TIIAP FY 1999
Project Narrative

Ballet Arts

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Education, Culture, and Lifelong Learning
Minneapolis, Minnesota

DANCE PARTNERS
history

PHASE I

In 1996, Marcia Chapman of Ballet Arts Minnesota (BAM) suggested using technology as a means of making dance more accessible. In mid-1997, a $10,000 grant from US WEST Foundation allowed DANCE PARTNERS to proceed. After many meetings with service providers and with arts educators, we decided on a full day of exchange with two interactive classes in order to test both the equipment and the power of choreography across the miles. The test took place in November 1997 at two linked Minnesota facilities located in Plymouth and La Crescent, over 200 miles apart. The conference spaces included two fixed cameras and a third roving mobile camera; dance flooring was installed in the emptied rooms. Each site hosted student dancers and their dance teacher, one a specialist in modern dance, the other in classical ballet, and each offered a two-hour class. Dance steps, exercises and techniques were taught interactively using a full T1 line to transmit the information.

How could video contribute to learning, augmenting and supporting the dance teacher in the studio? What techniques and camera angles were most effective? Both the teachers and students quickly adapted to the slight image delay; it did not hamper communication. In one stunning example, the La Crescent teacher actually "sculpted" the correct dance position on a student in Plymouth, by drawing with her hands on the television screen. SEE ATTACHMENT 3 for a project description.

In PHASE II, our recent research has focused on the best way to use the technology and -- significantly -- how to forge alliances amongst the many communication providers in the state. A video showing of the documented work has sparked tremendous interest, as it demonstrates how arts experiences can be available to many people. In 1998, DANCE PARTNERS was highlighted at the National Governors Conference. Ten more interactive sessions are planned, each one advancing our understanding of teaching strategy and the technology, beginning in April 1999.

1. Project Definition

In this section, we describe the communities involved in PHASE III of the project, characterizing them by need. We then detail project outputs and outline anticipated outcomes. Community Needs

Dance in Our Culture

Dance permeates our national culture and consciousness. Movement sells. Our airwaves are lathered with layers of hip-hop, middle-of-the-road rock, swing, nostalgic country ballads that raise social issues. Every major newspaper and magazine has focused on the recent movement craze. SEE ATTACHMENT 1 for remarks about the power of dance in human society. But note -- the 50 largest dance companies are concentrated in only 10 of our largest cities. Of the 4,000 or so people gainfully employed in the profession, most perform and teach in urban areas. And

in Minneapolis, only one out of ten schools offers some form of dance instruction -- and that number is declining. For some reason, dance educators are slow to recognize that the pervasiveness of dance in everyday life makes this medium an effective tool for reaching into communities.

Interconnection

From the start, DANCE PARTNERS was told "Simply design the project. The technology is there." This proved to be quite untrue. Finding studios acceptable for dance that could adequately transmit a solid moving image was next to impossible. Communication between cities was controlled by different -- and fiercely competitive -- communications carriers. If T1 lines were available they were gobbled up by data transmission.

Minnesota is moving toward a unified state-wide telecommunications network. Yet it is not fully operational. There are mixtures of digital and analog technologies amongst regions. Interconnection is still a dream. Arts organizations and other public entities must further depend on the vision of system administrators to provide access and to encourage collaboration amongst educational institutions and providers in the private sector. Dance educators, eager to reach a constituency, view the network hungrily.

By contrast, interconnectivity is taken for granted in rural Ohio. Within the university community, a model telecommunications system uses T1 lines for the most part and T3 lines, fiber optics and microwave upon occasion. Yet for dance educators, outreach into surrounding rural communities is no more real than in Minnesota. The tool has not been taken up.

Internet Access

The Minneapolis Public Library System, in February 1999, completed Internet hook-ups for all of its 14 branches. The service provided is heroic, for the telephone penetration rate [and thus access to the Information Superhighway] in America has remained constant, with the remaining large pockets of "have nots" among the low-income, minorities and the young, particularly in central cities and in rural areas. In Minneapolis, public school children are increasingly poor. 44 of these schools have concentrations of students eligible for free or reduced lunch; 11 exceed 90%. As for those who own computers, furthest behind the national average are seniors [those over 55] and the young [those under 25]. In rural areas, many communities are interconnected, yet do not have access to teachers of dance or other arts experiences. In Brainerd, MN, for example, dance has never been taught,

The Disabled Community in Minneapolis

More than one in every five people in Minneapolis has some form of disability. According to the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, it does not even occur to many disabled people to try to join the mainstream, they have been "outside" for so very long. Opportunities for movement therapy -- let alone unencumbered movement -- are rare.

