University of Oregon

Arts and Administration Program

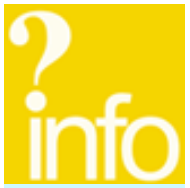
Search

AAD Home
Undergraduate Program
- Undergraduate Program
- Undergraduate Minor
- Distance Education
- Festival & Event Management Certificate

Graduate Program
- Graduate Program
- Programs Overview
- Letter from the Director
- Admission
- Areas of Concentration
- Application Materials
- Capstone
- Careers
- Master's Abstracts
- Certificate Programs
- Core Courses
- Course Offerings
- Graduate Student ePortfolios
- Internship
- Master's Capstone, Project and Thesis List
- Project
- Requirements
- School of Music Ph.D.
- Student Forum
- Technology
- Thesis

ICAS
- Institute for Community Arts Studies
- History of ICAS
- Lecture Archive
- Imagining the Future of ICAS

Research & Publications
- Research and Publication



Home > CultureWork > Current Issue

Current Issue

Current Issue Includes:

August 2006. Vol. 10, No. 3.

Boomers, XY's and the Making of a Generational Shift in Arts Management **Victoria J. Saunders**

Canaries in the Coal Mine: Art, Freedom, and Community (Eugene City Club, June 2, 2006) **John Frohnmayer**

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- Occasional Paper Series
- Faculty Research and Publications
- Doug Blandy
- Gaylene Carpenter

CultureWork

- CultureWork
- So, What's A Broadside?
- Current Issue
- Previous Issues

News

- News
- Events Calendar

Faculty Overview

- Faculty Overview
- Doug Blandy
- Gaylene Carpenter
- Rogena M. Degge
- Kassia Dellabough
- Patricia Dewey
- Lori Hager
- Janice Rutherford
- Eric Schiff
- Courtesy/Adjunct
- Emeriti
- Participating

Internships

- Internships
- For Students
- For Intern Supervisors
- Work Learning Goals
- Arts and Administration Program Internship Locations, 2004-2006

Helpful Links

- Helpful Links
- College Resources
- Management Links
- Arts Updates
- Local Art Organizations
- Careers
- Give A Gift to AAD

Special Events

- Special Events
- Ten Year Anniversary
- Ten Year Anniversary - Founders Panel

STPA Conference

- Social Theory, Politics and the Arts
- STPA Photo Gallery
- Conference Program, Schedule & Guide
- Travel Information
- Accommodations
- Registration Fees and Procedures
- Helpful Links
- 2006 Conferences
- Contact Us

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- CultureWork Home -

-Previous Issues-
-So, what's a broadside?-

-Previous Article: Canaries in the Coal Mine: Art, Freedom, and Community -

Boomers, XY's and the Making of a Generational Shift in Arts Management (1)

Victoria J. Saunders

In 1999, Americans for the Arts (AFTA), a national arts advocacy and service organization, created a peer group called the Emerging Leaders Council as an advisory body to assist in the advancement of programs and services that promote the growth and development of emerging arts professionals nationwide (Americans for the Arts, 1999). What AFTA addressed with these efforts is the recognition that:

> 1) Between 50 and 85 percent of non-profit executives plan to retire in the next five years;
>
> 2) The current generation of young professionals who are between the ages of 20 and 35 are preparing to take the helm of arts and culture organizations in communities across America; and
>
> 3) There is a need to nurture and develop these young professionals into strong successful leaders if we are to continue building on the foundation that the previous generation has established for the field of arts and culture administration.

While the itemized list above could be simply described as a standard set of current environmental conditions for the non profit arts administration field, they have become the topics of more impassioned discussions at conferences, professional gatherings and in web

blogs around the country. Like the conflicts between young people and their authority figures that were made famous in the generation gap of the late 60's and early 70's, we are beginning to experience similar tensions between those emerging non-profit arts leaders who are entering the field and those who are soon to be retiring but who are still managing and directing. Of broader concern is whether or not both age groups will be able to work together to encourage and affect a rich and rewarding transfer of arts leadership from one generation to the next. To do so will enable the field as a whole to emerge stronger and more resilient in the long run.

