

Measuring cultural growth

17.1

In recent years, government agencies and the general public have devoted increasing attention to the cultural dimension of Canadian life. The introduction of Canadian content regulations for television and radio and a capital cost allowance for investors in Canadian feature films are two prime examples at the federal level of government action designed to stimulate Canadian creative expression.

As an example of growth over a 10-year period, Table 17.1 summarizes levels of support to the arts from 1969 to 1979 by the Canada Council. From this one funding agency, annual support for music and opera, for example, rose from \$2.9 million in 1969-70 to \$9.7 million in 1978-79, and for theatre from \$2.8 million to nearly \$8.9 million, after hitting a high of nearly \$9.5 million in 1977-78.

Many aspects of culture cannot be quantitatively measured, such as the quality of a painting, the talent of a performer, the subjective enjoyment of an audience member, or even a particular need of support. However, as an element in the national economy the contribution of cultural activities to the gross national product can be measured. The cultural sector is labour-intensive and generates thousands of jobs for Canadians. Thus it may be viewed in economic as well as social and artistic terms.

With the arrival of the 1980s, there are clear signs that culture is subject to changing forces. The merging of culture and communications that is part of the communications revolution seems likely to reshape many aspects of Canada's cultural life.

Cultural statistics program

17.1.1

During the 1970s Statistics Canada with the co-operation of the secretary of state department undertook the collection of data for a cultural statistics program. This was set up to provide a base of information for the use of policy makers, administrators, researchers and the general public. The program comprises 14 projects: book publishing, book distribution, newspapers and magazines, film, radio and television, performing arts, the sound recording industry, libraries, museums, other cultural facilities, artists, cultural and leisure activities of Canadians, arts education, and cultural expenditures.

As a result of surveys, studies and statistics collected on these subjects, a number of bulletins and publications have been issued. Analyses of existing statistics are conducted by the cultural analysis section of the education, science and culture division of Statistics Canada.

A survey of leisure activities was conducted in conjunction with the monthly labour force survey of Statistics Canada in February 1978. Results were published in the annual *Culture statistics, performing arts, 1978*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 87-610, from which the following information on the performing arts has been extracted.

The performing arts

17.1.2

Today's performing arts, including theatre, music, dance and opera, share the collective entertainment market mainly with movies and sporting events. The appearance of television in the 1950s and its rapid growth in popularity was first seen as formidable competition for the stage. There was some fear that the availability of TV entertainment at home would cut deeply into attendance at the performing arts. Not only could TV provide more convenient and cheaper entertainment than a play or music concert, but TV could also serve up more really new material than could ever be hoped for from the performing arts.

But in the last two decades, instead of a decline of interest there has been a general upsurge particularly in theatre. Music, dance and opera have been close behind. Only recently has growth in theatre attendance levelled off while attendance at classical music concerts soared by 30% between 1972 and 1978.