

International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres

United Kingdom and Ireland Branch

founded 1953



PRESS RELEASE

IAML(UK & Irl) Response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on England's public libraries

The UK & Ireland Branch of the International Association of Music Libraries welcomes the interest shown in public libraries and endorses the need to improve the quality of both buildings and services. We are, however, concerned at the apparent focus on books as the only core, traditional library material. Public libraries have been lending printed music for well over 100 years and many have been lending recordings since the 1940s. These resources form an important element of the public library national offer. Music and audio-visual librarians have long championed the need for libraries to provide information in the format most relevant to the user's need. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's response to this report states that 'free access to information, creativity and knowledge through the public library should be available to everyone - whether it is contained in books or on the internet'; this must surely include music of all kinds and in all formats in ensuring an all-embracing cultural experience.

Music materials make a vital contribution to social inclusion and lifelong learning and do much to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. The IAML(UK & Irl) publication *Access to Music*¹ states that: 'Music is a social and sociable activity which engenders communication, social cohesion and mutual understanding, without the need for language or literacy. It has the power to influence cognitive and emotional behaviour, and its therapeutic and healing effects are widely acknowledged. Libraries must be fully involved in providing access to music.'

We welcome the view that the Public Library Service Standards need extending and believe that meaningful standards for printed music and audio-visual formats should be included in order to promote their importance in a comprehensive library service.

The suggestion that the legislation should be updated is most welcome and long overdue. The Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 provides for 'recordings' only as an option; all media, including music scores and recordings, are so well embedded in the library system that they must be regarded as core stock and articulated as such in any revised legislation. IAML(UK & Irl) will be pleased to participate in any discussions relating to updating the legislation.

The report's interpretation of the law to state that access to ICT should be free as a service 'ordinarily provided' is most interesting. Taking this to its logical conclusion, this

¹ Pamela Thompson and Malcolm Lewis. *Access to Music: music libraries and archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland: current themes and a realistic vision for the future.* IAML(UK & Irl) 2003

is surely the time to apply the same rule to sound and video recordings, which are provided, albeit at an extra charge, in almost all library authorities. It is time to look at the Danish model of compulsory free access to music materials in libraries (www.kum.dk/sw3161.asp). We recognize, of course, that there are financial implications in the implementation of such an approach. The Government has made it clear, through special funding to schools and through the Music Manifesto, that it believes music to be a vital component in learning and life experience; libraries are in an unrivalled position to play a part in this process provided they are given the encouragement and the resources. Joined-up thinking is needed to ensure that children and other members of the community have access to a wide choice of recordings, printed music, books about music, and online information. The value of these resources can, however, only be fully exploited by the appointment of knowledgeable, specialist staff; we strongly believe that library authorities should, by means of standards or legislation, be required to provide such specialist skills.

***IAML(UK & Irl)
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Notes to editors

Press enquiries:

Kathryn Adamson, President IAML(UK & Irl) Tel: 020 7873 7323, Email:
k.adamson@ram.ac.uk

About IAML(UK & Irl)

IAML (UK & IRL) is the association which represents the interests of institutional and individual members involved in the provision of music library services throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. The membership encompasses public, academic, national and special libraries and it is a model of cross-sectoral working within a subject field. For further information consult the IAML(UK & Irl) website at: www.iaml-uk-irl.org

Select Committee Report on Public Libraries

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmcomeds/81/8102.htm>