Outputs

Network

DANCE PARTNERS will use infrastructure network lines [new or existing] -- T1 lines at a minimum -- to link some 20 teachers and 250 students and their communities at participating studios in Minnesota and Ohio. An interactive dance studio using portable PictureTel Venue technology will be installed in the Hennepin Center for the Arts, a space now used by BAM for traditional dance teaching SEE ATTACHMENT 4 for a diagram. At the Reif Center in Grand Rapids, the main dance studio is now being made T1-accessible. In Athens, Ohio University Telecommunications Center will refurbish and maintain an existing teleconference room as an interactive studio. They will also provide Web access for participants without computers and modems. At Reif Center and in the Twin Cities, E-classrooms will be created.

In TEACHING CYCLE A, interactive point-to-point dance classes will bring classically trained dancers together with modern dance students. In one of our disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods, 38% of the kids 18 or younger live below the poverty rate; building on the success of a decade-old program called City Children's NUTCRACKER [SEE ATTACHMENT 2 for a description], we will bring these Minnesota city kids into contact with Ohio seniors, chosen from communities as the very best hoofers around. We also will bring the disabled from rural and urban Minnesota together under the tutelage of a gifted teacher of improvisation, Chris Aiken.

There will be multi-point interactive sessions in TEACHING CYCLE A, too. They will link all these communities at the beginning and at the end, when distinctive movement patterns will be shared in a grand movement choir. SEE Madeleine Scott's ideas about adapting classical Laban technique in ATTACHMENT 5.

In TEACHING CYCLE B interactive multi-point classes will link one elementary and one secondary Minneapolis school to BAM and a School of Dance in order to train teachers how to teach dance to young people. Interactive point-to-point classes will teach improvisation [MN] to beginning dance students [OH]; another class will explore intergenerational movement. SEE ATTACHMENT 5 for interactive class design & a timeline. This cycle will be repeated in Year Two.

Interactive WEB site

A fully interactive multi-format WEB site will provide the context for understanding the movement taught in the interactive classes. The site will include digitized examples of dance movement from diverse cultures, including student choreography and movement ideas executed in moving image and audio; graphics and text, such as student journals documenting progress and self-critique; and, a monitored chat room for the exchange of feelings and ideas. Interpretive narrative by knowledgeable practitioners from the community, community leaders and elders will be included as well as interdisciplinary information about history and the meaning of each dance form taught. Archival examples from dance research repositories suggested by consulting archivists, such as Dance Heritage Coalition, and on-line interviews with professional dancers will also be included.

All outputs will be closely monitored. Evaluative data will be collected throughout.

Outcomes

Through past experiment, we already know that choreographic pattern can be taught through interactive technology. In PHASE III of DANCE PARTNERS -- the subject of this proposal -- we will develop the Web-site fully to incorporate streaming audio/video and student-designed movement packets and continue to look at the way we teach so that others can replicate and adapt the best aspects of our work

As new ways of moving are mastered, as confidence in expressive movement is established, we would expect the self-esteem of student dancers and community participants to grow. Sense of place should measurably increase, as evidenced by an enhanced sense of community and pride in regional and local differences. We surmise that long-term relationships -- a new form of Web-based virtual community -- will evolve among people who live 1,000 miles outside the neighborhood!

We postulate that this model can be applied to other performance arts and with modification to the teaching of the visual arts. To facilitate this outcome, we will develop a PERFORMANCE TOOLKIT to document those elements of movement performance that may be held in common with the other performance arts and arts disciplines. A useful way of conceptualizing these outcomes is provided by the Graduation Standards for the Arts in the Profile of Learning, as pioneered in Minnesota and now adopted nationally.

2. Evaluation

Evaluation Purpose and Questions

The purposes of evaluation will be twofold, addressing project design and changes in affective and cognitive learning by participants. Using data collected during implementation of the project, our evaluator, Professor Karen Rogers of the University of St. Thomas, will (1) assess how well the project achieves its goals; (2) determine how effective the model is in enhancing the cognitive and psychological processing of participants; and (3) determine how viable, generative, and transformational the model might be for future arts education efforts via interactive telecommunications technology. The evaluation questions to be addressed include: Were the large number of partners involved in this project able to work cohesively despite the great geographical distances? How fully and professionally were the instructional packages developed for the WEB site? In what ways and how extensively did partners and participants utilize the potential of the network? Were both able-bodied and disabled students recruited in great enough numbers to warrant the extensive networking and partnerships established in this project? Were the respective communities involved with the partners committed to participating in the project? Were the general attitudes and values of participants toward their communities, toward diversity, toward dance and other arts areas, and toward multimedia networking/media literary positively influenced? What were the specific changes in knowledge, skill, and behavior observed in student participants? Does the model work? Can the model be generalized to other arts or curricular areas?

