Mill (handcrafted pottery made in Desha). These and other DeltaMade products featured on the web site [www.arkansasdeltamade.com](http://www.arkansasdeltamade.com) are marketed as "products of the soil and soul."

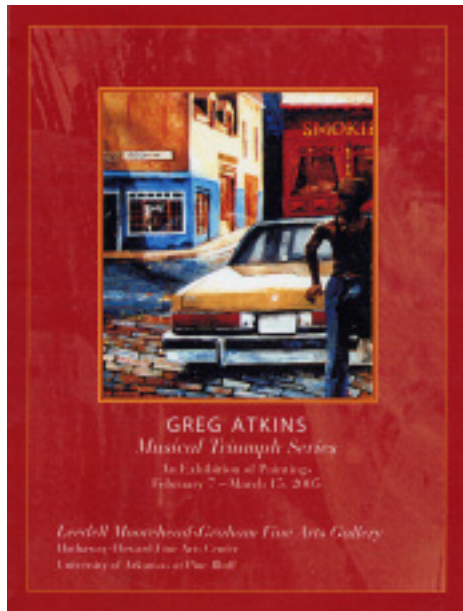
Even this poorest of Arkansas' five economic regions manages to make some financial resources available to its cultural and arts groups. Most of a number of affiliates of the Arkansas Community Foundation provide small grants to cultural organizations, and the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis provides some cross-border support to Crittenden County.

#### **Associational infrastructure**

Local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce organize most of the region's festivals. In part, dependence on these organizations reflects the small number of arts councils and other organizations that focus on creative endeavors. Although the Arkansas Arts Council lists only three organizations in the Southeast region that can be classified as arts councils, far fewer than in any other region in the state, these organizations are extremely active.

The Crittenden Arts Council, for example, which serves West Memphis, not only brings noted national performers to the community, but is also active in promoting the arts in the local public schools, which earns it support from the business community as well as from the public. The organization also supports individual artists including the Delta Artist Society, a number of artists in different media who network and occasionally engage in joint marketing efforts. The Guachoya Cultural Art Center in Lake Village brings together artists in that Delta community.

One of the region's most important arts institutions is Helena's state-supported



Delta Cultural Center, which pursues its mission of promoting the Delta's history and culture by variously organizing exhibits on blues music, sponsoring concerts including the Arkansas Delta Family Gospel Festival, and assisting with the preparation of lesson plans for area schools that offer curricula intended to further students' understanding of the region's rich cultural heritage.

### Looking Ahead

The Southeast region clearly has a strong cultural base on which to build. Its traditions are steeped in the blues and the history of the earliest visitors to the state. But individuals interviewed for this project expressed frustration at the region's seeming inability to capitalize on these and other inherent strengths. An example is the blues music scene. Although widely promoted and well attended, the blues festival's future has been rendered uncertain by recent funding struggles of the sponsoring organization. More daunting even than the survival of the event is the struggle to ensure that blues music remains part of the local culture. Few public venues in the region feature live blues music on a regular basis, and Arkansas is rarely mentioned in travel articles in national publications that



highlight instead blues events in Memphis and across the river in Mississippi, particularly Clarksdale.

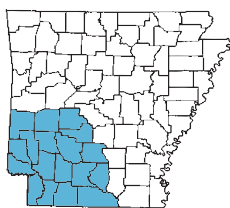
There also seems to be a need to better integrate its African-American community into the region's creative economy. Faculty report, for example, that because it is perceived to be a black institution, many people "don't want to come to that side of town" to take advantage of some dynamic programming in the arts offered by the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Other interviewees reported that African-American residents did visit community wide institutions such as the Southeast Arkansas' Arts and Science Center. Although a major part of the state's rich musical heritage, the African-American church has been neither measured nor nurtured as an asset outside the religious community.

It is also clear that the region's limited resource base has had a negative impact on the arts. Cultural institutions traditionally thrive in areas with strong corporate and philanthropic support, resources the Southeast, relative to other regions of the state, is sorely lacking.

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Fine Arts Gallery hosts regular exhibitions.

*Tourism officials, for example, are coming to view the creative economy as complementary to the region's established outdoor recreation market...*

### **The Southwest: Continuing to Manufacture, but Looking Ahead**



The recent erosion of resource-based manufacturing and rural population loss has left southwest Arkansas, which has long depended on its natural resources to drive its economy, struggling to develop a new formula for economic progress. Growing its creative economy is becoming an important part of the solution. New grassroots cultural activities are springing up throughout the region in both traditional and new media, and the region is blessed with strong educational assets that can be leveraged to support cultural development and train creative workers.

#### **Regional Overview**

The Southwest region encompasses 18 counties that stretch from the city of Hot Springs in the northeast to the Oklahoma and Texas borders on the west and Louisiana border to the south. This region, which descends southward from the ridgelines of the Ouachita Mountains in the north to the rolling hills and pine forests of the Gulf Coastal Plain, is largely rural. Its 427,000 residents are about evenly distributed, one-third in its two metropolitan areas, Hot Springs and Texarkana, another third in its “micropolitan areas,” and the remaining third in wholly rural counties.<sup>9</sup> Hot Springs, the region’s largest city, has a population of only 38,000. Texarkana has 30,000, the abutting city of Texarkana, Texas almost another 30,000. The next largest communities, El Dorado, Camden, and Arkadelphia, all have populations of 20,000 or fewer.

The region’s economy is heavily resource-based. Many residents work in the farming and forestry industries, many more in the poultry processing, wood products, and paper plants that constitute a large share of the region’s manufacturing economy. Resource-based tourism is impor-

tant in parts of the region, particularly in the Diamond Lakes region, Ouachita Mountains, and along the Ouachita River, areas that draw hikers, climbers, campers, hunters, fisherman, and other nature enthusiasts as well as attract large numbers of vacation homeowners.

Owing in part to its resource-based manufacturing activity, the Southwest is the region most heavily dependent on manufacturing. In most counties, at least 20 percent, and in some more than 30 percent, of the residents work in manufacturing industries, including fabricating metal products, tires and automotive parts, aerospace components, and gardening and landscaping tools and machinery.

The region is facing a number of serious economic challenges:

- Outmigration is a pressing concern, most non-metro counties having lost population, and the region as a whole, although total population has grown slightly in recent years, still significantly lagging the state.
- The region’s critical manufacturing sector has been incurring significant job losses.
- Although the region’s unemployment rate only slightly exceeds the state average, poverty plagues much of the region, particularly the southernmost counties, in which poverty rates routinely approach and even exceed 20 percent.

It is in this context that creative assets are attracting greater attention as potential contributors to regional economic development. Tourism officials, for example, are coming to view the creative economy as complementary to the region’s established outdoor recreation market, with the result that tourism materials are increasingly emphasizing the region’s picturesque small towns with their historic centers, numerous music, craft, and cultural festivals, and cultural venues including museums, performing arts



facilities, galleries, and historic sites. These same cultural offerings are also believed to be helping to make the region an attractive locale for vacation homes.

The Southwest region's strongest creative assets, its music, visual arts, and cultural heritage, are being supplemented by an emerging film and video production industry. The region's largest, best established cultural center, Hot Springs, long-standing dependence on tourism has spawned a range of cultural activities, and growth in retirement and vacation home ownership in the city and the Diamond Lakes region has further fueled demand for cultural amenities. The approximately 400 artists and performers living in Hot Springs in 2000 according to federal data have likely increased in number since.