This article is the first of two that will examine the generational shifts occurring in arts management leadership and the implications for the field as a whole as we begin the transition from Baby Boomers to Echo Boomers (children of Baby Boomers more commonly referred to as Gen X and Gen Y). In this article we will define the differences between the lifestyles and work habits of these generations and how those differences will play a pivotal role in the successful transition of leadership from one generation to the next.

Defining Generations

While generational transitions in leadership are not unusual, they are more pronounced today due to the size of the outgoing Baby Boom population and the changes in technology and lifestyle that affect the incoming Echo Boom demographic. The following is a brief and select summary of the characteristics and issues that each generation brings to the table:

Baby Boom Generation and the Emergence of Professional Arts Administrators

The Baby Boom took place between 1946 and 1964. Baby Boomers represent 30% of the population in 2006 and a workforce of 75 million strong. Between 1980 and 2000, the pool of prime executive age men and women (ages 34 to 54) swelled to 35 million (Tierney, 2006). This year, the first "Boomers" are reaching a retirement age of 60. This generation is marked by its workaholic tendencies and the need to define its success by its productivity. Boomers pushed the trend towards 65 hour work weeks and take pride in their ability to "multitask", a term they developed to describe both a computer's and human being's ability to simultaneously perform two or more tasks at once. Ideals that fueled social consciousness and creativity also led to the creation of the field of arts administration as we know it today—from grassroots community arts movements to the emergence of non profit arts organizations, state and local arts agencies, and the National Endowment for the Arts. John Kreidler (1996), Executive Director of Cultural Initiative Silicon Valley and the author of *Leverage Lost: The Non profit Arts in the Post-Ford Era* stated:

> …by far the most significant factor in …[the non profit arts] movement's origin was the sudden arrival, in the 1960s, of a huge generation of … artists, technicians and administrators, driven not by funding or economic gain, but rather by their own desire to produce art….This training and desire resulted from several broad influences that coincided at roughly the same moment: significant shifts in societal values, a peak in economic prosperity, the arrival of the massive baby-boom generation on American college campuses, the momentary ascendancy of liberal arts education, and a high water mark in leisure time.

Given the newness of the field, there were no classes or university degrees in arts management for early arts administrators; much of the professional field was created on the fly. Those who were establishing the field were in their 20's and 30's and had left other careers to embark on this new journey we call arts management. Today Boomer arts administrators, now in their 50's and early 60's, are proud of their contributions to the field and have found it hard to relinquish the reigns for reasons that range from economic necessity to a love of their work. Goldbard (2006) explained this difficulty letting go in the following terms:

> Almost without exception, [Baby Boomers] persisted because they started those organizations and nurtured them through innumerable permutations of power-sharing, so that to contemplate leaving them (as they eventually must) is pretty much on a par with abandoning their children.

Now entering retirement age, Boomer administrators are finding themselves hovering between holding on and letting go of their current leadership positions in a field they largely established. The next generation is markedly different from theirs, however, and they are apprehensive about handing over the reins. For the past six years arts consultant Bill Moskin has been exploring ways to nurture the next generation of arts leaders through a project funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. In a recent interview, Moskin (2006) noted that the older generation is concerned that when they leave, the vast knowledge of the field and its history will be lost. Established leaders are also concerned that the current academic programs in arts administration are geared more towards developing expertise in matters such as grant writing and fund accounting while ignoring the "soft skills" of leadership like community and political organizing, making presentations to elected officials and arts advocacy. Established leaders are looking at today's young leaders in terms of their own leadership style rather than in terms of what makes the newer generation, with its distinctive characteristics and perspective, equally as capable. While they acknowledge the next generation's viability, they are not sure how to work with it to move the field forward after they retire.

Echo Boomers: Generations X and Y

Generation X (Gen X) identifies those who were born between 1961 and 1981; today they are between the ages of 25 and 45. Closely tied to Gen X are those born between 1977 and 2003 who are identified as Generation Y (Gen Y). The first Gen Ys are turning 29 years old this year; the same age at which many Boomers began leading local arts organizations in the late 60's and 70's. Generations X and Y (XYs) more frequently experienced the absence of parental involvement due to divorce and increased work demands. The first "latch key kids" have learned to become self-reliant adults. Yet they also experienced new child-rearing styles that led to an entitlement to high self esteem and parents becoming both friends and authority figures. Thus, today's young leaders yearn for greater recognition from as well as a more equal relationship with their bosses than their predecessors.

