

Text for "Helping ourselves: IAML(UK)'s courses on advanced reference sources in music", IAML conference, Berkeley, California, Tuesday 6 August 2002

Presented by Angela Escott and John Wagstaff

In the time available to us this morning, Angela and I will aim to tell you something about the idea behind IAML(UK)'s "Advanced reference sources in music" course, about how it was set up, and about how it has developed since 1998, when it was first offered.

The title of today's presentation—"Helping ourselves"—is deliberately chosen. In the UK as in several other countries it is difficult if not impossible to specialise in music librarianship at library schools. Many of the schools will turn a "blind eye" to students who choose to undertake a music librarianship dissertation at the end of their course, and many will make a valiant attempt to support students taking such a route, even though there may be no music specialist on the staff. Few UK music librarians currently in post in UK music libraries will have had much opportunity to study music librarianship formally at library school, and it is against this backdrop that the UK branch's "Courses and Education" committee has come up with several training initiatives over the past few years. The "Advanced reference sources in music" course was just one such initiative, and my colleague in Oxford, Julie Crawley, together with Richard Buxton from Huddersfield University and myself, found ourselves the "guinea pigs" for this new course.

The title of the course, "Advanced Reference Sources in Music" may suggest to some people here that IAML(UK) already offered a "Basic reference sources in music" course, and that the new course was in some way a development of this pre-existing course. This isn't strictly true, and although IAML(UK) has for some years been offering a course entitled "Music for the Terrified" that introduced basic concepts—at the "what is a vocal score" level—it would probably be incorrect—unfortunately—to say that the one carries seamlessly on from where the other left off. It's important, too, to note that, when we advertised the course, we really had very little or no idea who was likely to sign up for it: not only did we have only a limited concept of what "advanced reference sources" in music were, but we also suspected that each person attending the course as a delegate would likewise have his/her own perceptions. We were also, one might most kindly say, rather "relaxed" about learning outcomes for the day: were we starting to design the course again today we would doubtless give such things much more attention. Our course publicity did, however, suggest in fairly vague terms that "Any librarian who is faced with music queries should get value from this course, whether or not they are working in a substantial music library"; and that [QUOTE] "This course is designed to give public and academic music librarians the confidence to use their reference sources effectively, the ability to choose the most appropriate sources for their library, and the chance to discover a wide range of printed and electronic material" [END QUOTE]—quite a tall order for a one-day course.

We limited our course to 20 delegates, feeling that this allowed for enough individual opinions to engender good discussion, but also that it was a small enough number for individual attention to be given if required (a secondary consideration was, of course, the size of the venue). This was our timetable:

IAML(UK) ADVANCED REFERENCE COURSE, DECEMBER 1998: TIMETABLE

1000. Registration

1030. "Where are we with music reference?" a look at the varying needs of public and academic libraries

1115. Coffee

1135. The "Reference Interview": how to get people to say what they want

1205. Recently published reference tools in music, including exhibition of new items

1245. Lunch

1400. Electronic sources of music information, divided into:

(i) CD-ROMs;

(ii) Internet resources

1445. Tea

1505. "Beat the panel!"; plus review and feedback session

The intention, I think, was to strike a balance between talking about specific resources on the one hand—hence the Electronic Sources session after lunch and the "guided tour" of selected resources before it—and wider issues concerning reference work on the other: thus the session on the "Reference Interview" in the morning session and the opening paper on "Where are we with music reference" at the beginning of the day, which charted the increase in music reference resources from the three items advocated by James Duff Brown in 1893 to the many hundreds listed in the latest edition of Duckles's *Music reference and research materials*. We were particularly keen to avoid the day becoming some sort of "show and tell" session, in which the course team held up a reference work and said "here's a reference work: it's really good", followed by "here's another reference work: it's really good too". But on the other hand we suspected that many delegates would have come from libraries that were not as well stocked with reference materials as was Oxford, and would appreciate the chance simply to see and handle various reference works to which they may have found references, but which they did not have in their own collections. And it was certainly true that one of the most successful parts of the day came in the pre-lunch session when, having alerted our delegates to ways of finding out about new reference resources—principally through the regular column in the UK branch's journal, *Brio*, entitled "New reference sources in music", through the columns on *Notes* and *Fontes*—we let them loose on an exhibition of some 30 items that were detailed in a course handout. We should have allowed an hour for this session, rather than the 40 minutes actually allotted; and I like to think that we did some publishers a favour that day by increasing their sales. Here's a part of the list of materials that we had on show:

ADVANCED REFERENCE SOURCES IN MUSIC, 10 DECEMBER 1998: SOME NEW REFERENCE MATERIALS

The following list contains those reference works which we have put out on display for you to look at. Hopefully there will be something of interest! The items are arranged here in alphabetical order, but not necessarily arranged as such on the library tables. In addition you will find various electronic resources displayed on the terminals dotted around the library. They are also for [your use](#).