Hot Springs hosts numerous music, craft, and cultural festivals and has a thriving gallery district, several performance venues, and a number of museums and exhibit spaces. The city's signature annual cultural events are the nationally recognized Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival and Hot Springs Music Festival. In part because of the film festival and presence of its organizer, the Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute, the city has also attracted a number of small film and video production businesses.

Other important concentrations of creative assets are found in Arkadelphia, Texarkana, and El Dorado. Two universities in Arkadelphia, Henderson and Ouachita Baptist, offer degrees in a number of artistic disciplines and provide venues for the visual and performing arts. Faculty and students of these institutions contribute significantly to the community's cultural life through performances, exhibits, and private teaching. A local arts organization in Texarkana has spurred development of two new major cultural facilities, a theatre and a visual arts center, and in El Dorado a number of small-scale events, venues, and educational programs, many supported by local philanthropic and arts organizations, have combined to provide

a range of cultural opportunities in a variety of disciplines, primarily music, the visual arts, and dance. Cultural assets can also be found on a lesser scale in some of the region's smaller communities including Camden, De Queen, Hope, Magnolia, Mena, and Mount Ida.

Table 8 reports for each county in the Southwest region the number of artists, designers, and performers and their relative concentrations. The data underscore the role played by Hot Springs (Garland County), Arkadelphia (Clark County), and Texarkana (Miller County) as centers of the region's creative economy.

### Educational Institutions

The Southwest region's creative economy enjoys considerable support, particularly

*...the Diamond Lakes region has further fueled demand for cultural amenities.*

**Table 8. Full-Time Artists, Designers, and Performers in the Southwest Region by County, 2000**

County	Number	Number Per 1,000 Employed
Calhoun County	12	5.1
Clark County	129	12.1
Columbia County	87	8.2
Dallas County	5	1.4
Garland County	400	10.9
Hempstead County	3	0.3
Hot Springs County	55	4.1
Howard County	48	7.6
Lafayette County	7	2.2
Little River County	20	3.4
Miller County	139	8.2
Montgomery County	25	6.7
Nevada County	23	5.4
Ouachita County	48	4.2
Pike County	30	6.1
Polk County	20	2.4
Sevier County	24	3.5
Union County	97	5.2
<b>Arkansas</b>		<b>6.9</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2006  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/CreativeClassCodes>



Texarkana's ArtSmart program integrates the arts into education by having students get creative including making a comic strip about geometry.

*Degrees and certificates in graphic design, computer-aided design and drafting, web design and development, and mass media communications, among other disciplines, are offered...*

in the fine arts, from three four-year institutions. Henderson University and Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia and Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia as well as the two-year Texarkana College offer degree programs in the visual arts, drama, and music, the latter a particular strength. The region also has at least 11 private dance schools, two theatre-affiliated drama schools, and 40 music teachers offering private music lessons or classes.

The commercial arts enjoy somewhat less extensive support. Degrees and certificates in graphic design, computer-aided design and drafting, web design and development, and mass media communications, among other disciplines, are offered by the aforementioned institutions as well as by Cossatot Community College in De Queen, National Park Community College in Hot Springs, Rich Mountain Community College in Mena, and Southern Arkansas University Technical Branch in Camden.

Arkadelphia's Henderson University and Ouachita Baptist University both offer bachelors degree programs in a variety of artistic disciplines. The most extensive offerings are in music, followed by the visual arts. Ouachita Baptist offers programs in vocal studies, instrumental studies, church music, and theory and composition. Henderson offers a music degree with options in vocal and instrumental music.

Ouachita Baptist also offers degrees in graphic design and studio art. Mediums include painting, drawing, ceramics, mixed media, and computer graphics. Henderson offers a degree in digital art and design. Both institutions offer

degrees in theatre arts, and Henderson offers a degree in mass media communication. These institutions also offer degrees in music and visual arts education, and their presence affords opportunities for local musicians to obtain private music instruction. Six of seven Arkadelphia music teachers listed on the Arkansas Music Teachers' Association web site are on the faculties of one or the other of these institutions.

Hot Springs, although the region's major arts and cultural center, does not have a strong post-secondary educational base, but is home to a unique public secondary school for which the arts is one of three areas of academic focus. National Park Community College, the city's only higher education institution, offers a non-degree choral music program and an associate degree program in graphic design, and has proposed a degree program in photography. Texarkana College, in Texarkana, offers associate degree programs in art, drama, and music, the latter curriculum being the most extensive. Although on the Texas side of the border, the college offers in-state tuition to Arkansas residents through a reciprocal agreement with the state of Arkansas.

In addition to its degree programs, Texarkana College's continuing education department hosts the Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing, a partnership between the college, the American Bladesmithing Society, and the Old Washington Historic State Park near Hope that keeps alive one of southwest Arkansas' most celebrated craft traditions. At the primary and secondary level, the Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council works with school districts in Texarkana and two nearby communities to introduce arts into the

schools through its ArtsSmart program, whereby visiting artists help teachers integrate the arts into daily instruction.

Southern Arkansas University (SAU) in Magnolia offers bachelors degrees in a number of artistic disciplines including visual arts (studio art, graphic design), music (vocal and instrumental), theatre, and mass communication (with an emphasis on broadcast and print journalism) as well as advanced degrees in music and arts education. In nearby El Dorado, Southern Arkansas Community College offers courses, but no degree programs, in the visual arts and music. Faculty members at these schools also provide private music instruction in Magnolia and El Dorado.

### Events and Festivals

Communities throughout southwest Arkansas celebrate the region's artistic and cultural heritage and showcase regional and national creative talent with numerous events and festivals. More than 50 are held annually, including 13 music festivals (many featuring Arkansas' home-grown bluegrass music), 11 crafts festivals, nine history and cultural festivals, six visual arts festivals, three culinary festivals, two dance festivals, one documentary film festival, one literature festival, and six multi-disciplinary festivals.

Hot Springs, also the region's major tourism destination, hosts more than 20

events and festivals annually including jazz and gospel music festivals, crafts shows, art festivals, cultural heritage celebrations, and dance festivals.. The Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, which shows more than 100 documentary films, and Hot Springs Music Festival, which brings together for a series of performances established and emerging classical musicians from throughout the United States, attract the largest and most far-flung audiences.

The region's smaller communities host their share of cultural events and festi-



*...Texarkana  
and two  
nearby  
communities  
introduce arts  
into the  
schools  
through its  
ArtsSmart  
program...*

*As shown in **Southern Living** in Hot Springs.*

**The Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts** in Hot Springs is a state residential school for academically talented high school juniors and seniors. One of the few state math and science high schools that includes the arts in its title, it offers a wide range of programs including Art and Science of Photography, American Folk Music and Acoustics, Multi-Dimensional Art, Studio Art, and Art History. Math and science students learn science through art and learn art through science. Last year, for example, the folk music and acoustics class performed *Back Roads to Woodstock* at the Ouachita Little Theatre. President Clinton, who introduced the legislation that created the school when he was governor, spoke at its 2007 commencement. The school recently introduced a documentary film program in partnership with the Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute, and is contributing to documenting Arkansas' cultural history through its Arkansas Memory Project, a student-produced archive of Arkansas history research and teaching materials. begun in 1998, that includes official documents, publications, maps, letters, narratives, recordings, photographs, art, and other artifacts.

