A Data Treasure Trove

**ARTICLE | Unlocking the Potential of Open 990 Data**

For years, the vast universe of data collected by the Internal Revenue Service via Form 990—including information on nonprofit finances, the size and scope of the nonprofit sector, and nonprofit organizational and governance structures—was largely inaccessible to the public due to enormous costs and inefficiencies. Yet a sustained campaign culminating in 2019 federal legislation to mandate electronic filing and public disclosure changed all of that. In the years since, Form 990 data has fueled dozens of breakthroughs, including research, new tools that direct donors to areas of need, and exposure of harmful financial practices. However, as contributors Cinthia Schuman Ottinger and Jeff Williams write, “barriers to access and use remain,” and “the social sector has only begun to scratch the surface of open 990 data’s capabilities.”

Digital Neighborhoods

**ARTICLE | Solving Social Media’s “Local Paradox”**

The problems of social media are often chalked up to anonymity and alienation. Unfortunately, local social networks—such as Facebook Groups and Nextdoor—are often filled with just as much misinformation, racism, and toxicity as global platforms, with effects that can be even more severe, thanks to local social networks’ direct connection to the offline world. What can be done? Chand Rajendra-Nicolucci and Ethan Zuckerman of the Initiative for Digital Public Infrastructure suggest building new networks that are values-driven, closely moderated, trusted, and local. This approach stands in contrast to the platforms run by global corporations with an eye toward maximizing profitability. But, the pair write, “to continue to experiment with and spread this model, significant investment is needed from leaders in government, nonprofits, and media.”

**How Do You Measure Fear?**

**ARTICLE | Plotting Impact Beyond Simple Metrics**

How best to measure impact remains one of the most active and difficult conversations in philanthropy. Natasha Joshi of Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies says a recent interaction with a grantee provoked her organization to reconsider some of their assumptions and to conduct a survey asking more of their partners how they see the impact of their work. The feedback led to a new framework for understanding outcomes along two different axes: tangible to intangible and fast-emerging to slow-emerging. “What became clear from sorting through the data was that most organizations (if not all) operate in all four quadrants at once, and there is no hierarchy of actions or results.”

**Tough Questions**

**ARTICLE | The Upside of Nonprofit Burnout**

“Are those of us in the social sector using our accumulated skills and intellect wisely, or are we caught up in an inefficient nonprofit industrial complex that seems more about keeping donors happy than solving problems?” That’s one of the questions SSIR contributor John Hagan asks in this article recounting the experiences that drove him to leave his role as a nonprofit CEO. Widespread burnout is not the fault of nonprofit employees, though. “This article is directed to funders, boards, and other CEOs,” he writes. “It’s your responsibility to redirect what you’re asking of your staff. It’s up to you to create a workplace where staff have time to think about the problems they are trying so hard to solve.”