More workplace differences rise because XYs are not willing to follow the Boomer's workaholic style, have a stronger need for work/life balance and are highly influenced by quality of life concerns (Green, 2006). This has created tension in the workplace as XYs choose to spend comparatively less time in the office and more time in other artistic or personal pursuits than their predecessors while still wanting to maintain financial stability and gain recognition for their leadership in the field. While seemingly contradictory to Boomers, it is nonetheless a real need that characterizes the XY generation. This point has been brought out in several AFTA Emerging Leaders listserv threads as well as in a recent focus group of young arts administrators held in San Diego. The focus group was convened to get a first hand account of these concerns from the Emerging Leaders of Arts and Culture San Diego, a group of 20-35 year old arts administrators in San Diego's arts and culture community.

A major difference for XY's that has been brought out in listserv threads and the focus group dialogue is the frustration that XY's have with the dissimilarity in technological experience between the Boomers and the younger generations. The computer age begun by the Boomers has been capitalized on by XYs—who grew up with home computers, video games, and the internet. Thus, XY's are the first to completely incorporate computers and technology into their everyday lives. They know more about how to use technology than their supervisors and are often frustrated by the amount of time they spend helping older staff members navigate their computer systems. Many feel that they have expertise that is frequently called upon by their bosses and that they provide a significant contribution to the organization's productivity and yet, they do not receive the recognition for their expertise or their contribution.

Another difference with the XY's is that larger numbers of young arts leaders are entering the field with undergraduate and/or graduate degrees in arts administration and with far more academic training in the field than their predecessors. This creates friction as young professionals emerge with sound educational qualifications but none of the extensive practical-on-the-job experience held by the older leadership. Boomer heavy boards of directors, charged with hiring successors to retiring leaders, are uncertain of the leadership

abilities of these less experienced up and comers and are less likely to hire them for upper level positions. Young arts administrators in the San Diego focus group noted an age-defined "glass ceiling" hanging over their ability to move up the institutional ladder, especially in larger and more well-established organizations. Further complicating matters, is the notion that the non profit field is losing ground as a viable employment option as young leaders begin demanding higher pay. Laden with the high cost of their college education, today's young leaders are not as eager as their predecessors to forego financial stability or competitive wages for the "desire to produce art". Thus, they are more likely to look beyond the non profit arena in search of employment in the creative industry's private sector. As such, it raises a concern about the potential loss of future leadership as young arts professionals may opt out of the non profit realm. And finally, while some are ready to move on and others are just waiting for the Boomers to step aside, still others are unsure of their professional expertise and leadership acumen and are interested in mentoring opportunities with established executives to learn from their experience and build their skills as leaders.

Next Steps

A Generation Gap clearly exists in the non profit arts sector. Armed with our ability to utilize the information we have about the qualities and characteristics of each generation, we can move forward, celebrating the experience and skills of the outgoing leadership while capitalizing on the vibrant energy and fresh ideas of the incoming generation. Moskin (2006) noted that the shift in leadership and its implications has held sway in issue-oriented theoretical discussion in private conversations as well as in public roundtables, blogs (Hessenius, 2005 and 2006) and professional circles. However, Moskin also offered that there has not been any overall movement towards bringing the generations together in a concerted way. As such, it is important to create an environment where established and emerging arts administrators can begin to explore how they might be able to learn from one another, share with one another, and work together despite their differences. In this way, they will shape the future for arts management and the sustainability of arts and culture programs and services for future generations of patrons and audiences.

The arts and culture field values collaboration, diversity, and inclusion. The profession goes to great lengths to ensure that these values are transmitted and expressed through our artistic processes, grantmaking, and board and staff development efforts. We pontificate on diversity at convenings, publish articles on collaboration in journals, and encourage discussion about inclusivity in college classrooms. It is now time to put our best understanding of these concepts into practice. This generational shift in leadership and all its implications is the perfect opportunity for arts leaders to embrace cross-generational collaboration, age diversity, and professional inclusivity with our own colleagues as we enter into a process that will help move the field through a difficult transition. This can be done with the collective goal of creating a future that ensures that the arts remain a

relevant force in the American experience. The next article will examine ways in which this leadership transition might take place.

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1. This is the first of a two part series. Part two will focus on select ways in which arts institutions and community arts groups may address leadership transitions. This article will be published in the Fall 2006 issue of *CultureWork*.