**Ouachita Art Trail:** Mena has long been the center of activity in Polk County, which is rich in creative history and culture. Until recently, however, the only way for tourists to buy the wares of local artists and artisans was to happen upon their home business or booth at a local fair. Three partners recognized this undertapped market and came together to address it. The Ouachita Creative Community Council, Rich Mountain Community College, and Mena Art Gallery are creating an artisan trail that marks the locations of area craftspeople and other attractions to make them more accessible to visitors. Once a year, as the Ouachita Art Trail studio tour, the trail will provide collaborative marketing for area artists. It will eventually include a branding component, with Ouachita Creation being used to designate the work of local artists.

*...local arts groups believe that additional resources and more ways to link artists together are needed, as are avenues for producing and marketing their work and strengthening relationships with other segments of the community.*

vals. The Ouachita Mountain community of Mena has a particularly active schedule with a bluegrass festival, a monthly series of bluegrass concerts, a crafts festival, an arts festival, and a dance festival. El Dorado hosts five annual events that feature the visual arts, music, cultural heritage, and regional cuisine. Among the more unusual events found in these smaller communities are the Arkansas Storytelling Festival at De Gray Lake State Park near Bismark and the Quartz, Quiltz, and Craftz Festival in Mount Ida.

### Places and Spaces

Venues for arts and cultural displays, exhibits, performances, and productions provided by higher education institutions, local governments, private non-profit organizations, and individual artists and entrepreneurs, among other entities, include:

- At least 34 facilities that display or sell visual arts, including one art museum, 11 exhibition spaces, 13 private galleries, and nine artists' shops and studios;
- At least 23 museums (excluding art museums) and four visitors' centers focused primarily on area and cultural studies;
- 10 performing arts facilities (includ-

ing theatres, concert halls, and auditoriums) and at least eight clubs and restaurants that regularly feature musical performances; and

- 15 film and video production facilities and two music recording studios.

These venues, although scattered throughout the region, are most heavily concentrated in Hot Springs and Arkadelphia. Hot Springs has at least 17 galleries and artists' studios, many clustered in the city's Gallery District, five museums including a local history museum, a science museum, a Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, the Hot Springs National Park Museum, and a muscle car museum, and several clubs and restaurants that feature musical performances. Although the city does not have a performing arts center, three facilities provide performance space, the largest being the Hot Springs Convention Auditorium. The Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute's Malco Theatre, which presents documentary films during its 10-day Documentary Film Festival, schedules other film presentations and events throughout the rest of the year. Hot Springs is also home to at least nine film production businesses thanks, in part, to the presence of the Documentary Film Institute. Film production businesses can also be found in Mena, El Dorado, and Texarkana as well as elsewhere throughout the region.

Henderson State University and Ouachita Baptist University have provided Arkadelphia with high quality exhibit and performance space. Henderson State's Arkansas Hall includes a 965-seat auditorium and 162-seat studio theatre, and its Russell Fine Arts Center includes the Harwood Recital Hall and Russell Fine Arts Gallery. Ouachita Baptist's Jones Performing Arts Center seats 1,500 and its Verser Theater 200. Henderson also has a museum of natural and social history.

### Associational Infrastructure

Southwest Arkansas has a fairly strong support structure for creative activities,



especially music and the visual arts. Most communities with high levels of such activity—Hot Springs, Arkadelphia, El Dorado, Magnolia, and Texarkana, for example—have local arts councils or other arts support groups. Even in communities with lower levels of creative activity, such as Ashdown, Hope, and Nashville, local arts councils can be found, and a new organization is forming in Camden. Hot Springs also has a number of organizations that specialize in particular artistic disciplines including the visual arts, documentary film, and jazz. Most rural areas lack much networking. Such local arts groups as there are believe that additional resources and more ways to link artists together are needed, as are avenues for producing and marketing their work and strengthening relationships with other segments of the community.

Some local arts groups have been instrumental in developing and operating arts facilities, most notable among them, perhaps, the Texarkana Regional Arts and Humanities Council, which operates the city-restored Perot Theatre that presents music and theatrical performances. TRAHC also transformed a former federal courthouse into the Regional Art Center, which presents a series of changing art exhibits. On a smaller scale, El Dorado's South Arkansas Arts Center has developed a multi-use facility that houses three art galleries, a theatre, ballet and photography studios, classroom space, and open studio space for artists.

The region's formal philanthropic base for arts funding is limited. Four foundations, two in El Dorado, one in Arkadelphia, and one in nearby Amity, make arts and cultural grants.

### Looking Ahead

Developing its creative economy holds the potential to generate considerable economic benefits for a region grappling with economic and demographic change. But although the Southwest region boasts a wide range of creative activities, they

haven't yet achieved the critical mass needed to become a significant creative cluster. The challenge for the region is to build, coordinate, and leverage its creative assets so as to catapult its creative economy into a more central role in its economic life.

Regional branding might help. The region doesn't have a well-defined cultural image like the Delta or Ozarks. Whether it can forge a distinctive creative identity and become known for unique creative products, and whether, building on the promising start of the Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute and a small core of film and video production businesses, it can become a center of film and video production are important questions the region should be asking.

The region should also be exploring opportunities to more fully leverage its considerable educational assets. Could educational resources be mobilized to spin off new creative enterprises, help artists and musicians learn entrepreneurial skills, retain graduates with creative talent, and serve as venues for networking and information sharing?

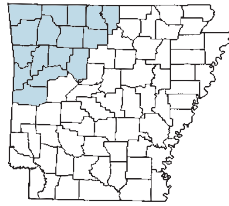
The region's many independent artists, often living in isolated rural communities, face the challenge of developing better ways to communicate among themselves, with partners such as the tourism industry, and with markets. What new technologies might be tapped and organizational structures formed to integrate and scale up disparate creative activities?

Only by finding ways to meet these challenges will the region be able to more fully capitalize on the only partially tapped potential of its creative economy.

*The challenge for the region is to build, coordinate, and leverage its creative assets so as to catapult its creative economy into a more central role in its economic life.*

*The need to attract workers from all over the world is one reason arts and culture have become so important to the region.*

### **The Northwest: Creativity and Rapid Growth**



Throughout most of the twentieth century, northwest Arkansas, which stretches from Fort Smith to the Missouri state border, was a prototypical poor southern rural region that attracted few outsiders and had fewer minorities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1980 classified five of its 16 counties as having “persistent poverty.”<sup>10</sup> The region was heavily dependent on agriculture and some growth in manufacturing for employment. Seven of its 16 counties were designated “agriculture-dependent,” three “manufacturing dependent.” Eureka Springs, popular in the early twentieth century for its curative waters, lost much of its rejuvenative appeal with the maturing of medicine.

#### **Regional Picture**

The picture of northwest Arkansas painted above predates the ascendancy of mega-retailer Wal-Mart and poultry giant Tyson that transformed the region. It’s no longer sleepy, depressed, agricultural, or even industrial. Wal-Mart employs nearly 30,000 people, its 1,200 suppliers another 12,000 or so. Add Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt, and their respective suppliers and you have one of nation’s densest “logistics clusters,” one that relies on a continuous flow of highly skilled employees from around the world. The Northwest region, which had 30 percent of the state’s population in 2006, has since 2000 grown at more than 14 percent, nearly three times as fast as any other region.

Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville as well as surrounding and more remote towns are experiencing explosive growth as new jobs are created and business travelers pour into the area. New construction underway in and around Bentonville, the home of Wal-Mart, in the form of 2,300 residences, 14 banks, 6,600 hotel rooms, and numerous

shopping centers and restaurants is valued at approximately \$2 billion. The population is growing so fast that a new school is required about every seven months, and the once tiny regional airport is now served by every major airline with non-stop flights to Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Houston, and the Research Triangle, among other destinations.

