

Town and Gown: Introducing Academics and Volunteer Management Practitioners to Each Other

Leaders of Volunteers	Academics Studying Volunteering & Related Topics	Mutual Issues/Needs
Have tremendous experiential knowledge but very little hard data to prove their instincts.	Improving but still prevalent low status of philanthropic, nonprofit subjects – with volunteering low on even that list. So little professional recognition for studying it.	Funding for better, but therefore more costly, studies.
Find that studies with limited scope are widely applied to any and all volunteering situations.	Volunteering too often narrowly defined as synonymous with the nonprofit or voluntary sector (or NGOs).	Lack of universally-accepted definitions of the word “volunteer” and all the activities it covers. Therefore questionable research results and data that can’t be compared.
Rarely read anything scholarly and often unaware it exists.	Never look at anything written solely for practitioners – either don’t know it exists or discount it out of hand as not grounded in statistics.	Opportunities for more cross-sector interaction: journals, conferences, local meetings.
Eyes glaze over when reading articles with statistics and convoluted academic language.	Insistence on writing in academic tone and jargon, with no concern for non-scholar readers.	Greater acceptance of other forms of documentation, beyond statistics. Seeking ways to publish <i>two</i> versions of studies for different audiences.
No access to researchers in the planning/doing stages and little after the data is published.	Resistance to anything that could be interpreted as a research “agenda.”	Again, more cross-sector contact, especially locally, connecting researchers as early as possible with program managers who can pose real-world questions...and provide larger, more varied cohorts of volunteers to study.
Don’t always see how to apply studies that could be useful.	Too often draw their own conclusions as to applicability of their research, without reality-checking with the field.	
Have questions about volunteer engagement but do not know how to articulate these in a way that would interest scholars (or don’t realize academics are looking).	Narrow and stereotyped understanding of the scope of volunteering. Leads to research that is focused on the most old-fashioned and changing roles and settings.	

Starter Set of Major Research-Centered Organizations and Publications

☆ **Institute for Volunteering Research**

<http://www.ivr.org.uk>

Internationally-recognized, London-based leader in research truly focused on volunteer-related subjects, not just the nonprofit sector. See especially the Research Bulletins and other free materials on their Web site.

☆ **ARNOVA (Association for Research in Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action)**

<http://www.arnova.org/>

An international membership organization dedicated to fostering through research an understanding of the nonprofit sector, philanthropy and volunteerism. They hold an annual conference and publish a journal, **Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly**. See their links to research and academic centers at <http://www.arnova.org/?section=partners>. They also have a free and active online discussion group (listserv):

ARNOVA-L

- 1) Send a message to LISTSERV@LISTSERV.IUPUI.EDU
- 2) On the first line of the message type only: SUBSCRIBE ARNOVA-L Firstname Lastname

☆ **International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR)**

<http://www.istr.org>

An international association promoting research and education in the fields of civil society, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector. Publish the journal **Voluntas** and also have a listserv. See their calendar of research-related conferences *worldwide* at

<http://www.istr.org/calendar.htm>

☆ For links to where to find **statistics on volunteering around the world**, go to the "Research on Volunteering" section of the Energize Resource Library at

<http://www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/research.html>.

Corporation for National and Community Service Research and Policy Reports

http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/performance_research.asp

Various reports and studies on volunteering in the US, especially on youth service and AmeriCorps.

Nonprofit Library Commons from Imagine Canada

<http://nonprofitscan.imaginecanada.ca/en/home>

Site with research findings and reports on the voluntary sector in Canada, with many items on volunteering.

International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing

<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-NVSM.html>

Features the latest academic research taking place in the realm of nonprofit marketing: including fundraising and volunteer recruitment and management