Warren BEBBINGTON, ed. *The Oxford companion to Australian music*. Melbourne; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Frances BEDFORD, *Harpichord and clavichord music of the twentieth century*. Berkeley, CA: Fallen Leaf Press, 1993.

Michael BERNARD, ed. *Lexicon musicum latinum medii aevi – Dictionary of medieval Latin musical terminology*. Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992- [in progress]

[BRITISH LIBRARY]. *British union catalogue of orchestral sets*. [Boston Spa]: BLDSC, 1989; 2/1995.

Next to the display of printed reference sources, the part of the day that delegates most appreciated was probably the session concerned with music resources on the Internet. Even today this sort of session tends to guarantee a good audience, and back in 1998 this was even more true. My colleague Julie Crawley had put together a *lot* of documentation for this session, on the basis that many librarians seem to feel personally enriched if they can leave a gathering with a new set of Web addresses, and the session took a lot of effort to organise in terms of technology too. We gambled on the technology working, which by and large it did, though today we would probably be more likely to have a Powerpoint back-up available. When presenting this sort of session one does again hit the problem of "show and tell", of course: "here's a web site: it's really good", and so on. We all know that one only really gets to know reference resources, whether on the Web, on CD-ROM, or in print, by gaining familiarity with them over a long period, and we could in the end only provide our delegates with a brief introduction to some resources, and give them hints on how to keep up to date with new ones. It strikes me, too, that back in 1998 many librarians probably required a lot of *reassurance* about using the Web, as well as guidance on specific resources. Was it true that most of the information on the Web was rubbish, or simply copied from other sources? How could one tell good from bad when, unlike print resources, most electronic data had gone through no peer-review or copy-editing processes; and so on.

So: what did we do right, and what did we do wrong? Well, I've already mentioned the popularity of the reference books exhibition, and the fact that we should have left more time for it. Because Julie, Richard and I could not get together in one room before the day of the conference itself (Julie and I were both in Oxford, but Richard, who presented the session on the reference interview, had to come from Huddersfield, and could not arrange a meeting before the day itself), we had to try to sort out all the details by e-mail, and with hindsight I think we would probably have done much better to have had a face-to-face meeting early on, to go through exactly what each of us was going to do. The final session of our day, "Beat the panel", was meant to be a session in which delegates brought along reference "stumpers" for a brainstorming session. This did not work too well, because hardly anyone *had* brought anything along, and we should have had more questions in reserve. When planning this session I had had in mind the "Reference refresher" session that MLA had offered in Boston in 1998, and which had successfully elicited questions from the floor. Maybe the British are simply more reticent. We did manage to introduce some *principles* of reference work into the session, such as the difficulty of proving a negative: for example, how much more difficult it is to prove that someone is dead than to prove that they are still alive. Later courses, such as those offered at the Royal College of Music in London, and about which Angela will talk in a moment, took a more structured approach to the "stumpers" session, by setting delegates a list of enquiries to answer by the end of the day.

One thing that struck me about the Oxford course, for all its failings, was the enthusiasm shown by all the delegates. I have spent a good deal of time in this session outlining what we could have done better, but I would not want to close without noting how much everyone seemed to want the day to work, and how enthused we all were simply by the fact of trying something new. Since our 1998 course the Advanced Reference Sources course has been considerably honed and improved, although its basic structure of the reference interview, exhibition, internet and practical enquiry solving has remained the same. It has been offered once a year since 1998, and I shall now hand over to Angela, who will tell you of her experiences with it at the RCM.

Angela's text from this point...

When we were invited by IAML UK to give the course at the Royal College of Music, which we did twice, its format had been successfully tried and tested by John and his team at Oxford, and at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester: general introductions to the day —"what are reference sources", and how to elicit from the user exactly what they want; printed source and internet sessions; and finally a lighter concluding session for solving prepared reference questions. Feedback from previous courses was useful to us in devising our timetable for the day. For example delegates at John's course valued having time, and would have liked more, to look at the recommended printed reference works which he had put on display for them. We timetabled this into our course. Organisers of the second course, held in Manchester, amalgamated the two introductory sessions.

