

# Philanthropy Journal

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OF NORTH CAROLINA

Speaking up

## State nonprofits intensify political lobbying activity

As government falls increasingly under conservative control and lawmakers reduce funding for social services, nonprofits are becoming more politically active. In the process, a debate is growing over how far nonprofits should take their political lobbying and advocacy.

By STEPHANIE GREER

American politics is changing. Government is cutting funding and services and, as a result, nonprofit organizations face greater demand for their services and declining

### POLITICS

resources with which to pay for them. To cope with the heightened role, many nonprofits also are becoming increasingly active in the political process. That activism is raising questions about the extent to which nonprofits should be political organizations.

The higher profile nonprofits are taking is reflected in a number of developments:

- Nonprofits are becoming more aggressive in lobbying local, state and federal lawmakers for more dollars and less regulation.

Nonprofits are using written communications more aggressively to get their message to government officials, prospective donors and the news media.

Foundations are funding efforts designed to increase civic activity.

- Government officials are trying to crack down on nonprofit activities they believe moves beyond legal limitations on nonprofits' political involvement.



Jane Kendall



John Hood

Nonprofit organizations always have been at the heart of the American political process. But recently, as conservatives have taken control of city halls, county courthouses, state houses and Congress, the role of nonprofits in the same arenas has become increasingly controversial. The ideological battles being waged on all government levels has only intensified the debate over nonprofit political activity. Legally, all nonprofits have the right

to be active politically; the debate centers on whether that activity is appropriate.

"To me, one of the main functions of private nonprofit organizations in a democratic society is to provide an independent voice in public debate, including in the legislative process," says Jane Kendall, executive director of the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, a trade group. "It's an essential part of their mission. The mission usually isn't just to be the band-aids [for social problems]; the mission is often to address hunger, to alleviate suffering - you can't only do

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## Market change Software vendors adapting

Keeping up with the breakneck speed of technological change is a challenge for companies that make software for nonprofits. Trends include adapting to the Windows operating system and producing more integrated products.

By BARBARA SOLOW

When asked to identify key trends in the nonprofit software field, company executives speak with one voice.

"Windows, Windows, Windows," they say.

The growing popularity of the computer operating system developed by Microsoft Corp. has many companies scrambling to create Windows versions of their software.

### SOFTWARE

This fall, several leading companies that produce software for nonprofits - including Blackbaud Inc., MicroEdge Inc. and Donor II/Systems Support Services - will be introducing Windows versions of their fundraising, grantmaking and planned giving programs.

With a growing number of nonprofits converting to Windows, many

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"Get email"

## Internet wave catches on

As the hype about the Internet continues, foundations, nonprofits and development offices all are finding ways to put Internet technology to practical use for their organizations.

By SEAN BAILEY

If anyone yet doubts the potential for the Internet to help nonprofits, consider what a three-judge federal appeals court said in June.

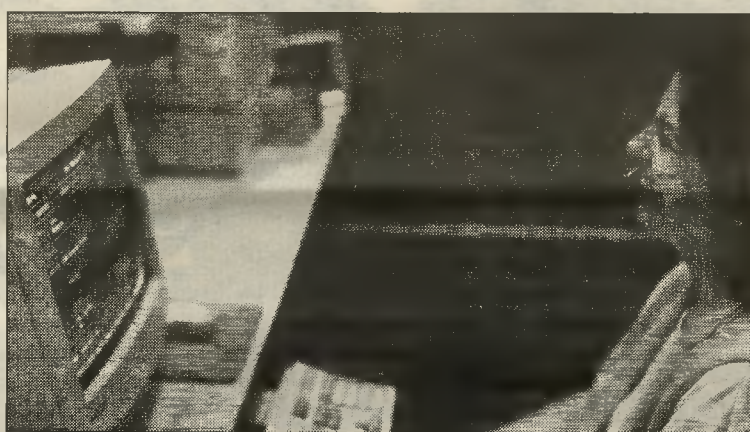
"It is no exaggeration to conclude that the Internet has achieved, and continues to achieve, the most participatory marketplace of mass speech that this country - and indeed the world - has yet seen."

The court opinion came in a landmark censorship case against the U.S. government. Although the judges, like many nonprofits, were Internet illiterate when they got the case a year ago, after delving into cyberspace, they could not help but acknowledge "the 'democratizing' effects of Internet communication: individual citizens of limited means can speak to a worldwide audience on issues of concern to them."

Like the judges, many nonprofits in the last year have taken their first hesitant steps into cyberspace - buying computers, getting email, launching homepages, creating electronic mail discussion groups or providing Internet service to the public.

For some, joining the most hyped shift in communications ever has been a heady experience. For others, embracing the change and adapting to new ways has been painful and frustrating.

And for those still watching from the sidelines, or those challenged by technology's ability to loosen their



Karen Greiten, development projects coordinator for the North Carolina Museum of Art, is one of a growing number of computer system specialists working for nonprofits. Greiten manages the museum's computer fundraising system.

Photo by Elaine Westor

### TECHNOLOGY

control on information, the feeling that the train is pulling away seems to grow with each passing day.

In New York City, a three-year old nonprofit called the Contact Center Network has detected a big jump in nonprofits getting on the Internet. The organization's global directory of nonprofit Web sites has more than 7,000 listings and is receiving 150 to 200 new nonprofit listings each week.

"It really shows the pace of what's happening," says Ami Dar, executive director for CCN. His nonprofit exists to promote better communication and cooperation among individuals, and use of computer technology and the Internet has become its major focus.

He estimates that 5,000 to 7,000 nonprofits in the U.S. have Web sites, and his organization is working to

increase that number.

Not surprisingly, Dar thinks every nonprofit in the world should be online. One of the biggest changes Dar has seen in the last year is the increasing use of email by nonprofits.

"Get a Web site and do whatever you want," he says, "but get email - it's just so important. I think people who don't get it are going to be left behind."

Dar says he has observed that small nonprofits that had avoided getting a personal computer are now getting one because they now recognize the need for email.

Indeed, email may prove to be the unsung technology of the Internet. Email has changed the way Jan Muller does her job at the Triangle Community Foundation.

"We had gotten so many requests,

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Growth pains

## Nonprofits expanding, facing challenges

Nonprofits represent the fastest-growing sector in the U.S., says a new study by Independent Sector.

By TODD COHEN

The nonprofit sector in the U.S. is expanding faster than business and government but faces big hurdles because of shifts in giving patterns and shrinking government support for social services, a new study says.

"The great challenge for communities, government and business will be to determine the role and responsibilities of governments and charitable organizations in order to provide necessary services to communities and the nation," says the *Nonprofit Almanac 1996-1997*.

The 326-page study is produced by Independent Sector, a Washington-based coalition of nonprofits, and published by Jossey-Bass Publishers in San Francisco. It documents national trends and statistics on wages, finances, employment and giving patterns in the nonprofit sector.

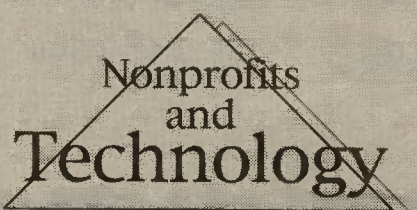
Depending on the source of specific data within the study, the most recent year for which data are available may vary. Among the findings:

- From 1977 to 1994, national

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