

# Documenting Music Library Histories: Charting a Path for Advocacy, Outreach, and Strategic Navigation

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Houman Behzadi, Head Librarian  
Marvin Duchow Music Library, McGill University

Thursday, July 10, 2025, 9:00 AM GMT+2  
IAML 2025, Salzburg, Austria

# Outline

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- Context: Marvin Duchow Music Library (MDML) and Schulich School of Music (SSoM)
- Sabbatical project: July 2024 – June 2025
- Data sources, research methodology, and study outcomes
- Conclusion: Study's significance
- Q&A



# Context

- McGill Conservatorium established in 1904.
- Faculty of Music constituted in 1920.
- Earliest consulted evidence of demand-driven acquisition: 1924.
- 1930s: Carnegie Corporation funding enabled modest collecting in response to music faculty requests.

Dean Harry Crane Perrin's memo to  
University Librarian Gerhard Lomer, 10 Dec. 1924.

10th Dec., 1924.

Dr. Gerhard Lomer,  
Redpath Library,  
McGill University.

Dear Dr. Lomer,

I do not know whether I have recommended the following books for the Library:

Variations on the Theme of Music by W. J. Turner, published by Heinemann at 12/6.  
Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians pub. by Dent, 35/-

Mr. Ruffnagel came to see me the other day and showed me a miniature full score copy of Bach's Mass in B minor which is very cheap at \$3.50. He also has the whole set of Beethoven's nine symphonies, full score, Litolf's edition, which he is willing to let us have if we require them at \$7.00 for the whole lot. They are all unused copies. He also has the whole of Liszt's Pianoforte works in twelve volumes, edited by Sauer, which he would let us have for \$35.00. I suppose we have the Beethoven symphonies in the library, but at the same time it would not hurt to have a duplicate set, if it were possible.

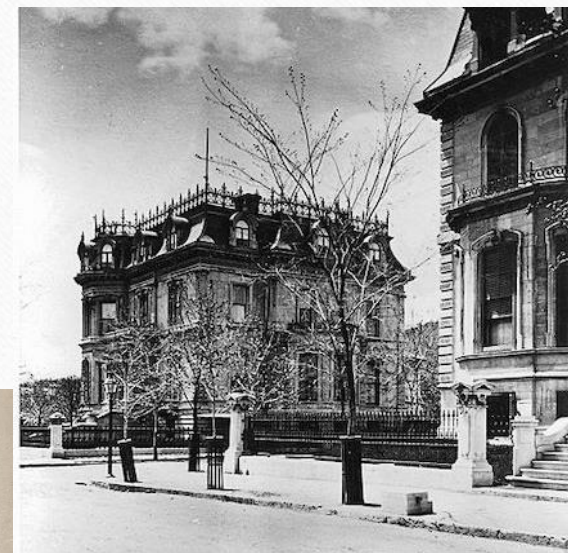
I think we ought to get for either the Book Club or the Library a book published by the Oxford University Press entitled 'A Survey of Contemporary Music' by Cecil Gray at 7/6, and 'A Marginalia of Music' by Edwin Evans, also published by the Oxford University Press at 2/6.

Perhaps you will let me know at your convenience whether any of these can be considered for the Library.

Yours very truly,

Dean.

McGill Conservatorium  
in the Workman House





3. The Committee proposes to allot to a department annually a sum to be used for both books and periodicals on the department list. Departments will thus be able to decide for themselves the proportional amounts to be spent on books and periodicals.

7. As the Committee is concerned not only with the immediate distribution of funds but with the building up of book collections in a co-ordinated manner, it feels that all departments should actively co-operate in the selection of books and periodicals. As a means to this end, the Committee asks you to designate some member of your Department, who has a specialized knowledge of its books and periodicals and an active interest in library development, to be the representative of your Department in library matters.

Libraries memo to Dean Clarke, announcing new model of collection fund distribution, 14 Nov. 1935.



October 6, 1944

Dean Douglas Clarke,  
Conservatorium of Music,  
Sherbrooke St. W.

Dear Dean Clarke,

Renewals of subscriptions to periodicals for the calendar year 1945 are now under consideration.

For your information I enclose a copy of your Departmental List for 1944. Will you kindly return it with deletions and (or) additions before October 23rd. in order that Orders may be placed promptly.

If the list is not received by the above date, it will be taken for granted that there are no alterations to be made.

*G. R. Lomer*  
Librarian.

