

# StanfordSOCIAL INNOVATION<sup>REVIEW</sup>

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## ***10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Essays*** **Celebrating Ten Years**

By Walter W. Powell, Rob Reich, & Paul Brest

Stanford Social Innovation Review  
Spring 2013

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# CELEBRATING TEN YEARS

BY WALTER W. POWELL, ROB REICH, & PAUL BREST

**C**elebrating the 10th anniversary of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR) provides an appropriate occasion to reflect on the state of the field and the role that the publication plays in it.

By comparison to medicine or teaching, civil society, the nonprofit sector, and philanthropy—we'll lump them together for present purposes—have constituted a weak field. The field has lacked cross-cutting standards of practice, assessment, and accountability. The activities and outcomes of nonprofit organizations and foundations are opaque and not readily susceptible to observation. Professional organizations have found it challenging to provide deep support to their broad diversity of constituents and interests. And notwithstanding the well-respected activities of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), the sector has not attracted anywhere near the amount and quality of academic research that its role in society and global affairs would justify. Though hyperbolic, it gets the point across to say that in the United States this has been a field mainly organized around a provision of the tax code, section 501(c)(3).

Although the field has developed considerably over the past decade or so, it still has far to go. Among the necessary components of a field are vehicles for gathering and disseminating knowledge for the benefit of its practitioners, theorists, and empirical researchers. Not so long ago, prospective donors who wanted to learn more about a nonprofit organization had little more than a self-serving glossy annual report or a pretty website to rely on. Now we have Guidestar, GiveWell, Philanthropedia, the Center for High Impact Philanthropy, Charity Navigator 3.0, and a host of other entities dedicated to providing information about nonprofit organizations and foundations.

Similarly, not so long ago, if a scholar or policy wonk wished to read up on the sector, there was little more than ARNOVA's journal, the *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, and the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, a newspaper that highlights nonprofits' work and fundraising results and publishes the sector's classified employment ads. With the entry of SSIR and other magazines like *Nonprofit Quarterly*, *Alliance*, *Foundation Review*, and a host of blogs and new online media, this has begun to change. Each of these publications plays an important role in strengthening the field and linking its participants together.

SSIR is part of the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS). Its title reflects the conviction that social innovation spans all sectors—nonprofit, business, and government. The magazine's forward-looking spirit also reflects its home in Silicon Valley, an incubator of social enterprises as well as high-tech start-ups. We acquired the journal several years ago from its founders at the Stanford Graduate School of Business because we



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were convinced that the field needed a unifying publication committed to the best contemporary writing.

SSIR's editors continue to have a catholic view of the journal's mission, which, to quote the title of a recent article, recognizes that "innovation is not the holy grail," but just one means to the end of improving society. SSIR is neither a scholars' nor a practitioners' journal, but a place where academic disciplines and practice meet for their mutual benefit.

SSIR's purpose is to promote thoughtful reflection and stimulate debate among nonprofits, foundations, businesses, governments, and scholars around the globe. The journal has been a vehicle for disseminating developments in the field, including new partnerships and hybrid entities that are springing up among these sectors, impact investing, and an increased attention to global issues. We welcome the growing number of journals devoted to philanthropy and the nonprofit sector.

Notwithstanding this wonderful diversity, our ambition is that as SSIR enters its second decade, it will increasingly be seen as *the* essential publication for the field.

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## THE GLOBALIZATION OF GIVING

BY JANE WALES

**W**hen *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR) was first conceived in Silicon Valley a decade ago, newly wealthy, problem-focused entrepreneurs had seized the opportunity to use their knowledge, networks, and finances to advance the social good globally.

They were both the architects and the beneficiaries of the information age and the technology-driven globalization it enabled. They wanted to see its dangers mitigated and its benefits more equitably shared. They formed learning communities like the Global Philanthropy Forum (GPF), built consultancies like FSG and Bridgespan