



## United Kingdom, report 1997

1997: when pictures are successfully transmitted from the surface of Mars, it is regrettable to report that UK music librarians have still not discovered a successful antidote to that 1996 phenomenon MMLD (Mad Music Library Disease). Despite a change of Government, all the symptoms remain - underfunding, redundancies (cosmetically called "early retirements"), stresses and strains. There are times when we feel less like successful NASA operatives of the Mars buggy than those struggling to keep the MIR space station together. And yet, UK music librarians continue to reach for the stars. We still hope fondly that, one day, the music catalogue of the Lending Division of the British Library might be automated, or that public libraries might be connected to the Internet, or that appropriate funding might be forthcoming for the continued public library provision of performance sets upon which community music-making depends, or even that music libraries in general might receive due recognition by funders of national development programmes.

Amongst all the cutbacks and redundancies, the major loss this year has effectively reduced by one the membership of our colleagues in IAMIC with the closure of the Welsh Music Information Centre due to funding withdrawal. This is in a general national context of stock fund cuts of up to fifty percent, or a cessation of international inter-loan transactions, or failures of new small "unitary" local authorities to provide any music library services at all. As staffing levels are cut and gradings reduced, more is expected of fewer. National statistics indicate that demands for music materials continue to increase, and U.K. Branch members experience ever increasing difficulties in finding time for professional work. And yet our skywatchers can still marvel at an *aurora borealis* of spectacular professional ambition and achievement.

The Distance Learning Course in music librarianship reported in *Fontes Artis Musicae* 44/2, (April-June 1997): 202-203 is scheduled to be operative from January 1998. Congratulations are due to the Music Libraries Trust and its consultant Ian Ledsham. Also to be congratulated are John Wagstaff and the Documentation Committee of IAML(UK) for the completion of the second edition of the *British Union Catalogue of Music Periodicals* [BUCOMP2]. This is expected to be published in the spring of 1998. Susi Woodhouse with evangelical zeal is continuing to gain new converts to Project EARL [Electronic Access to Resources in Libraries], exploring ways in which the Internet can maximise access to existing public library resources. Malcolm Jones continues to dedicate himself to the ultimate creation of a National Union Catalogue of Vocal Sets. Noelle Mann has achieved more success in her efforts to establish a London-based Centre of Russian Music. IAML(UK) is planning a major public conference on



performance set provision to take place in Birmingham on November 6, 1997 during National Libraries Week. And Scottish colleagues are becoming increasingly excited at the prospect of hosting the Millenium IAML Conference in Edinburgh (August 6-11, 2000).

The 1996 IAML(UK) Annual Report reprinted in full the funding application for a Music LIP [Library and Information Plan] Development Office. Invited by and submitted to the Government-funded Library and Information Council [LIC], it is in the vagarious nature of UK development funding that, eighteen months later no one in LIC has said "yes" or "no". Enormous frustrations have been ameliorated to some extent by developments such as those reported here which, piecemeal, serve to advance the cause of UK music librarianship that might otherwise have been advanced as a coordinated national strategy. IAML(UK) itself has submitted evidence to a LIC Working Group on Public Networking.

Two further developments in 1997 give rise to considerable excitement. Julie Crawley is involved with a proposed National Jazz Archive Unification Project which would develop catalogues and databases of diverse jazz materials held in UK by both institutions and individuals. Amongst those involved is John Dankworth, and National Lottery funding is being sought.

Kate Sloss is director of a further project rejoicing in the modest title of "Proposal for a National Union Catalogue of Music." With Kate's Trinity College of Music as lead organisation, the project aims to link the databases of the nine UK music conservatory libraries in two stages, with a third stage incorporating public, university, and national collections. Costed as a three-year development programme, funding is sought within the Electronic Information Development Programme of JISC [Joint Informations Systems Committee]. Its acceptance will explore an absolutely central galaxy within the original (1993) Music LIP development plan, and will represent a revolution in UK music library provision of truly cosmic proportions.

Thus we still reach for the stars in our firmament. IAML(UK) continues to scan the skies for encouraging signs of cosmically climactic changes, despite fears by some fatalistic earthlings that we are less likely to experience a new dawn of enhanced funding than NASA is of discovering molecular traces of music librarianship on Mars.

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