

Rhode Island Historical Society

PROVIDENCE, RI

THE STATS

OPERATIONAL SINCE 1822

EMPLOYEES: 33 FULL-TIME, 93 VOLUNTEERS

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$2.0 MILLION IN 2015

NUMBER OF PROFILES SUBMITTED: 7

What They Do

The Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS) is the United States' fourth oldest state historical society. It is a private, membership organization, founded in 1822. The RIHS owns and maintains the John Brown House Museum; the Aldrich House; and the Robinson Research Center. The organization also manages the Museum of Work and Culture, a regional history museum devoted to the history of northern Rhode Island. Additionally, the RIHS is the steward of four properties related to King Philip's War.

LEARN MORE AT CULTURALDATA.ORG



The Challenge

As is the case for many cultural nonprofits, many members of RIHS's Board were rich in for-profit business experience, but lacked deep knowledge of nonprofit finance and management. In 2011, having recently hired a new, and first time, Executive Director, and having successfully identified a new Board Treasurer/Finance Committee Chair, the leadership team needed to establish common ground and a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing this complex history institution.

How DataArts Helps

"DataArts reports were a lifesaver at a time when I needed to gain the trust and understanding of my new Finance Committee Chair. They provided a familiar language and business-friendly format for us to talk about the distinct issues facing our nonprofit organization. Once we were on the same page, the Finance Chair and I worked together using DataArts reports to help guide conversations, Finance Committee meeting and Board presentations," said Grefe. "The reports helped us use the language of finance to build a bridge between the world of business and the world of nonprofit museums. Thanks to DataArts, the working relationship with our Board became much more productive and informed. What's more, the data and reports enabled us to answer donors' questions in ways that built trust and confidence in our management and business practices."



"DataArts' reporting helped us use the language of finance to build a bridge between the world of business and the world of nonprofit museums."

C. Morgan Grefe
Executive Director

How Data Makes a Difference

Data analysis provides the backbone of RIHS's financial and operational planning. "I knew we had succeeded when there were no questions about our financial status or reports at the end of one of our Board meetings. For me, it was the first time a budget presentation ended with a round of applause!"

DataArts, in a Word

"Empowering. To our staff, our trustees, and our funders. Overall we have become more comfortable collecting data and planning for data collection and evaluation at the beginning of a project, rather than as an afterthought. The data we collect also tells us how we did with new or tried and true programs, and helps us determine when we need to refresh and retool."

About DataArts

DataArts is a nonprofit organization that empowers the arts and cultural sector with high-quality data and resources in order to strengthen its vitality, performance, and public impact. The Cultural Data Profile (CDP) is DataArts' flagship service, which thousands of cultural nonprofits use annually to report their financial and programmatic information. DataArts is a catalyst for data-informed decision-making that results in stronger management for arts and cultural organizations, better-informed philanthropy, and a rich information resource for advocates and researchers.

For more information, visit us at www.culturaldata.org.



Photos courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI.
Photo credit: Rhode Island Historical Society & Gage Prentiss.