



Introduction: The Music Librarian in 1960

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WHAT IS A MUSIC LIBRARIAN? The question is a simple one and would seem to call for a simple answer: a music librarian is a professional subject specialist who serves in a responsible capacity in relation to a music collection. Such a definition would cover all of those involved in any of the normal library functions in so far as they have a bearing on music: music cataloging, reference work, acquisition, circulation, and administration. Yet the ranks of the professional librarians by no means embrace all of those to whom music librarianship is a significant area of activity. Much of the vitality of this field comes from the outsiders not associated with a library staff, from the musicologists, the music educators and private teachers, the music dealers and publishers, collectors, critics, and musicians of all varieties of purpose. It is this complex of interests, coupled with the inherent attractiveness of music as an art, and its well defined margins as a subject area, which accounts for the fact that music is one of the most active fields of special librarianship.

Probably no minority group within the library profession has achieved greater autonomy. Since 1931 the Music Library Association has helped to coordinate the diverse interests of the group in America. It supports a number of vigorous local chapters, and holds bi-annual meetings on a national scale. Among the nearly nine hundred members of the Association, the professional librarians are in the minority. The Association's quarterly, *Notes*, now in the seventeenth volume of its Second Series, is recognized as the leading bibliographical journal of the music world. On the international level, the music librarians were the first group of subject specialists to achieve an independent organization under the auspices of Unesco. Founded officially in 1951, the International Association of Music Libraries held its Fifth Congress in the summer of 1959 in Cambridge, England.

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Among those who are professionally occupied with music library problems, there are two major spheres of interest, not altogether in harmony. One is represented by the scholar-bibliographers, and the other by those chiefly concerned with practical techniques and services. It would be tempting to try to identify this dichotomy with the conflicting interests of the college and university music librarians, on the one hand, and the public music librarians, on the other, but this would be an over-simplification. The conflict is one which can be observed at nearly every level of music library work. By and large, the practitioners have felt that their interests and problems have been neglected in favor of the needs of a few highly specialized patrons. Whether or not the complaint is justified, there is no doubt that the close alliance between music librarianship and research has been one of the most productive and stimulating factors in the growth of the field in America. An improvement in the quality of the collections and a strengthening of the role of the library in higher education have developed hand in hand with the emergence of historical musicology as an academic discipline, and it is no accident that the first president of the Music Library Association, Otto Kinkeldey, was also the first president of the American Musicological Society.

In Europe the identification of music librarianship with scholarship has always been the rule. From the time of François-Joseph Fétilis (1784-1871) to the present day, a succession of scholar-librarians have been associated with the great music research collections of France, England, Germany and Belgium and have produced many of the essential music reference works in use today: Jules Écorcheville, William Barclay Squire, Alfred Wotquenne, Johannes Wolf, and Charles van den Borren, to name only a few of them. These men were trained musicologists first and librarians second, and their influence has been transplanted into the American tradition through the work of Oscar Sonneck, first chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress, Carl Engel, his successor, and Otto Kinkeldey, whose distinguished contributions have benefited librarianship and scholarship in equal measure.

It is in the area of music bibliography that the impact of scholarship has been most clearly felt. Effective research depends upon the precise organization of the source materials, and many of the tools which the musicologists have developed and sharpened for their own purposes have become standard equipment for the music reference librarian. Some insight into the problems to be met at the research level

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and the painstaking processes involved, are given in this issue of *Library Trends* in Jan La Rue's paper, "Musical Exploration: the Tasks of Research Bibliography." At the same time, J. B. Coover's statement concerning "Reference Bibliography in the Music Library" will indicate that the tools thus far produced are by no means adequate in their coverage, and that much work remains to be done before satisfactory control over the diverse materials of music is attained. In this task the librarians cannot rely solely on the scholars; bibliography is not merely an aid, it is a responsibility which the librarians themselves are in the best position to fulfill.

The patterns of music librarianship are constantly undergoing change. That is why the term "the music librarian in 1960" is used implying that he is not the same person he was in 1930; nor is there any reason to believe that thirty years hence he will play the role he does today, in spite of the fact that librarians are constitutionally disposed to resist change. It is not change in content so much as change in media that has brought new elements into the picture. The most obvious example of the profound effect which a new type of library material has had on library practice is found in sound recordings. They have invaded the quiet domain of practically every music librarian in the country and have given rise to specialists who devote the major part of their time and energy to the problems of recorded sound. Some of the larger libraries can afford to assign a full-time professional to the cataloging of phonorecords. Bibliography has expanded to include discography, and institutions such as The New York Public Library and the Detroit Public Library have produced discographers whose authority is recognized throughout the world: Philip Miller and Kurtz Myers. There are radio librarians, such as Miss Valentine Britten of the BBC, who are concerned exclusively with the discs and tapes used in a large broadcasting enterprise. E. E. Colby's chapter in this issue on "Sound Recordings in the Music Library" draws attention to another line of professional activity, that of the archivist in charge of a permanent research collection of recorded sound. This is only the beginning; as further developments take place in this field, it is certain that new specialists will be created to handle them.

One of the patterns which is emerging in the collegiate music library is that of the teacher-librarian. His responsibility may range, at one end of the scale, from a situation in which a part-time librarian is given part-time teaching duties, and at the same time pursues his

own graduate studies, to the other extreme, where a librarian with full academic status offers a type of instruction which can be regarded as the apex of his professional services. Ideally, the teaching role should not detract from the librarian's service capacity but should enhance and fulfill it. The teaching situation presents an opportunity for reference work of the highest order, a chance to bring students, particularly at the graduate level, into productive relationship with their research materials, to help them select their projects and guide them to the relevant literature.