# FACULTY OF MUSIC

|   | Catalogue Price |           |        |         |
|---|-----------------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Brandenburgh Concerto No. 1   | 2/-             | 2 of each | 4/-    |         |
| 2   | 1/6             | do        | 3/-    |         |
| 3   | 1/6             | do        | 4/-    |         |
| 4   | 2/-             | do        | 4/-    |         |
| 5   | 2/-             | do        | 5/-    | 1: 1:-  |
| 6   | 1/6             | do        |        |         |
| Introductory Volume Oxford History of Music (Oxford University Press) |                 |           | \$7.00 |         |
| Brahms and his four symphonies - Julius Harrison (Chapman & Hall)     |                 |           | 5.00   |         |
| Brahms - Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4                                | 3/- each        | 2 of each |        | 1: 4:-  |
| Brahms - Violin Concerto  | 4/-             | 2 copies  |        | 8:-     |
| Brahms - Variations on a Theme by Haydn (Op. 56a)                     | 2/6             | 3 copies  |        | 7: 6    |
| Brahms - Concerto for Violin and Cello (Op. 102)                      | 6/-             | 2 copies  |        | 12: -   |
| Bach-Respighi - Passacaglia in C Minor                                | 7/6             |           |        | 7: 6    |
| Delius - Brigg Fair   | 4/6             | 2 copies  |        | 9: -    |
| Delius - On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring                        | 3/6             | 2 copies  |        | 7: -    |
| Elgar - Variations on an original theme (Enigma) (Op. 36)             | 7/6             | 3 copies  |        | 1: 2: 6 |
|   | 7/6             |           |        |         |

McGILL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

SEP 23 1940

The following work has been added to the library.

Please present this card at the desk if you wish to make use of the book.

G. R. LOMER,  
Librarian.

Dvorak: From the new world. Symphony in E minor.

VYB.D55.3 2 copies

McGILL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

May 17. 1939.

The following work has been added to the library.

Please present this card at the desk if you wish to make use of the book.

G. R. LOMER,  
Librarian.

Nef, Karl  
An outline of the history of music.

VW11.N29:E

McGILL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

JAN 14 1939

The following work has been added to the library.

Please present this card at the desk if you wish to make use of the book.

G. R. LOMER,  
Librarian

Brahms: Symphonies 1 to 4  
VYB

" Variationen über ein Thema von Haydn VYA.B73v  
" Klavierkonzert No. 1 VYB.B73d  
" Doppelkonzert VYP.B73v  
P.T.O.

McGILL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

APR 24 1938

The following work has been added to the library.

Please present this card at the desk if you wish to make use of the book.

G. R. LOMER,  
Librarian

Tovey, D.F.

Essays in musical analysis.  
Vols. 1-2.

VX.T64

(OVER PLEASE)