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Victoria J. Saunders is an arts management consultant in San Diego. In October 2004, while a staff person at the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, Saunders launched the first professional and leadership development program for young arts administrators, Emerging Leaders of Arts and Culture San Diego. She continues to work with this group while researching the issues of leadership and professional transition in the non profit arts and culture sector. Saunders received her MA in Arts Education, Community Cultural Services from the University of Oregon in 1991.

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- CultureWork Home -

-Previous Issues-
-So, what's a broadside?-

-Previous Article: Boomers, XY's and the Making of a Generational Shift in Arts Management-

Why talk to an arts audience about the constitutional vandalism of President Bush's signing statements? Because the arts tell the truth to power when Congress has failed and the Courts are silent. The arts have power, majesty and authenticity to speak about the issues that concern us most, and the erosion of our constitutional government is at the top of the list. — John Frohnmayer, August 2006

This past June, when we had barely wrapped up the May issue of *CultureWork*, were in the midst of grading finals, and were planning for our second child due in late August, Doug Blandy (*CultureWork*'s Advisor) approached us about a speech given at the City Club of Eugene. Doug was excited about the speech and its connection to the journal's mission to "provide timely workplace-oriented information on culture, the arts, education, policy, and community." In the haze of wrapping up the spring term we said yes and wondered what was being said about the arts locally at the City Club.

A little geographical background here: Eugene is a mid-sized city (estimated population is around 185,000), and overall, news travels fast, especially among the university community. Still, the breadth of arts and cultural activity in Eugene does not allow one to concentrate on all the possible experiences available. So, we were a bit confused about this speech, that we had not read yet, and its real applicability to *CultureWork*.

Slowly we worked our way around to reading the speech, *Canaries in the Coal Mine: Art, Freedom, and Community*, by John Frohnmayer, former NEA chair, and we were struck

by the message. The speech is a powerful reminder of the importance of the arts and the roles artists play within the formation of history. History is a strange animal in that it is dynamic, but at the same time static (the 'more things change the more they stay the same'). Frohnmayer's message is a concise and commanding reinforcement of what many of us in the arts administration field have recently been feeling. But the power of the speech goes beyond a simple reinforcement of one's opinion. It serves as a reminder of the importance of the arts and artists in giving voice to historical views that might be overlooked or suppressed. As activist and historian Howard Zinn argued, "that's what art does — it takes something that is not quite true, it is invented, but it makes you think about reality in a way that a simple non-fiction account could not possibly match."(1) Zinn and Frohnmayer remind us, arts administrators and artists, that we are not only the caretakers and creators of "pretty" things, but of history itself.

The dynamics of history has moved us forward in our personal life with the recent birth of our daughter, Elise. That spring term haze has been cleared and any static aspect of our lives during that time has become vibrant again.

John Frohnmayer has graciously allowed us to reprint his speech in its entirely. Our hope is that it might help you to clear whatever haze is keeping your lives and artistic pursuits stationary.

—Julie and Robert Voelker-Morris

1. Burton, S. (2003). Duty of expression: Thom Yorke and Howard Zinn debate the artist's role in making the world a better place. *Resonance, 39*. Retrieved August 30, 2006, from http://www.resonancemag.com/index2.html

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Canaries in the Coal Mine: Art, Freedom, and Community

John Frohnmayer

Eugene City Club, June 2, 2006 (1)

Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

By that standard we all should be dead.

Forgive me if this talk is both a celebration and a diatribe: a celebration because of the

lifetime of extraordinary works of Mark Clarke and Peg Coe and a decade plus of brilliance by the Lord Leebrick Theatre (2), and a diatribe because we have little time to save ourselves from political annihilation. While my language may be apocalyptic, the crisis in American nerve, American justice, American law, and American ideals is real and getting, by the day, worse.

