

## **Creating a Community Resource Network (CRN): Why build the same thing twice?**

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Even before the *Seattle Theatre: What's Next* meeting on 8/1/2011, it was apparent that the Seattle theatre community needs a unified database of resources that can be shared between those that currently have sharable production materials and those that need those materials. This document will lay out a plan of action for creating a dynamic, searchable database of available resources, as well as contact information and terms of use, with a focus on brainstorming methods to network between the haves and the needs. It is my hope that this document will be a representation of the values and challenges we face in creating such a database and a plan of action for creating and maintaining a resource database.

### **I. Identifying the need for a Community Resource Network**

**Value:** As a community, we value diverse artistic expression ranging from one man original productions on a shoestring budget to a large budget park show with 20+ actors. Diversity is the lifeblood of our community and it is invaluable that each production have easy access to the materials they need.

**Challenge:** The community faces a fiscal and physical environment with a fundamental lack of performance, rehearsal and shop space as well as limited communication between organizations. TPS, as it is currently used, exists to connect artists to organizations (as demonstrated by its comprehensive audition database) but could also be utilized to increase communication and cooperation between organizations.

**Opportunity:** Let's lay the foundation of greater communication and cooperation between organizations of all sizes (laterally and vertically), fostering artistic growth through shared resources at all levels of production.

**Project:** Using input developed by community discussion about have and need, create a dynamic and searchable database hosted on TPS Online. The Database could include: Information about rental spaces; Prop and Costume Stock; Lighting / Sound equipment available to borrow or rent; Information on where to get deals on supplies (friends in high places); etc. Database could expand to include equipment for sale.

### **II. Initial Steps to create Database**

This is a project that requires a large amount of time at the front end. Since the primary element making this project successful will be the inclusion of a wide variety of organizational resource lists, attaining as much community involvement as possible is paramount to creating a successful database. Additionally, given the detail and time required from organizations, individual connection across the community is important. This calls for meetings and email correspondence with space managers, managing directors, etc. I propose that the following actions are taken to ensure full community involvement:

- 1) Brainstorming: How would your organization use this database either as a provider or borrower? Please email me with thoughts!
- 2) Self identification: Any organization or individual who reads this document and wishes to contribute their resource information, space rental fees, etc. should contact this committee

- 3) Larger Organizational outreach: Utilizing current connections, I would like reach out to those organizations that have been established the longest and have the most resources, requesting their lists of inventory available to borrow. It would be beneficial to expand the committee working on this task to ensure community buy-in.
- 4) Database Design: On August 15th, Shane Reagan of TPS and I will be meeting to discuss the process of building this database, what information needs to be included, how it fits on the TPS website, creating a standardized format for information provided by self identified organizations. We will be focused on how we want the database to work rather than how to build it, by reviewing the needs requested by the community at large.
- 5) Procurement and Formatting: After initial delivery of resource lists, it would be important to review the information as received and prepare a standardized format for each list. .

### **III. Implementation of database**

After compiling a comprehensive resource list, the committee will ensure that a database is created and will be community maintained. This should be an easy to update system, controlled effectively through TPS member logins. The database should specifically include and be sortable by (but would not be limited to):

- Organization Name/Contact individual
- Resource type (lights, sound, paint, set, space, costume, props, etc.)
- Generic object type (par can, speakers, spray paint, platform, Black Box, hat, wine glass, etc.)
- Specific object type (Par64, Flyable Fender, Krylon, 4x8 with legs, 45 seat house, Jester's cap, 1800's goblet, etc.)
- Any additional description such as color, size, wattage, etc.
- Whether object can be modified by borrower/renter
- Additional Terms of rental/borrowing
- Current availability of resource
- Other brainstormed sortables

This level of information from individuals/organizations willing to lend their resources would require a willingness to commit to keeping the database up to date, especially with current availability and the addition of new resources.

Using the initially provided resource lists, a format will be built that will be easy to follow for other community members wishing to upload their list of resources. Many organizations will come into this project with a specific, internal organization system, and part of the goal of this database is to create and establish a standard language between the organizations. Therefore, by utilizing organizational systems that have worked for decades, members of the community can utilize the tried and tested system considered and presented by the database. Requesting that information be presented for upload to the database in a specific formatting, will help to create that standard language, as well as relieving the burden on the database administrators tasked with ensuring usability and consistency.

### **IV. A vision of the Future**

After a successful five years of production, Generic Theatre Company in Seattle has decided to rent and manage their own space. They have been a high end user of the CRN (Community Resource Network) and have been able to stage 9 original productions, renting rehearsal space from companies such as TPS,

Freehold and Velocity, and staging four week long runs at both Annex Theatre and Central Heating Lab. Over 75% of the props that they used during that time came from organizations in the community such as Seattle Children's Theatre, Macha Monkey and Seattle Shakespeare. When considering the option of how they could afford to rent and manage a space full time, they found that The Seattle Rep was purchasing new stage blacks and would be giving their old ones away at a steal and they pieced together a light board and a series of gently used lighting instruments from an Anonymous theatrical benefactor and the Fifth Avenue. Finally, in need for some seats and posting in the newly instated needs portion of the database, they were able to use the seating units once in the Columbia City Movie Theatre. After taking up residency in their new Capitol Hill Digs, Generic Theatre Company looks at its collection of chicken heads, wigs, platforms and extra microphones and begins to update their own expanded resource list, and immediately lists their own rental costs for companies wanting to rent the space they manage.

## **V. Brainstorms**

**This should be a community document, so any ideas, thoughts, concerns, etc. emailed to me will be added below.**

Addendum questions:

- 1) Should whoever maintains the database be involved in policing the return of / proper care of items obtained through the database?
- 2) Will this project need a permanent volunteer admin to ensure lists are current, and can this be done on a monthly or quarterly basis?
- 3) A perfect database would be one that includes the status of resources (whether it is in use or loaned out), is this something that we plan for in the initial creation of the DB? Can it be designed for self reporting and automatic upload of resource status?

-Rob 8/5