The need to attract workers from all over the world is one reason arts and culture have become so important to the region. Although its communities have a strong cultural heritage in traditional music and arts, the region has not been able to compete for young talent with urban hubs like Austin, Atlanta, Memphis, or the Research Triangle. The influx of more architects, interior decorators, people employed in the architectural crafts, and landscape and web designers means an even greater demand for art and cultural events.

To the east, the historic Eureka Springs in Carroll County has experienced an economic resurgence as a magnet for artists and writers and a popular site for weddings and conventions. Nearly 38 percent of the county’s work force, more than six times the state average, is employed in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, and food services, and the county was recognized as a national “Rural Arts Haven” in a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture paper. Boone and Benton counties are both well above the national average in concentration of artists, performers, and designers, and the region’s largest cities, Fayetteville and Fort Smith, are increasingly relying on the arts and culture and investing in downtown cultural districts to compete for the new people and companies and their incomes.

The entire region is attracting large numbers of retirees, also major consumers of the arts and culture. Six northwest Arkansas counties were designated “retirement counties,” defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as having an over-sixty



The Communication Art Institute, a writers' colony in Eureka Springs.

population that has grown by more than 15 percent due to immigration.

The region is now beginning to get attention in the national press. The *New York Times* travel section, for example, featured:

- Fayetteville in April 2006, calling it “flush with youth, culture and natural beauty, a college town that loves its football, but . . . also has a growing arts and music scene, a historic downtown with a 19th century square, galleries, farmers markets and arts festivals, the Walton Arts Center, and good restaurants”;
- Eureka Springs in 2007, describing it as “some weird cross of Asheville, NC and Oak Bluffs, MA, all perched on the side of a hill that would make San Francisco proud and topped with a grand old hotel. In short, it’s fun.”

Construction of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art is well under-way on a 100-acre site in Bentonville. Designed by world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie, the museum is the talk of the art world. The 100,000 square foot building, which will house three galleries, a public education learning center with an auditorium, a professional education area, and visitor services including meeting spaces, museum store, and din-

ing areas, is expected to bring hundreds of thousands of visitors annually to the region when it opens in 2010.

Table 9. **Full-Time Artists, Designers, and Performers in the Northwest Region by County, 2000**

County	Number	Number Per 1,000 Employed
Baxter County	106	7.0
Benton County	575	8.0
Boone County	144	9.5
Carroll County	210	17.9
Crawford County	111	4.8
Franklin County	19	2.5
Johnson County	10	1.0
Logan County	45	4.9
Madison County	28	4.5
Marion County	55	2.7
Newton County	17	4.8
Pope County	146	5.9
Scott County	10	2.1
Searcy County	13	4.2
Sebastian County	438	8.3
Washington County	885	11.5
<b>Arkansas</b>		<b>6.9</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2006  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/CreativeClassCodes>

*The region  
is also home  
to 23 private  
schools of art,  
music, and  
dance includ-  
ing the Eureka  
Springs School  
of the Arts...*

### Educational Institutions

The region's leading educational institutions play a significant role in supporting its creative economy.

- The University of Arkansas' School of Architecture in Fayetteville won national recognition in 2007 from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, American Institute of Architects, and American Institute of Architecture Students, and the Community Design Center, also in Fayetteville, won two awards for design education.
- The University of Arkansas' MFA program spans ceramics, design, painting, printmaking, photography, and sculpture, and has, since 1966, included one of the strongest graduate creative writing programs in the country with courses in poetics and fiction theory as well as traditional and contemporary literature.
- The University of Arkansas' MFA program also includes film and communications, although not with a full degree, but strong enough to afford actors "equity contract points."
- Northwest Arkansas Community College's Communications & Arts Division has a graphic design degree

program, communication arts, performing and visual arts, and an associate of arts degree that transfers to a baccalaureate.

- Arkansas Tech, in Russellville at the southern edge of the region, has departments of art and music with majors in fine arts, graphic design, and music.
- North Arkansas College in Harrison, in its liberal arts, not occupational, track, offers programs in studio art, multimedia, and graphics and web design.
- The University of the Ozarks in Clarks-ville, the first racially integrated college west of the Mississippi, hosts the Walton Fine Arts Center, a state-of-the-art performing arts complex.

The New Design Center in Fayetteville has become the first school of design in the state. Founded in 2005 by Sonia Gutiérrez to "put Arkansas on the map in design," the center offers a two-year, 68-credit certification program in digital design that includes graphic design, multimedia, games, video design, and web design as well as the business skills needed to convert creativity into income.

The region is also home to 23 private schools of art, music, and dance includ-

Eureka Springs School of the Arts, in western Arkansas, which offers more than 40 summer workshops and year-long classes for youth and for adults.





ing the Eureka Springs School of the Arts, which has master classes and summer workshops for adults and youth in a wide range of disciplines including clay, acrylics, woodturning, drawing, photography, and jewelry. The Main Street Creative Community Center, also in Eureka Springs, offers after-school arts programs for youth and evening programs for adults. Another 46 individuals offer private lessons or classes.

### Events and Festivals

The more than 200 major annual events, fairs, and festivals that feature, market, or highlight the art, design, entertainment, and history of the Northwest region, which do not include the many one-time events organized to celebrate a particular occasion or experience, include:

- 30 arts and crafts shows;
- three children's events;
- 105 community celebrations;
- 13 culinary festivals;
- three performing arts events;
- four design shows;
- six film festivals;
- four literary events;
- 10 pageants and parades; and
- 37 nature or seasonal festivals.

In 2006, the second annual Fayetteville Arts Festival generated \$50,000 in sales, more than double the previous year's total.

### Places and Spaces

From the largest performing arts centers to local art galleries and the walls of coffee shops, any places or spaces explicitly built or designated for the production, marketing, or display of art, design, or culture constitutes a regional asset. Consider, for example, the following:

- Fayetteville is designating and zoning a downtown cultural arts district to help it leverage its heritage and culture and stem the flow of businesses to suburban malls.

- Fayetteville's Walton Arts Center last year presented a Broadway series, dance series, international musicians, symphonies, and world-class performers, and supported in-school residencies.
- Fort Smith created in its convention center an "Artplace" with paintings and sculptures, held a reception, sold the art, and selected 12 sculptures to be strategically situated throughout the city to enrich the environment.
- Springdale's Arts Center of the Ozarks, which has been supporting and promoting the area's arts for more than four decades, hosts concerts, children's theatre, crafts fairs, a gallery, and food festivals.
- Eureka Springs' historic auditorium, opened in 1928 with a concert by John Phillip Souza, has since featured such stars as Ray Charles, Judy Collins, Bill Cosby, Bela Fleck, Emmy Lou Harris, Alison Krause, Lyle Lovett, and Randy Newman.

Music, especially, is not confined to theatres or centers in the Northwest region. No fewer than 13 restaurants, seven coffee houses, and 18 clubs, heavily concentrated in Washington County and around the university, regularly schedule appearances by musicians. The region also boasts 44 film and 24 music studios.

Eureka Springs is also among Northwest region cities that have devised unique ways to use space. In a downtown parking lot lined with art, during "Lucky 13 Starlight Outdoor Cinema" weekends, classic movies alternate with recent hits projected on the side of a building, complemented by pre- and post-movie live entertainment (and sometimes outdoor slumber parties).