Advanced Reference Sources for Librarians

Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester

Programme

9.00 Registration

9.30 'Is this what you really, really want?'

The reference interview

11.00 BREAK

11.20 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings'

A guided tour through some new (and a few older) reference resources.

12.15 LUNCH - see enclosed list of nearby eating places

2.30 Towards the Unknown Region: Using the World Wide Web to answer enquires, including *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* online.

4.25 BREAK -- tea, coffee and biscuits will be served in the Library

5.15 Review and feedback

5.30 Course closes

They devised snappy titles to reflect the range of their courses including a reference to the Spice Girls. We felt justified in using New Grove as a source of inspiration for one session, since Grove had been a Director of the Royal College; and the use of "Crossword" reflected the nature of a number of our telephone enquiries.

Advanced Reference Sources for Librarians

26 April 2001

Royal College of Music, London

Programme

9.30 REGISTRATION

Coffee and tea in the RCM Senior Common Room

10.00 From Crossword to Catch

Varying user needs and the reference enquiry

10.30 Music Internet Resources

Internet and CDROMs for music reference

OR **Iconographic and performance history reference resources**

11.30 BREAK

12.00 Music Internet Resources

Internet and CDROMs for music reference

OR

Iconographic and performance history reference resources

1.00 LUNCH

The RCM Dining Room is open for lunch

2.15 From 'Taiwan to Twelve Apostles'

A guided tour through new and old printed reference

resources

2.45 See for yourself. A chance to look at the reference tools

3.15 BREAK

Tea available for purchase in the RCM Dining Room

3.35 Review and feedback

4.00 COURSE ENDS

The final, "The unanswered question" session took the form, as it had in Oxford and Manchester, of trainers answering difficult reference questions given them by delegates earlier in the day. We decided that trainers had enough stress during the day, and that delegates could share the work and their knowledge in the final session by answering reference questions we had given them earlier in the day, and sharing favourite sources. Handouts therefore included a musical quiz to be researched during the day. Here the feedback was most inconsistent. It "aimed too low", was "unnecessary", yet for another was a strength of the course and another wanted to be helped with the answers by being told which were to be found online and which in printed reference sources.

We wanted to make the best use of the Royal College's special collections and of the particular history of our own printed reference material. We have a musical instrument museum and a department of portraits and performance history of which the Keeper, Oliver Davies was happy to give delegates a tour along with information about iconographic reference tools. This proved so popular that delegates all gave 10 out of 10 for this session on the feedback forms. A curator of our musical instrument museum provided a list of specialist organology books, with helpful annotations, for our printed reference session. Apart from the Keeper of Portraits, our training team comprised nineteenth and eighteenth century specialists, our Reference Librarian, Dr Peter Horton, Timothy Eggington, formerly of the British Library, and myself, orchestral and band librarian.

Delegates were from a wide range of libraries: broadcasting - both sheet music and research department, conservatoire, universities which specialise in science or languages, public libraries and former polytechnic - i.e. a further education institution with a more vocational emphasis. Some had many years of experience, and some were just starting out in their careers. The diverse experiences of delegates were reflected in feedback forms. Some found the level of the course too high, while one or two felt we were covering ground already familiar to them. This is an issue that future organisers of courses may need to consider.

My colleagues had opted to present the printed and web search sessions, so I took responsibility for the introductory session, with the duty of giving essential information about location of fire doors, rest rooms and dining room, but with the happier task of introducing the venue with its interesting history. John kindly allowed me to use some of his ideas about how to define a reference source, and some history of music reference itself. I spoke about the evaluation of sources and discussed reference work as it relates to my own post as orchestral librarian—listing my own favourite sources and telling delegates how I go about locating performing material for my works which are programmed for our orchestras and bands.

The printed reference sources session was bound to an extent to be what John censured—the choice of a number of reference works, but Dr Peter Horton's session scored highly on the feedback forms. He spoke about evaluation and chose a broad range of works, giving time to his own personal interests—hymnology and opera—and to the strengths of our own reference collection including British music, the history of music printing and publishing, instrument making and film music. With political correctness he recommended works which cover "women in music".

