 Studies and Reports  
from the  
Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project

A. Towards an Information Infrastructure for the Nonprofit and Voluntary Domain


In Preparation


15. Designing a National Survey of Nonprofit Organizations, by Paul Reed.

B. Understanding the Social Dynamics of Volunteering, Giving and Participating and the People Who Do Them


38. The Impact of Tax Incentives on Charitable Giving: A Social Analysis, by Paul Reed. Paper presented at the Fourth Annual National Forum of the Public Policy and Third Sector Initiative, School of Policy Studies, Queen’s University, October 2003.


Studies in Preparation

57. Education & Income as Correlates of Contributory Behaviours, by Paul Reed and Kevin Selbee.


59. A Comparative Study of Contributory Behaviours in Canada and Australia, by Paul Reed, Mark Lyons, and Kevin Selbee.

60. What Can They Be Thinking? Social Reasoning and Contributory Behaviour — A Quantitative Analysis, by Paul Reed and Kevin Selbee.

61. The Links Between Types of Voluntary Organizations and Their Volunteers and Donors, by Paul Reed and Kevin Selbee.


63. How Large is the Voluntary Sector, Really?, by Paul Reed.

64. Social Embeddedness and Contributory Behaviours, by Paul Reed and Kevin Selbee.

65. On the Social Epidemiology of Contributory Behaviours, by Paul Reed and Kevin Selbee.

66. Developing a New Model for Measuring the Real Value of Volunteering, by Linda Graff and Paul Reed.

67. Civic and Social Engagement in Canada: How Much and By Whom?, by Paul Reed and Kevin Selbee.
The Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project

Origins and Objectives

It was in the mid 1990s that a number of governments across the country, as they made major reductions in their spending on social programs, suggested that the impact of those cuts might be offset if some of the human services previously available through programs could be provided by organizations in the voluntary sector. There was an element of idealism in this that was appealing, but it required reliable information about the actual ability of the sector’s organizations and volunteers to accept a significant increase in their workload. It was also a time of widespread turbulence in the voluntary sector as charitable organizations everywhere struggled to cope with rising social need, increasing difficulty in procuring resources, and an uncertain environment of changing priorities and policies. To navigate that turbulence, the sector sought strategic information about itself and its activities.

The search for information revealed a remarkable paucity of data, information development, and research on the voluntary sector. Awareness slowly emerged that development of many kinds of information — about the size and characteristics of the population of volunteers, the distribution of their activities, the charitable organizations through which their efforts were channelled, the financial and other resources of the sector — was imperative.

In response, a multi-year initiative for sustained, focused effort to build a corpus of empirical knowledge about the voluntary sector and the contributory behaviour of Canadians was proposed. Beyond a core set of analytical probes, this initiative included inventorying existing data resources and generating new data via surveys and case studies. The objectives were, broadly, to clarify what we know and what questions we cannot answer about the voluntary sector, to strengthen conceptual structures that would help advance our understanding of the voluntary domain, and to develop a vision for long-term information development.