Evaluation Procedure and Data Collection

Quantitative data will be collected on student, instructor and partner responses to the project using self-report instrumentation within the instructional media. Response data will be collected electronically and the results will be reported as the project progresses, so that changes can be made along the way. In this manner, successes in one location can be immediately shared with other sites where the project may be somewhat slower in being implemented. This data will also reflect on how well participants are "learning" and how their values toward community and toward the arts may be changing as the changes take place. Qualitative data will be collected on student, instructor and partner responses using content analysis of student and instructor journals, chat line responses, and communications (electronic and hard copy) among partners and instructors. An observation checklist will be developed for assessing the outcomes of the instructional packages provided. Evidence of participant growth, instructional delivery, and performance quality will be the focus of these analyses, and they will be ongoing to aid in improvements to the implementation effort. Qualitative data about attitude and knowledge/skill changes, impact of the project and goal attainment will be collected using interview schedules with instructors, project partners and selected focus groups of student participants. Interview data will be subjected to content analysis to shape the summative findings of the evaluation.

The evaluation materials as well as the results will be included as a package in a PERFORMANCE TOOL KIT to be used in replication of the model in other arts areas or communities. These analyses will provide the basis for articles published in industry journals, such as DANCE USA and will accompany all postings on the HETC Web-site.

3. Significance

Innovation

Violinist Pinchas Zuckerman has taught over distance as part of MasterVision demonstrations. At a recent Boulder technology conference, a dramatic soliloquy was critiqued by a distant acting coach. Art museums have taken to digitizing their collections and to putting them on the 'Net, some with "virtual tours". GTE gave a two-year grant to Dallas Black Dance Theater to explore interactive potential. BAM conducted the point-to-point dance teaching/choreography experiment that led to this proposal.

Other examples:

Very Special Arts Massachusetts provides a nationwide service to a vast constituency through the 'Net, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts [CA] addresses community needs by training youngsters in technology, The Vermont Millennium Project seeks to bring artists and their public into closer contact by presenting work and announcements of performances. Most inspiring for us has been the Virtual Chatauqua project being piloted in Boulder, Colorado. The work of performing artists is actually being digitized and sent into rural areas, even though the technology is not yet adequate to carry full-motion video. We have benefitted from reading these proposals in depth and, in some cases, talking with project administrators. To our knowledge, no arts institution has taken full advantage of the interactive participatory potential of the existing

telecommunications infrastructure as a way to teach full movement in and through space. Establishing a model project All aspects of the project are replicable. Evaluation will identify effective project components. Implementation in differing settings is mainly a matter of imaginative adaptation, not of technical limitation.

4. Project Feasibility

Technical Approach

For this phase of the project, traditional dance studios will be wired with T1 interface and with dial-up or hard-wire interconnection to existing land-lines of the telecommunications infrastructure. Among the campuses of Ohio University, some classrooms are linked with fiber optic technology and via microwave transmission. Interconnection through T3 lines would minimize "lag" in both sound and picture, but is not yet feasible to adopt this technology for the Minnesota sites.

On a day-to-day basis, the Minneapolis Public Library Community Computer Centers are open to the public and can provide instruction for e-mail and Internet use to community dance students. Activities requiring extra band-width will be provided through two new E-classrooms adjacent to dance studios in Minneapolis and Grand Rapids [MN]. Supervisory staff will be trained by consultants and at Community Computer Centers to prepare digital materials, including zipped photo shows, clips of dance movement, etc. The source for moving images will be digital video shot by our camera personnel. The Web-server will be located in the Telecommunications Center at Ohio University in Athens. Student input in the form of postings can of course come from multiple locations. Digital input will likely come only from specified sites, such as from the Hennepin Center for the Arts and the Ohio Telecommunications Center. Interoperability Standard Internet and land-line transmission protocols will be used. Technical Alternatives We are using existing infrastructure. As new protocols are developed, we expect to integrate them in our interactive multi-point sessions. At this point, we have not considered "high-end" technology because of expense. It is important to demonstrate practical applications available to most of us across the country.