I have re-read the Constitution: a document I revere for its wisdom and complex simplicity. (Although I would say, in relation to the prohibition it contains against granting titles of nobility, that I have some questions about this Lord Leebrick outfit.) It (the Constitution, not this Lord Leebrick fellow) vests all legislative powers in Congress. (Art. I § 1)

It says every bill passed by Congress, before it becomes a law, shall, ". . . be presented to the President . . . . If he approves he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it with his Objections to that house in which it shall have originated. . . . ." (Art. I § 7)

The executive power is vested in a President. (Art. II § 1) The President, before assuming office, shall take this oath: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of The President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." (Art. II § 1)

At this point you may be wondering if the teleprompter has the wrong speech, but stay with me for a moment. On 750 occasions, so far, President Bush has been presented with a bill passed by Congress. No bill has he vetoed – not one. Instead he has issued, with little publicity, "signing statements" in which he directs the executive department either not to enforce these bills, or to enforce them in accordance with his interpretation (constitutionally, the province of the Supreme and other Federal Courts).

In short, our Constitution's separation of powers into three branches – our vaunted checks and balances – has been compressed into a single person – President Bush. He has usurped unto himself the legislative and judicial functions and, not withstanding the oath I just read, has chosen to enforce such laws as he sees fit in the way he sees fit. For example, on March 9, 2006, he signed the renewal of the USA Patriot Act. Here is an excerpt from his signing statement:

> The executive branch shall construe the provisions . . . that call for furnishing information to entities outside the executive branch . . . [and will] withhold information . . . which could impair the deliberative process of the executive . . . . (March 9, 2006 weekly compilation of Presidential documents, pp 425-426.)

In other words, Congress cannot expect the reports of FBI activities that the law requires.

Not only will President Bush not enforce the law, he has told Congress to pound sand.

Moreover, he sees no need to justify to us – the citizens who own the government – why this departure from law and precedent is necessary, is justified, or is wise. The few and the puny cries of dismay have been greeted with the litany of 9/11, that dissent is disloyal, that we are at war (albeit not a declared war in the constitutional sense) and that we are in peril and should be afraid.

And maybe we are. How else can we explain the utter lack of scrutiny – let alone public outrage – at this constitutional vandalism? How else can we explain that the press – our guardian of liberty – our source of information vital to democracy – has been AWOL?

What I fear most is not the next – or even the inevitable terrorist attack. I will fight. I will make sacrifices – I will defend freedom with strength and resolve. What I fear is the epitaph that says: The Revolution came in plain sight and we were too busy, too preoccupied, too selfish to notice. And so the ideals, the moral leadership, and the rule of law that have made us both proud and admired as a country will be gone. Democracy surrendered. And then 9/11 would be not just a national tragedy but a national disgrace — a lever used to pry the heart out of America.

The Cato Institute – hardly a bastion of liberal love-speak, said it best: "[under Bush's] sweeping theory of executive power, the liberty of every American rests on nothing more than the grace of the White House."

What does this have to do with art? Absolutely everything. When politicians don't speak truth to power, artists can and do. I have three examples:

The first comes from President Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy (p. 5) in which he proclaims that America's "clear responsibility to history" is to "rid the world of evil." Well, that's a tall order. Let's start with Federalist 10 in which Madison says a republican form of government is necessary because humans are factious and the majority will trample the minority unless a single representative has to juggle the interests of many different factions.

Reinhold Niebuhr, the towering 20th century Theologian in his systematic theology *The Nature and Destiny of Man* describes us as both children of God and sinners; every person carries both the ability to do good, and the inevitability that he will do evil (otherwise, why Christ's sacrifice?)

Rid the world of evil? Shakespeare knew better. Lear destroys his family, his kingdom and his life over jealousy and megalomania. Shakespeare's Richard III explores the misuse of power and the nature of evil. Moliere's Tartuffe is about a man who pretends piety and

generosity while trying to bed his host's wife and rip off the family. Evil is part of human nature. Artists know it and the President should, too.

Second example: The consequences of the misuse of power. A common description of the difference between a comedy and a tragedy is that the main character in a tragedy has power and in a comedy does not. Baron Lord Acton tells us that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. So in The Crucible Arthur Miller's subject was the Salem witch trials, but it was written and produced during the McCarthy era. The witch hunts, abuses of power, fits and foibles of human nature are true for all history.

Similarly, Ibsen in An Enemy of the People recounts one man's struggle against official corruption and the will of the people (here, it's a health issue – unclean water in the spa.) And, for his efforts? He is destroyed.

