

Across Canada, there is a thriving artistic scene. The last census found a total of 493 professional performing arts groups in Canada, including 108 symphony orchestras, chamber and other music organizations, 285 theatre companies, and 65 dance troupes.

In addition, some 13.2 million Canadians and foreigners attend more than 40 000 performances by these groups each year. Yearly attendance at the Stratford Festival is over half a million. The Montreal Jazz Festival attracts over a million visitors.

Furthermore, in 2000, one in four Canadians aged 15 or older pursued visual arts activities such as painting and sculpture. In the same year, three in 10 Canadians engaged in textile crafts, and 2 in 10 in other crafts.

Over the years, Telefilm Canada has financed more than 600 feature films, and 1500 television shows and series. The National Film Board has produced over 10 000 works since 1939, and has won almost 3000 national and international awards. Every day the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produces programming that enlightens and entertains audiences.

Now Canada's new media industry is stepping onto the cultural stage, blending traditional forms of expression with new kinds of knowledge into a potent creative and commercial potion. To stir things up even more, the federal government plans to spend \$75 million over three years to enrich Canadian cultural content on the Internet.

Approximately 1000 new media firms operate in Canada. While many of them have their roots in television, film, publishing and animation, 47 percent of Canadian new media firms recently surveyed are exclusively "multimedia-dedicated" companies. Over half of these Canadian firms are already successfully serving the toughest market of all, the United States, which accounts for 17 percent of revenues.

Canada is an increasingly knowledge-based economy with one of the world's best information infrastructures. We have made connectivity a national priority. Along with the United States and Scandinavia, Canada has the highest rate of household Internet access in the world. More than half of all Canadians over the age of 15 (and 9 out of 10 teens) used the Internet at least once last year. Also, through the SchoolNet program, every school and public library in the country is linked to the Internet. Now, the Canadian Heritage Information Network is creating on-line exhibits to bring Canada's heritage collections and knowledge to all Canadians around the world. By 2004, major government services will be accessible on-line.