Scalability

Our respective communities look to DANCE PARTNERS to build a case for the arts-technology alliance and to our successes as possible models for implementation. If we can document positive affective and cognitive learning, we expect that the approach will be adopted in Minneapolis schools and eventually in other schools on the state-wide Learning Network. As budget dictates, we will incorporate infrastructure upgrades as they are implemented. SEE ATTACHMENT 7 for letters of support.

Sustainability

We have already begun to seek alternative funding sources, including support at the state level, local foundations for implementation in neighborhoods and national agencies for maintenance and extension of the network interconnection.

Applicant Qualifications

DANCE PARTNERS bring together nationally prominent dance educators, seasoned telecommunications professionals, recognized practitioners in library science expert in archival storage and retrieval; and media and arts management professionals noted for innovative work in their fields. Each partner brings complementary skills and experience to the project. SEE ATTACHMENT 2.

Budget, Implementation Schedule and Timeline

SEE BUDGET NARRATIVE and ATTACHMENT 5.

5. Community Involvement

Involvement of the community

Well-established relationships of the performing and teaching partners have provided a conduit for information about community need and key contacts for implementation of this project. BAM has worked in the targeted neighborhoods for nearly a decade to build trusting relationships defined by the needs of inner city neighborhoods. Minnesota has been a leader in implementing graduation standards in the arts for schools; as a result, the dance education community has been thoroughly canvassed regarding need and best practices throughout the state. We have aligned our practices to meet these Standards. Other colleagues in the arts and telecommunications communities were consulted throughout the pilot development phase. We have worked with Reif Center since the inception of DANCE PARTNERS to find ways of integrating The Arts into community life. Brainerd arts educators figure among the most active proponents of distance learning; but DANCE PARTNERS' plan for the disabled was unique when it was proposed about a year ago; it remains so. We have also sought guidance from the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living and have sought the advice of the Mayor's Office on Disability [Saint Paul] and the State Council on Disabilities [Minnesota].

Support for end users

We will work through accomplished non-professionals, community leaders and elders to surround the project with the personal support groups that often succeed in winning trust and respect where well-meaning institutional initiatives fail. On the WEB site, we will feature the opinions and accomplishments of these community members as model for the student dancers. We will continue to facilitate usage of the site by participants after classes end, hoping to encourage long-term exchange in this new virtual community.

All Minneapolis public libraries are now connected to the Internet; there are two Community Computer Centers in the neighborhoods from which our dancers will be drawn. Privacy Personal e-mail accounts will be established for all participants. The Web-site and personal journals will be password-protected.

6. Reducing Disparities

Description and documentation of the disparities

Meaningful arts experiences are rare in the urban core. The lives of urban and rural youth seldom touch and almost never reach across generations. Minnesota disabled, as everywhere in America, are marginalized.

Dance educators throughout the country have yet to find models that relate dance meaningfully to the community and to real life. New teaching models for schools have been proposed [GOALS 2000 Standards], but then voted down by legislatures, often not understood by teachers, least of all by dancers.

Strategies for overcoming barriers to access

The collaboration of existing community programs and the efforts of the DANCE PARTNERS will provide a support network for all participants. Classes and the culminating sharing of experiences will be a community event, interactive style!

Being involved will be easy for participants.

For instance, any one person can access the WEB site from any computer. If they have none, any library in the metro area can provide a terminal. Our target neighborhoods also have Computer Community Centers paid for by the community, for e-mail and Internet access. Each group will be trained to be media-literate as regards handling a video camera and each week, someone in the group will document his or her movement idea for uploading. E-classrooms will be equipped with band-width that can handle up-loading of movement packets from ZIP discs. If a disabled person or an elder requires transportation, it will be provided.

7. Documentation & Dissemination

Documentation An array of materials will be collected -- videotapes, photos, journals, e-mail messages and postings, etc. Archival specialists, such as The Dance Heritage Coalition staff, will advise on a strategy for documentation of project process and recording of content, storage and long-term preservation procedures.

Dissemination

We intend to issue regular evaluation reports.. The participation of the Higher Education Telecommunications Consortium [HETC] is key to our dissemination plan. The Consortium will serve as a national vehicle for sharing reports and on-line experiences growing out of its partnership with DANCE PARTNERS. Those reports will be made available to all HETC client institutions across the country via the HETC Web-site for the use of the distance education professionals working there, as well as other faculty and students.

SEE ATTACHMENT 6.