The Arkansas Arts Councils list 47 art galleries in the Northwest region, 25 in Eureka Springs, four in Bentonville and Fayetteville, and the remainder distributed among the other eleven communities. Increasingly, restaurants (including Eureka Springs' Mud Street Café and

*Creative amenities will play a large part in attracting the kind of talented employees the new industries need and in enticing tourists to stay longer.*

Cottage Inn Restaurant), coffee shops, specialty stores, and even bed and breakfasts are displaying and selling art, and some of the world's best-known designers are represented in Abetika's showroom, a gallery of designer furnishings in Rogers. One issue artists face as the region grows and becomes more prosperous is cost. Artists surveyed in Fayetteville in 2005 indicated a need for more affordable studios and housing and more venues to reach markets.

### **Associational Infrastructure**

The creative economy of the Northwest region is locally organized, generally within specific disciplines and mainly in the crafts and performing arts. Fayetteville is home to a dance coalition and blues society, Bull Shoals to an arts and humanities council, and Siloam Springs to the Sager Creek Arts Association. Harrison and the rural Subiaco have arts councils and Gentry a fine arts society. Some are membership organizations; others host affairs at which their constituents can meet and interact. We found few examples of regional organizational forums for any of the other elements of the creative economy. Social relations among those involved in design, media arts, and culture seem to depend on national professional associations and informal connections, often made at the many events and festivals the region hosts throughout the year.

### **Museums and Cultural Centers**

The Northwest region is home to 46 museums ranging from the Wal-Mart store in Bentonville, Old Jail Museum in Greenwood, and Frog Fantasies in Eureka Springs, to Snake World in Berryville, to museums of art and science including Crystal Bridges in Bentonville, which, when it opens in 2010, will contain the nation's largest collection of American art.

### **Looking Ahead**

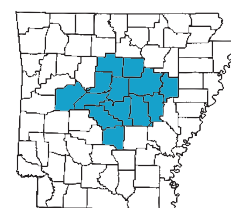
As the state's fastest growing region, northwest Arkansas' greatest challenge will be

to distinguish itself from other rapidly developing metro areas by managing its growth and urbanization in ways that retain its cultural heritage and give new and old citizens alike a sense of place.

New residents brought by new jobs offer tremendous opportunities for the creative economy, as clients for designers and architects, consumers of goods, and collectors of art. Crystal Bridges is expected to attract tens of thousands of new visitors each year. Creative amenities will play a large part in attracting the kind of talented employees the new industries need and in enticing tourists to stay longer. The region's educational systems will bear some of the responsibility for helping people to learn the competencies needed by the new businesses including the creative enterprises that provide services and support as well as arts-related experiences.

New residents and businesses will also increase the diversity to the region, generally a positive attribute in building creative economies and attracting talent. It will be a challenge to integrate old and new in a region not so long ago rather isolated, and to maintain traditions and preserve positive aspects of the culture while catering to new forms of growth.

### **The Central Region: Little Rock and Beyond**



Eleven-county central Arkansas is a diverse and thriving region in which the creative economy is expressed in many forms: through the design-based manufacturing firms Kohler and Munro Shoes, through fine arts venues such as the Chamber Music Society of Little Rock, through culture- and local history-based celebrations such as the Malvern Brickfest, and through the celluloid creations presented at the Ozark Foothills Filmfest. Urban and somewhat wealthier than much of the rest of the

state, the Central region enjoys a strong concentration of Arkansas' creative assets.

### Regional Overview

The eleven most urban counties of the highly urbanized Central region together account for more than 33 percent of Arkansas' total population and include not only the state's most populous city, Little Rock, but half of its ten largest cities. It has a slightly higher household income than the state's other regions, and relatively more households in the wealthiest, and fewer in the poorest, brackets.

The region's economy has a strong white-collar emphasis. Much of employment is concentrated in professional services, government, education, and sales, although manufacturing and construction and transportation and logistics are strong. In these three categories, the Central region appears to be beginning to successfully shift towards new, globally competitive industries. Its manufacturing strengths, for example, traditionally bricks, lumber, and paper, are transitioning to advanced materials, biomanufacturing, and aerospace. The region's foundation in food processing also remains strong and continues to attract new firms.

But the creative economy does not seem even to be on the radar screen in the region's economic profiles and strategic plans. A 2004 strategic economic development plan by Angelou Economics makes no mention of creativity or the arts. Tourism is widely seen to be important to the area, though, and with many of the region's significant tourism assets based on creativity, tourism-related strategies for economic development would be likely to involve creative assets in some way. Certainly, the proportion of artists to the overall employment base seems to suggest that a degree of importance attaches to the creative economy.

### Educational Institutions

Seven institutions of higher education contribute significantly to the Central

Table 10. **Full-Time Artists, Designers, and Performers in the Central Region by County, 2000**

County	Number	Number Per 1,000 Employed
Conway County	46	5.4
Faulkner County	318	7.5
Grant County	34	4.5
Lonoke County	56	2.3
Perry County	3	0.7
Prairie County	18	11.4
Pulaski County	1744	10.1
Saline County	341	8.5
Van Buren County	62	15.9
White County	117	4.0
Woodruff County	8	9.9
Yell County	28	11.1
<i>Arkansas</i>	<i>8127</i>	<i>6.9</i>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2006  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/CreativeClassCodes>

region's creative economy. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers bachelors degrees in studio art and art history and masters degrees in both and in art education. Its three fine arts galleries accept exhibition proposals from local artists, providing not only an important public venue for them but also opportunities for the local community to experience art (university faculty regularly offer lectures related to the gallery installations that are free and open to the public). A minor in digital graphics enables UALR students to pursue more industry-specific arts education and training.

The University of Central Arkansas in Conway provides gallery space in its small Baum Gallery of Fine Arts and student-run Black Box Gallery. Somewhat more application focused than UALR's program, its arts instruction leads to degrees in art education, art history, ceramics, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture.

The region's educational institutions also offer a number of performance-related

*Seven institutions of higher education contribute significantly to the Central region's creative economy.*

### **Right and Left Brain Learning at Parkridge Magnet High School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts:**

Arkansas has what might be the nation's only magnet school that combines typically left brain learning of math and science with typically right brain learning associated with the fine arts. Serving three school districts in Pulaski County, the 300- student school enrolls 100 in the fine arts each year. The current National Merit Scholar semi-finalist is a drama student. Learning in this unique institution is interdisciplinary, with science students taking arts classes, fine arts students taking math and science, and all intermingling and exchanging experiences. The school's annual spring musical is open to all, and more than once a lead part has gone to a science student.

*A public that comes to live with and enjoy the presence of art and creative displays is more likely to consume the work of local artists and craftspeople...*

degree programs including several in music, dance, and theater. Central Baptist College's music program is among the more interesting, offering music as a degree with a minor in business, Christian counseling, or religious education. This program structure reveals an element of Arkansas culture that became clear at the beginning of this study: that music, like the visual arts, can be "application oriented," experienced not only as performance, but also as a part of many pursuits and occupations, particularly as relate to African-American faith institutions.

North Little Rock's College of Aspiring Artists, embedded in Shorter College's two-year associates degree program, combines the study of music and business applications, but from a novel perspective. TCAA brings business, sales, and management know-how to bear on the world of music with the goal of teaching students not only how to refine and improve their performing, playing, and songwriting abilities, but also how to manage the external aspects of the music business.

#### **Events and Festivals**

Tourism is a significant contributor to central Arkansas' economy, and the region's creative assets, together with the areas natural beauty and amenities, are among the primary drivers of tourism. At a series of outdoor business events known locally as Little Rock's "Big Downtown Thursdays," for example, local musicians create an environment conducive to casual networking while local artists create

and sell visual art on site. Another example is "Making 'It' in Arkansas," a roundtable on filmmaking in the state that includes discussion of what it offers novice and seasoned filmmakers.