The quickly changing situation in information provision thanks to the world-wide web was most obviously reflected in our [electronic reference source sessions](#). It was the trainer responsible for that session at the Royal College, who had to introduce the greatest number of changes in his session in the four months between our two training courses. Many more sites were available, searching was easier, significant printed reference works had gone online. In his session for our first course, Tim Eggington gave some hints on ways to search with the major search engines—yahoo, altavista, excite.com - and how to check currency of a site. He emphasised the absence of authority control and the lack of precision in searching that is possible in a well-constructed library catalogue, in addition to the problem of evaluating sites. He defined and demonstrated directories, indexes and gateways and finally explored useful web sites in a number of categories. He also introduced sources that existed only on CDROM. By the time of our second course, Google had become the favourite search engine, some CDROM sources were now online. Tips for using search engines were provided in a handout, and all the time in this session was taken up with demonstrating web sites in different categories, beginning with directories, indexes and gateways, as follows:

MUSIC REFERENCE RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

SEARCH ENGINES

MUSIC GATEWAYS

ARCHIVES AND MANUSCRIPTS

AUDIO

SECOND-HAND BOOKSELLERS

LIBRARY CATALOGUES

PERIODICAL INDEXES

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

DISSERTATIONS

MUSIC INFORMATION CENTRES

Archives and manuscript projects such as ARCHON, Historical Manuscripts Commission, AIM25 (archives in the London area), audio, second-hand booksellers, library catalogues, periodical indexes, biographical information, (we consult the serology site of Indiana's Gaylord Music Library particularly frequently) dissertations, music information centres, were headings which just scratched the surface of reference sources on the web. Handouts were provided to us at that time, with brief annotations about content and usefulness. We had recently subscribed to GroveOnline, which was available for delegates to search. Were we offering the course now, more time would probably be allotted to this session, the sites which offer down-loadable sheet music, live concerts and multi-media information would be explored, as well as a number of new IAMLUK initiatives.

Practical

For the in-house organiser of these courses, much is to be discovered about the enormous number of small details needing attention. Timetabling issues—time allowed to travel from one session to another, or back from coffee and tea breaks, where geographical distances were substantial; building in time if the most entertaining trainer is likely to speak well beyond the time allotted; catering costs and dietary issues; everyone affected to be warned—especially staff at the reception desk; sign posting; places to put coats and bags; cord and notices to let library users know which areas were closed to them; conspicuous advance warnings for everybody; enough time allowed to stuff folders with handouts; attractively colour coded handouts; trainers to know when they were responsible for ushering delegates to the next session. Our IT room could only hold half the number of delegates, so parallel sessions were repeated; and in confirmation of John's most significant concern, a thorough testing of the technology beforehand.

I should like to thank Liz Hart of IAML UK and Pam Thompson for their help and support in organising the course at the Royal College, and particularly mention the hard work of my fellow trainers Peter Horton, Tim Eggington and Oliver Davies.

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What did we learn for the future after the Royal College course?

From the feedback forms filled in by delegates at the end of the day, and from personal experience, we would give opportunities for more participation by the delegates and time for delegates to introduce themselves. Many would have liked more group work. Had there been time, a more detailed tour of the library would have been appreciated. But we learnt that you can never please all the delegates—feedback forms showed that what displeased one delegate was found to be helpful by another.

Finally, we thought it would be useful to put together two OHPs (one from Angela, one from John) of "do's and don't's" for people planning their own courses. Here they are...

Angela's suggestions:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE COURSES

1. MORE DELEGATE PARTICIPATION

(INTRODUCTIONS, GROUP WORK, SHARING EXPERTISE)

2. TOUR OF LIBRARY TIMETABLED

3. WELCOME AND PRACTICAL DETAILS SEPARATED FROM FIRST SESSION

4. NOTE RESEARCH INTERESTS OF TRAINERS IN INTRODUCTIONS

5. MORE TIME FOR DELEGATES AT THE COMPUTERS

6.

John's suggestions:

- It is never too early to begin the planning process
- Make sure that everyone involved in the course is clear about what is required of them
- If you can do a "dummy run" of the course, so much the better
- Make sure that you formulate proper "learning outcomes" for the day
- Make sure that you collect written feedback, as this will help others when planning future courses. If a course has already been offered, try to see the feedback from that course, and act upon it when planning your own
- Leave enough time for delegates to browse among the reference books
- Leave enough time for "networking" and discussion

[END OF PRESENTATION]