

Report of the meeting of the Study Group on Access to Performance Ephemera, 24 June 2024 at the IAML Congress in Stellenbosch

There was a smaller attendance than in previous years, reflecting the overall numbers at the congress.

Katharine Hogg (chair) summarised the report from the past year since the group met in Cambridge (available on the IAML website).

She further reported that since the 2023 meeting a new resource in the UK is the archives of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester <https://archive.halle.co.uk/> This database contains over 40,000 entries with listings of works, artists, soloists, concert halls and more. Concerts in Manchester are the current focus, but as the database develops, content for concerts outside the Hallé orchestra's home city will increase. The project began in 2002 when the UK's National Lottery Heritage Fund supported one student volunteer to manually input data for the concerts conducted by the orchestra's founder, Sir Charles Hallé. Since then, with further funding, a bank of skilled volunteers has been trained as part of the project, allowing them to continue this work.

It was noted that the British Library suffered a major ransomware attack which has made various resources, including their catalogue, unavailable for many months, although things are gradually coming back online. Therefore there was no update on their crowdsourcing projects.

Stefan Engl updated the group on the progress of the crowdsourcing project on Vienna TheatrePlaybills, which uses volunteers to input transcriptions: <https://wienbibliothek.crowdsourcing.wien/theaterzettel/> The infrastructure for this project was taken from another project in the Wien Bibliothek. All transcriptions are checked for accuracy.

Ninke de Boer said that in the Netherlands a crowdsourcing project user volunteers managed by an archivist to index photographs of performances, which are often not adequately indexed. They use two transcribers and then use AI to check one transcription against another, saving some human agency in the process.

There was a discussion of how to approach the cataloguing of collections of programmes and ephemera. Engela Britz-Glanville (University of Cape Town music library) reported that the UCT library has between three and ten thousand programmes to be catalogued, and they have digitised the programmes of the Cape Municipal Orchestra for preservation rather than access. Following a large fire at the library they are operating in recovery mode, and are not collecting new ephemera.

Peter Linnitt (Royal College of Music, London) reported that they have returned to the library about 500,000 programmes from offsite storage and plan to embark on cataloguing and making them available.

It was reported that the German musicconn project is changing to using Vufind open source software.

Katharine Hogg

July 2024