The region is particularly rich in festivals and events. The following inventory, which excludes the region's many ad hoc festivals and special events staged as one-time celebrations, is likely an undercount:

- 18 music festivals
- 21 crafts festivals
- Nine culinary festivals
- 10 festivals celebrating some aspect of local or Arkansas history and culture
- Three literature festivals
- 12 additional festivals that are multidisciplinary or celebrate dance, film, or the visual fine arts

Bringing art and creative endeavors out into the open for everyone to experience and enjoy contributes to the quality of life in the region, important not only for its own sake, but also for its effect on the desirability of the region as a place to live and for businesses to locate. A public that comes to live with and enjoy the presence of art and creative displays is more likely to consume the work of local artists and craftspeople, and attend the festivals at which that work is made available.

#### **Places and Spaces**

Some of the most distinctive venues for the presentation and experience of art are found on the campuses of the Central





The Gann Museum in Benton commemorates the town's bauxite mining history – starting with this distinctive building, the only known structure in the world made entirely out of bauxite.

region's institutions of higher education. The University of Central Arkansas' Silas D. Snow Fine Arts Building, for example, houses Centre Stage, a fully equipped, 307-seat proscenium stage with adjoining shop areas for scenery and costume construction. Also on UCA's Conway campus are the Studio Theatre, a newly equipped "black box" space, and the Donald W. Reynolds Auditorium, a new, 1,200 seat, state-of-art equipped performance hall wired for live radio and television broadcasts. On the Hendrix College campus can be found two performing arts venues, Staples Auditorium and Cabel Theater.

In the region's many less formal venues, performance, although secondary to, is nevertheless closely allied with, the establishments' primary function. Performers in restaurants, clubs and bars, and coffeehouses, for example, enhance the environment and create an atmosphere that is conducive to eating, drinking, and socializing. The Central region has no fewer than:

- 36 clubs and coffeehouses that display local art on their walls or provide venues for live music;
- nine restaurants that do the same;
- 14 halls and auditoriums; and

- eight higher education venues.

Spaces specifically set aside for the exposition of the arts or culture include Cadron Settlement Park (or, assuming a "looser" definition of culture, Pickles Gap Village) in Conway, the sculpture Promenade along Little Rock's River Front, and the still developing historical and arts district of downtown North Little Rock.

### Associational Infrastructure

Because central Arkansas is home to the state capital, it has as well as many organizations and institutions that support the creative assets and economy of the region many others that have statewide responsibilities. The organizational infrastructure that serves as the foundation for the Central region's creative economy is consequently not organized along disciplinary lines to the degree that it is in the other regions of the state. Twenty-one of its arts organizations and guilds are multi-disciplinary. Seven of these are foundations or exclusively funding organizations. The other fourteen are broad-based organizations such as arts or culture councils that promote a wide range of creative endeavors. Seven of the twenty-one multi-disciplinary organizations have a statewide mission.

The other fourteen are focused on smaller units such as towns or counties. (The arts organizations generally do not organize along regional lines, but rather tend to be either local or statewide.)

Among the arts organizations in the Central region that do organize along disciplinary lines are:

- seven organizations that are focused on drama;
- four organizations that promote dance;
- 19 organizations that perform or promote music; and
- three visual arts and crafts organizations.

### Looking Ahead

With its strong base of creative and arts-based assets, the Central region is rich in creative and cultural experiences and opportunities. Its urban centers, central location, relative wealth, and role as the state's capital all confer advantages not shared by the state's other regions. Its challenge now is to exploit these advantages in a way that makes the arts not

only a pleasing amenity and tourist attraction, but an integral part of the local economy.

The region's creative economy, however, as noted earlier, is not mentioned in its economic development strategic plans, seeming to be regarded as an economic factor only to the extent that it provides activities for tourists. This is a trap that is easier for the Central region to fall into because, unlike other (in many cases poorer) regions of the state, its creative economy activities and offerings are not organized along the lines of any particular cultural identity. The Delta blues, Ozark folk traditions, even eclectic expressions of the northwest are cultural identifications directly connected to the respective locales' primary modes of creative expression and the types of creative goods for which they have come to be known. If its creative economy is to be advanced and its impact on the overall economic fortunes of central Arkansas increased, the Central region will need to tease out its cultural identity and explore how to develop its creative assets within the context of that identity.



## Previewing Opportunities and Challenges

The state of Arkansas has a sizable reserve of assets to offer its creative businesses and people. They rest in the state's educational institutions, calendar of events, and places in which creativity is developed, displayed, and shown. They reside in the organizations that represent, and that fund and serve, creative enterprises and people, and in original products produced by those people and enterprises. Some of these assets have been planned and managed at the state level, others at the community level. Some are the ideas of inspired citizens wanting to serve their communities, others commercial ventures expecting to make a profit. Taken together, the assets that we have been able to uncover in both expected and unexpected places constitute a solid foundation for Arkansas' creative economy. Nonetheless, these assets also reveal gaps, where a stronger support system might generate new opportunities and greater success in advancing the creative economy, especially in the rapidly growing media, digital, and design markets. This final section summarizes the opportunities and challenges identified by our analysis:

Although the creative economy, broadly defined, encompasses a wide range of industry sectors and companies, it can be subdivided into sets of companies with like characteristics. The previous report defined four such sub-clusters.

- *Visual, literary, and performing arts* includes artists and artisans, photographers, writers and publishers, and art schools.
- *Entertainment and media arts* includes radio and television stations, recording studios, bookstores, and film production companies.
- *Product and environmental design* includes architects and interior decorators, graphic design and culinary arts, and ornamental ironwork companies.
- *Cultural heritage and preservation* includes museums, historical sites, historic preservation and renovation efforts, and foundations.

Because some companies and arts institutions fit more than one category, the sub-clusters are not mutually exclusive. But viewing the creative economy through the lens of these sub-clusters neverthe-



The Delta Cultural Center in downtown Helena is a museum of the heritage and culture of the Arkansas Delta.

*Arkansans' sense of place is rooted in their identification with the creative and cultural economy.*

less makes it easier to observe regional strengths and weaknesses, identify new opportunities, and formulate strategies for plugging gaps.

### **Arkansas' Creative Economy: Overview of Assets, Opportunities, and Challenges**

What emerged from the focus groups, interviews, and analyses was an appreciation for the state's artistic and cultural strengths, the opportunities available to it, and the challenges it faces in trying to further develop the economic potential of its creative economy, particularly in its poorer and more rural communities.

#### **STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

*Creative expression is ubiquitous.* State-wide, Arkansans engage daily in a wide variety of creative activities. Whether establishing a small museum to celebrate their community's local heritage or participating in small-town community theater or online poetry blogs, residents exhibit a strong propensity towards creative activity and creative expression. Even in communities in which no significant economic contribution of the arts and creativity is in evidence, the groundwork is laid in the form of interest in and appreciation for the creative elements of life. A creative economy emerges when communities build upon this foundation of natural creativity and link it to local and regional economies.

*Arkansas' educational system values the arts.* Appreciation for the arts starts early and runs deep in Arkansas. The arts have retained a more prominent position in Arkansas' than in most other states' public K-12 education, and the state is home to one of very few state math and science schools that have added the arts. The Arkansas School of Math, Science and the Arts provides an exemplary model for integrating left and right brain thinking. A number of Arkansas communities, moreover, are participating in the state's Arts in the Schools program. This brings

artists into the schools to share their creativity with the students in order to help to keep creative traditions alive, especially in disciplines related to the local community's artistic heritage.