Third example: truth telling. Machiavelli in The Prince says that "ordinary people will always be taken by appearances." But political speak today – from both parties – is so devoid of soul, so full of spin, so riddled with half truths, omissions and misrepresentations that we have come to expect to be lied to. In this context Shakespeare was both cynical and acerbic: "Every man has his fault and honesty is his." Timon of Athens.

The poet e.e. cummings put it this way:

> nothing measurable can be alive,
> nothing that isn't alive can be art,
> nothing that isn't art can be true,
> and anything that isn't true
> doesn't amount to a very good goddamn.

In a recent speech in Corvallis, [Oregon], David Broder of the *Washington Post* said that not only do we not trust our politicians – we don't trust each other. Some of you may have seen the bumper sticker: "Horn broken, watch for finger." And that is where the arts, in addition to telling the truth to power, and unmasking the hypocrisy and vacuity of politics, play a vital role. The arts (and here I mean all of us who are engaged in any way in making, appreciating, promoting and enjoying the arts) can help our society to reestablish the connections between us as flawed but vital human beings.

Trust and trestle come from the same Latin root word. Trust is a bridge built with commonality. What is true about good art, enduring art, profound art is that it is true now, will be true tomorrow and was true yesterday. Art has a different way of keeping score than does politics, because art knows, in the words of Albert Einstein, that, "not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

Art gives us both the permission and the vehicle for political rebellion. Art gives us the vision to recognize human glories and foibles and to deal honestly with them. And art tells us that we are all in this together and we had best stop the partisan bickering and, in the best theatrical sense, get our act together as a society.

We have allowed purloined Presidential power to fill a political vacuum of inattention and paralyzing caution. We have presumed rather than achieved greatness; we have made few sacrifices as a people, while expecting the ultimate sacrifice from our soldiers. We know, if we listen to our playwrights, our poets, our singers that no hero will come to save us because political salvation is by dedication and sweat and honest compromise.

So I leave you with the words of the American poet Sam Hazo:

> I wish you what I wish myself:
> Hard questions and the nights to answer them
> And grace of disappointment
> And the right to seem the fool for justice. That's enough.
> Cowards might ask for more
> Heroes have died for less.

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1. This speech was delivered to the Eugene City Club on June 2, 2006 at the annual Arts Awards meeting. Honored for their lifetime of painting, teaching and support of the arts were Peg Coe and Mark Clarke and for a dozen brilliant seasons of theatre, the Lord Leebrick Theatre Company.

2. http://www.lordleebrick.com/index.htm. Lord Leebrick has established a reputation for high artistic quality and a commitment to presenting challenging and diverse scripts. The company is an NEA Grant recipient and a member of Theatre Communications Group, the nationally recognized organization of American not-for-profit theatres.

Lawyer, author, ethicist John Frohnmayer's views on the First Amendment first captured national attention when he served as chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. He was appointed by President George Bush and served from 1989 until 1992 during the highly visible controversy over NEA funding of art considered by some to be obscene. He published the story of his Washington sojourn in *Leaving Town Alive: Confessions of an Arts Warrior* (Houghton Mifflin) in 1993. His second book, *Out of Tune: Listening to the First Amendment* (North American Press) August 1995, is described as a "primer in

citizenship" and a "refresher course in the First Amendment for anyone who has a stake in democracy." *Out of Tune* explores the tension between freedom and order in a collection of essays and exercises to stimulate discussion of issues of public importance.

Frohnmayer graduated in 1964 from Stanford University with a B.A. in American history. He studied at the Union Theological Seminary in New York as a Rockefeller Fellow prior to taking his masters in Christian ethics from the University of Chicago. Following service as an officer in the United States Navy from 1966 to 1969, including a tour in Vietnam, Frohnmayer studied law at the University of Oregon. He was editor-in-chief of the Oregon Law Review and was elected to the Order of the Coif upon his graduation in 1972.

As a litigator in firms in Eugene and Portland, Oregon, Frohnmayer's clients included newspapers, a television station, and an International Sculpture Symposium. His experience with government funding of the arts began in 1977 when Oregon's governor appointed him to the Oregon Arts commission. He served on the Commission eight years, four as chair.

The People for the American Way honored Frohnmayer with its first National First Amendment Award in 1992, the Governor of Oregon recognized him for excellence in public service with the Governor's Arts Award in 1993, and the Montana Library Association awarded him its Intellectual Freedom Award in 1997.

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