Examples of the teaching librarians are not hard to find. At Cornell University the music librarian conducts a graduate seminar described as "an introduction to music research." Similar courses are taught by the music librarians at the University of Southern California and the University of California at Berkeley. Undoubtedly much the same ground is covered in the courses listed as "seminars in music bibliography" offered by the librarians at Stanford University, the University of California at Los Angeles, Columbia University, and the University of Illinois. In some instances the music librarian does his teaching in connection with a school other than a department of music, as, for example, the well-known course for prospective music librarians given by Catherine Miller in the Columbia School of Library Service, or a similar course taught by Anna H. Heyer in the Library School of North Texas State. At Wayne State University a librarian, who divides his time between music and general reference responsibilities, teaches a course in "general reference" in the Department of Education. At Harvard, Yale, and Rochester, the heads of the music libraries carry highly responsible teaching assignments in music history at the graduate level. This is true also at Berkeley where the librarian's course load includes a seminar in mensural notation, another listed as "Studies in musical source materials," and where he serves as faculty adviser to the master's degree candidates. For positions of this kind, it is obvious that the Bachelor of Arts degree in music, often cited as a minimum requirement for a career in music librarianship, is not enough. Where the standards for subject knowledge are determined by the librarian's academic colleagues, a doctorate, or at least a master's degree, is the rule rather than the exception.

Music libraries in American colleges and universities are comparatively young, if they are measured against the venerable histories of some of the larger public libraries, but their objectives have been

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more specific and their growth has been planned and accelerated under the stimulus of active music departments. There is keen competition in the second hand book trade for the essential materials that make up a music research collection. The rapidly rising prices in music dealers' catalogs will testify to this fact, as does the resurgence of scholarly publication in the music field. Institutions are trying to develop "over night" a level of subject strength it would take them years to reach under the ordinary processes of acquisition. Some of the problems involved in creating such a collection are discussed in this issue, by Brooks Shepard, Jr. in his paper on "Building a Collection to Meet the Needs of Research Scholars in Music" and in Ruby Mangahas' description of "The University of the Philippines Music Library" where one can observe these problems in their most acute form. Hers is a library where collection building is severely handicapped by the factors of distance and limited funds.

There are two points at which music library practice diverges rather sharply from other subject fields: (1) in the kind of cataloging treatment required, and (2) in the special facilities demanded in the way of space and equipment. Some progress has been made, both nationally and internationally, in the creation of codes for cataloging music and phono-records, but the basic problems of internal catalog development remain to be solved by libraries individually. Minnie Elmer's paper on "The Music Catalog as a Reference Tool" examines some of the possible approaches to the solution of these problems. As far as space and equipment are concerned, the present generation of music librarians is among the first to be in a position to have libraries designed for its special needs. What this means in terms of planning is the concern of Elizabeth Smith and Ruth Watanabe in their joint paper on "The Music Library in its Physical Aspects."

It would be extremely difficult to comprehend the diverse patterns of music library administration in America in one brief statement. For that reason a group of administrators have been chosen to speak for themselves, leaving it to the reader to make his own synthesis. Each represents a major area of music library practice. From Harold Spivacke comes a statement of the role played by the Music Division of the Library of Congress, by far the most significant single influence in American music librarianship. Bernice Larrabee's account of the structure and development of the Music Department of the Free Library of Philadelphia shows how intricate the workings of a music library in a large city system can be. Yet from the viewpoint of serv-

ice her objectives are almost identical with those expressed by Caryl Emerson in describing the activities of a medium-sized music library in Richmond, California.

Regardless of the spectacular growth of music libraries in educational and research institutions in the United States, it is the spirit of the free public library which is dominant in this area of special librarianship. Ingrained in the American citizen is the feeling that the library is his province, that it exists to serve his needs, and that same feeling is shared, almost involuntarily, by the library personnel. Public librarianship is a relatively new concept in European thinking, where a special library has traditionally been restricted to specialists, where credentials are demanded, where reference work is reduced to a minimum because the qualified patron is expected to know what he wants and where to find it. It is quite natural for an American library, no matter how institutionally circumscribed it may be, to seek ways in which to extend its influence into the community. Few subject areas offer richer opportunities for this kind of service than does music, through making materials available to community music groups, coordinating information about local music history and events, providing exhibits, record concerts, stimulating performance and appreciation of the art. Activities such as these provide the basic rationale for a music library's selection policy, as it will be clear to the reader of Irene Millen's "Patterns of Growth in a Public Music Library." And hers is a library that has reaped tangible returns from its "Friends" through their generous financial support of its acquisition program.

Let us return once more to the question which was asked at the beginning of this discussion: what is a music librarian, or, what is music librarianship? The answer, in all of its range of meaning, is implied in the collective statements made by the contributors to this issue of *Library Trends*. They work as specialists in a particularly rich area of the humanities, one which has vital links with current research activity and is full of applications in education. It presents a challenging future in bibliography and offers wide scope for community service. It demands considerable technical knowledge, not only in the subject field but in library practice which can extend into the specialized directions of sound recording and duplication processes. Many of these elements, to be sure, are shared in one or more respects with other subject specialties. But there is one ingredient that underlies all of the activities of a music librarian and sets him apart from his colleagues in the library world. It has not been given

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much attention in the preceding discussion because it is so basic as to be regarded as self-evident. A music librarian is essentially a *musician*, a musician in the widest sense of the term, although there may be times when the pressure of his duties makes him feel quite remote from any active involvement in the art. To be a musician is not merely a matter of knowledge or training, it is the capacity for a certain type of aesthetic experience. That capacity may be exercised in performance, it may be enhanced by study or by intelligent listening; but there is no point at which a music librarian's pursuit of musical knowledge and experience can be declared complete. When he ceases to grow toward greater mastery and understanding of the art of music, he will lose his effectiveness as the library's representative of that art.