#### *Creative people are attracted to Arkansas.*

The state's abundant natural resources and beauty, and attendant recreational activities and life styles, attract creative people. These natural resources, together with a relatively low cost of living, make Arkansas an ideal place for artisans, designers, and high-tech entrepreneurs to live and work.

#### *Arkansans feel a strong sense of place.*

Arkansans' sense of place is rooted in their identification with the creative and cultural economy. Interviews and focus groups revealed a strong common theme: that Arkansans feel a strong attachment to, and appreciate the distinctiveness of their state, their regions, and their towns. This is reflected in widespread interest in and commitment to celebrating local heritage and issues of local interest as well as in the embracing of homegrown and indigenous products and creative and cultural traditions.

#### *Infrastructure supports creative sectors.*

The arts, design, and related organizations that form a support infrastructure for the creative economy at the state, regional, and local levels are mostly focused on niches in which they provide information to, and support the work of, their constituencies with the goal of bringing the experience of art and design to all Arkansans.

#### **CHALLENGES AND NEEDS**

*Greater statewide coordination across the creative economy.* Arkansas has many strong arts-focused organizations, but no single organization that ties all the pieces together, that represents all of the state's creative economy constituencies and documents their needs and successes. The Arkansas Arts Council's role is an important one, but it is not to be a statewide coordinating body for all sectors of the

creative economy. With creative activity widely dispersed throughout the state, new organizational structures and communications methods might be needed to promote information sharing, networking, and collaboration among creative individuals and enterprises.

*More emphasis on, and coordination among, creative economy career paths within higher education.* Many institutions of higher education provide valuable and, in some instances, innovative sources of instruction in creative and arts-related fields. What is lacking is a unified leadership group to coordinate their activities and a statewide strategy for leveraging their resources to advance the creative economy. Coordination becomes increasingly important as the contribution of these assets to the state's creative economy grows.

*Economic development entities' limited understanding of and appreciation for the potential of the creative economy.*

Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations, in rural areas in particular, are not sufficiently informed about, and focused on, the state's creative economy. Economic development practitioners generally do not appreciate the full scope of the economic roles, potential, and contributions of that economy.

*Cultural constituencies within the state's creative economy are isolated.* Racial divides persist within the creative economy. Although their culture and art are important elements of that economy, the African-American and growing Latino communities are only slowly, and with difficulty, becoming involved in formal arts activities that include a variety of ethnic and racial traditions.

*Arkansas does not have a widely recognized creative identity.* Some Arkansas regions and communities have well-established creative economy brand identities, but the state as a whole does not. It continues to be viewed as agricultural and industrial. Crystal Bridges will be a major factor in changing that image, but

it will take a focused effort to extend a new image from the northwest corner to the entire state.

## **Drilling Down into the Sub-Clusters**

Each of the four sub-clusters has a particular set of strengths and challenges around which it can build a framework for future actions and recommendations.

### **The visual, literary, and performing arts**

This is the sub-cluster most commonly associated with the creative economy, and is, in fact, a major source of its content. Although artists, writers, and performers are numerous, Arkansas is best known for its literary arts and music traditions, particularly in the Ozarks and Delta. Notwithstanding formidable pockets that have gained national recognition, the arts and crafts are less visible statewide.

#### **STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

*Deep strengths in specific creative niches.*

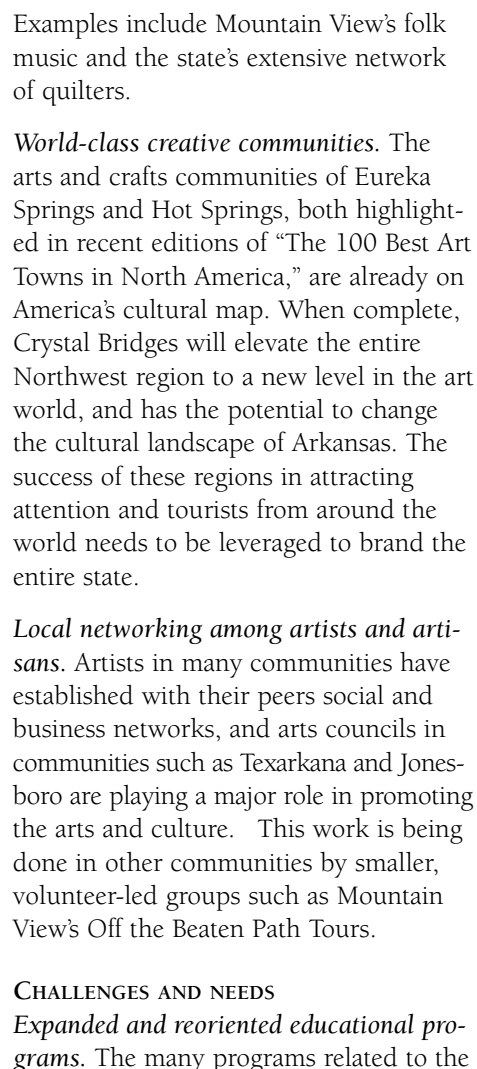
The literary arts, in particular, have a rich, deep tradition in Arkansas, reaching into every corner of the state. An expansive base of support that includes strong college and university creative writing programs, networks of published and yet-to-be published authors, literary festivals, venues for readings, a well-known writers colony, multiple online and print literary journals, and bookstores has enabled Arkansas to turn out a plethora of good and great writers.

*Gospel and choir music in the African-American churches, though it often goes unnoticed in measures of the creative economy, is nevertheless a significant creative asset.* The College of Aspiring Artists is exemplary among efforts to blend the cultural, social, educational, and economic potential of gospel music.

*Traditional creative roots that continue to be nourished today.* Many communities have maintained strong folk craft traditions to the present day, some even continuing to develop and revitalize them.

*Many institutions of higher education provide valuable and, in some instances, innovative sources of instruction in creative and arts-related fields.*

*Communities in which real estate costs are rising beyond what artists can afford risk pushing out one of the assets primarily responsible for their prosperity.*



*Business needs of artists.* Many artists expressed a need for help in pricing, marketing, and selling their artwork, and many who currently sell primarily to the tourist trade would like to export their art as well. Many also are finding studio space and art-congenial housing harder to come by, particularly in regions enjoying growing economic and cultural prosperity (Fayetteville and the Northwest region, for example). Communities in which real estate costs are rising beyond what artists can afford risk pushing out one of the assets primarily responsible for their prosperity.

*Stronger connections between the philanthropic and creative communities.* Foundations are viewed by artists and cultural organizations throughout the state as



being less than forthcoming with funding for creative economy activities and projects. That this study's analysis identified the strong base of foundations and philanthropic corporate support for the arts as a strength suggests that either this base is not being fully capitalized upon or its support is not being well communicated. Whichever is the case, connections between potential supporters and the arts community need to be strengthened.

### Entertainment and new media

Although this sector of the Creative Economy has not been particularly well endowed nor well known, the technical and digital sides of the arts are important because the state is investing in them in its schools and their market potential is significant.

#### STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Recognized strength in the documentaries niche.** The importance and value of documentary films is growing. Examples of this include, the My Community programs in which high school students produce documentaries of their home towns, the ascendancy of the nationally known Hot Springs Documentary Film Institute and its work with the Arkansas School of Math, Science and Arts, and the Ozark Foothills Filmfest with its focus on Arkansas subjects.

**Filmmaking skills and opportunities in the schools.** The EAST program is making

a connection between the digital and media arts and science in Arkansas high schools, and giving young people ideas about career opportunities in these fields. Also contributing in this area is the T Tauri Filmfest, at which youth films are showcased and earn awards. And, an on-line community extends the reach of these efforts to budding filmmakers in some of the state's most rural communities.

**Growth in film production.** The number of films produced in Arkansas has grown, from one or two per year in the 1980s, to four or five per year in the 1990s, to more than ten per year since 2000.

#### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

**Increased marketing and development of African-American arts.** Arkansas' creative economy has some unique and distinctive aspects that should constitute enormous assets. The blues, for example, has deep roots in the Arkansas Delta, and is part of the cultural and regional identity of those who live there, particularly the African-American population. Yet the Delta realizes little economic impact from its blues heritage. The Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival (formerly the King Biscuit Blues Festival), for example, although it is national in scope and brings in tourist dollars, draws too little on Delta-based musicians for performances and has little connection with the Delta's local and regional economies.

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Table 11. **Films Produced in Arkansas**

Years	Motion pictures	Documentaries	TV series or films	Total
Prior to 1970	10	2	1	13
1970-1975	13	0	1	14
1976-1980	13	0	2	15
1981-1985	6	0	6	12
1986-1999	25	0	6	31
1991-1995	15	0	6	21
1996-2000	22	1	3	26
2001-2005	30	5	11	46
2006-2007	26	10	13	49



Poster for the 2007 May Festival of the Arts held annually in Eureka Springs.

*Distance from entertainment and new media power centers.* The US entertainment and media industries are based primarily on the two coasts. To make and maintain connections with these power hubs requires overcoming the disadvantages of distance and being removed from the “scene.” At the very least, it requires travel and creative ways to build relationships.

*Intense competition among states for filming locations.* Other states, such as neighboring Louisiana, have devised compelling and attractive incentive programs that draw filmmakers. Arkansas lacks such programs.

*More attention to the media arts in community college programs.* Many of the skills needed to capitalize on the strengths of the entertainment and media arts would logically be developed in community colleges. Because the community colleges have not yet developed the capacity to build those skills, out-of-state film crews often bring in their own workforce, and the Arkansas loses out on the jobs and the revenues..

*Relatively few recording studios.* The relatively small number of recording studios (proportionate to what would be expected for the state’s population) hinders the development of local semi-professional and emerging musicians who need to record in order to market themselves and build their reputations.

#### Product and environmental design

This sub-cluster encompasses all aspects of design including buildings, interiors, products, packaging, and branding. The state’s design potential seems quite strong within the manufacturing sector, and the manufacturer’s survey emphasized that this asset can be highly leveraged to strengthen that sector.

#### STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Arkansas manufacturers are ahead of the curve.* Manufacturers’ growing understanding of the value of design to their markets and competitive positions is reflected in plans to increase investments in design. This bodes well for their ability to innovate beyond the design and aesthetic qualities of their products, which are increasingly considered to be the focus of consumer choice and thus key to competitiveness in national and global markets.

*New demand and market niches in green construction.* Expansion of Arkansas’ green building niche (there were 25 LEED certified projects underway in the state in early 2008) promises to open up new opportunities for architectural and interior design firms.



*Growing understanding of the economic and social value of design.* Increasingly, the state's institutions and private companies are beginning to realize the value of interior design and invest more heavily in it.

#### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

*A stronger educational infrastructure for design.* The state's lack of a strong base of design talent is not being addressed by its higher education institutions. Education for architects is limited. Only one university offering an undergraduate program and no graduate programs being offered, and programs in graphic and web design need to be bolstered to support advertising, manufacturing, and other creative sectors.

*Greater use of in-state capabilities for publicly funded construction.* Too many architectural design projects, including publicly funded projects, are going to out-of-state architectural firms. Arkansas needs to develop its base of architectural talent to ensure that, at the very least, Arkansas-based projects can be undertaken by top ranked, in-state architectural design firms.

*More on-ramps to the information highway.* Arkansas ranks 47th in the country in terms of broadband access. This has serious implications for the creative economy, including limiting regional artists' access to markets and discouraging online training in such fields as digital design.<sup>11</sup>

#### Cultural heritage and preservation

Arkansas stands out in its efforts to preserve, maintain, and market its natural and historical assets. Almost every community has historical sites or nature preserves, or both.

#### STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Cultural heritage assets as educational tools.* Arkansas has been able to effectively integrate culture into its public school

curricula, to a much greater degree than most states and despite the increased emphasis on testing for basic skills. This emphasis on arts and culture reflects leadership at the state level, primarily that of former governor Mike Huckabee. To maintain this emphasis, the current leadership will have to somehow signal its continued high-level commitment to a place for the arts and culture in education.

*Pride in local culture and heritage.* The state's hundreds of regularly scheduled and advertised cultural events and festivals that showcase local heritage, art, and culture not only attract visitors and generate income, but also instill in residents, and particularly in youth, a sense of pride in and appreciation for place. Many Arkansas museums also highlight local culture.

#### CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

*More extensive marketing of cultural heritage by economic development entities.* Although Arkansas is artistically and culturally rich, because of its cultural identity and pride in its heritage, the state has not really begun to translate its cultural riches into economic riches. Regions such as the Arkansas Delta, as mentioned earlier, could do more to market their cultural assets, and regional economic development organizations that actively promote tourism could more aggressively mention and market the arts and culture to enhance their economic impact.

#### Increased cultural representation.

Arkansas has a variety of cultures that contribute rich histories to its creative economy. To date, it has proved difficult to connect these to and integrate them with the larger creative economy. The state needs to ensure that the full range of Arkansas' culture including African-American and Latino elements are represented, and work to expand the audience for activities and events in which these population groups are already represented.

*Arkansas needs to develop its base of architectural talent to ensure that, at the very least, Arkansas-based projects can be undertaken by top ranked, in-state architectural design firms.*

## Notes

1. Joel Kotkin, quoted in Samuel Western, *Pushed Off the Mountain, Sold Down the River: Wyoming's Search for its Soul* (Moose, WY: Homestead Publishing, 2002).
2. Kevin F. McCarthy et al., *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004.
3. Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004.
4. Elizabeth Currid, *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, & Music Drive New York City*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
5. The USDA Economic Research Service's county typology can be used to determine whether a particular county's economy is dependent on a particular industry or industries.
6. Pine Bluff, including three counties, is its own MSA; Crittenden County, which includes West Memphis, is part of the Memphis, Tennessee MSA.
7. <http://www.ame-church.com/>.
8. Based on location quotients calculated from County Business Patterns, 2005.
9. A metro area assumes a core urban area of 50,000 or more population, a micro area an urban core of at least 10,000 (but fewer than 50,000). Each metro or micro area consists of one or more counties including the counties that contain the core urban area as well as any adjacent counties that are significantly socially and economically integrated (as measured, for example, by commuting to work) with the urban core.
10. Ranked in the lowest quintile of per capita income in every census since 1950. Lloyd D. Bender et al., *The Diverse Social and Economic Structure of Nonmetropolitan America*, Rural Development Research Report No:49, Washington DC; U.S. Department of Agriculture
11. "Pryor set for hearing on state's broadband," *Northwest Arkansas News*, August 25, 2007.



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RTS ¥ 205 Lloyd Street, Suite 210 ¥ Carrboro, NC 27510 USA ¥ +1 919 933 6699 ¥ [www.rtsinc.org](http://www.rtsinc.org)