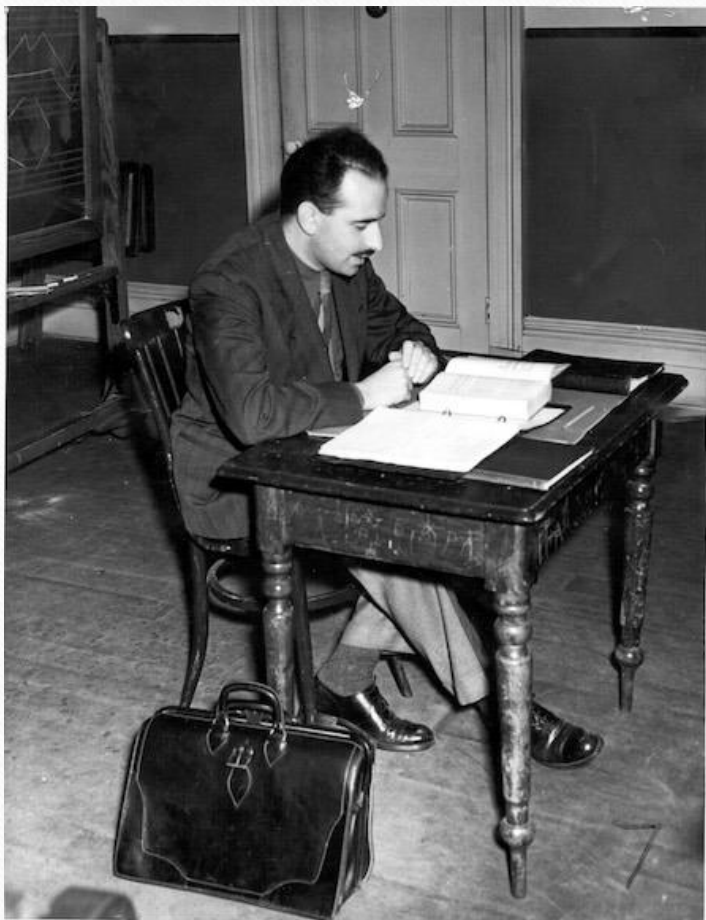


McGill

Libraries  
Bibliothèques



## 1950 – early 1960s



Marvin Duchow, 1914-1979



Helmut Blume, 1914-1998



Alexander Brott, 1915-2005



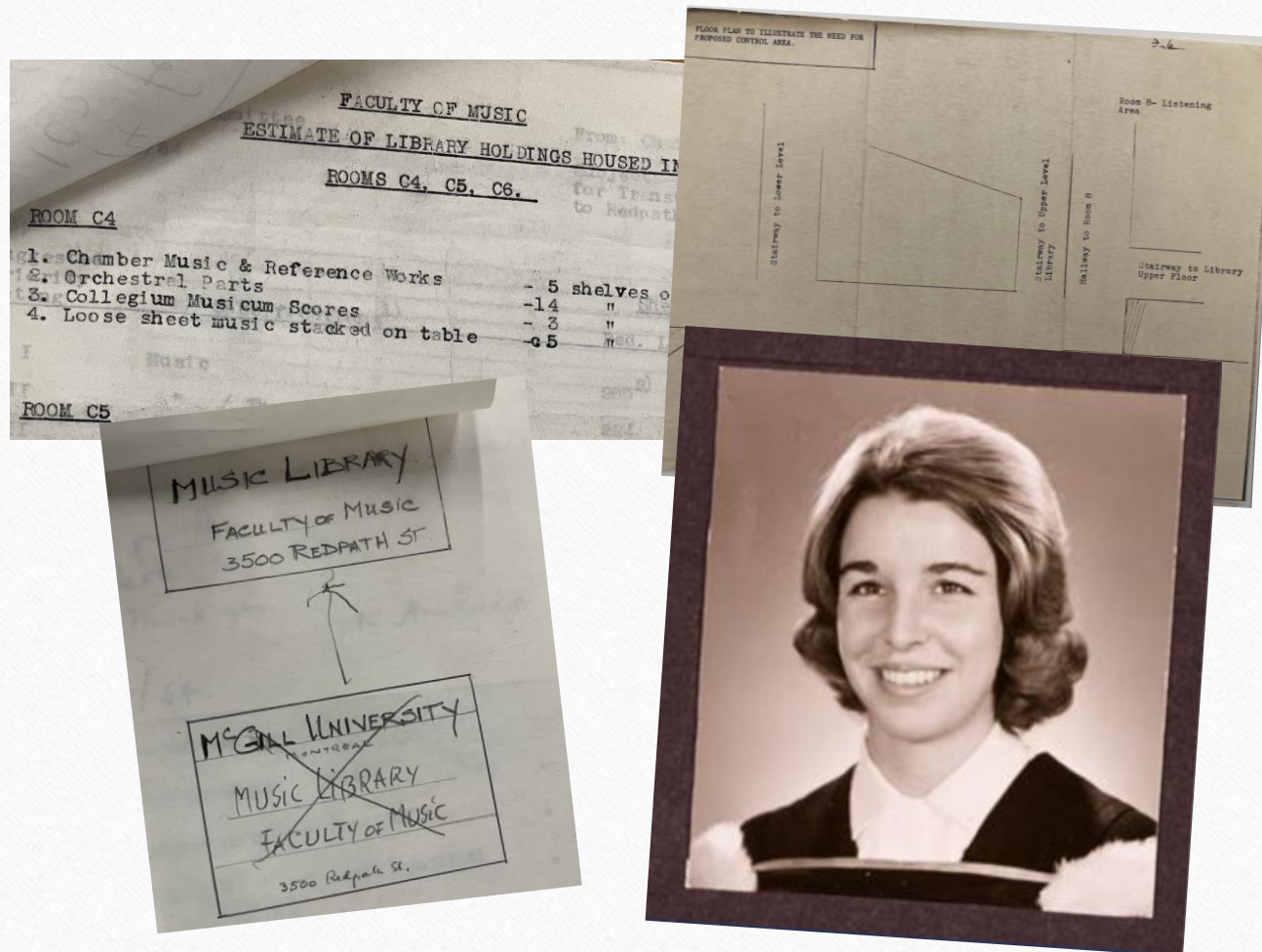
The peculiar irony of my position is that of all the institutions represented here McGill is, I venture to say, the only one with a but half-functioning music library, and without benefit of music librarian. Thus, one segment of our holdings is housed in the central university library—Redpath Library—and is in general circulation. The remainder—an important segment comprising an accumulation of old nineteenth century editions inherited by gift and bequeathal, as well as a solid core of recent publications in the field of collected editions—is scattered about, uncatalogued, in various nooks and crannies of the Faculty building.

Duchow, M. (1960). Canadian Music Libraries: Some Observations. *Notes*, 18(1), 33–39.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/893269>





Olive Hosmer House, 3500 Redpath St.



**McGill**

Libraries  
Bibliothèques





- Kathleen Toomey (1936-2023) was hired in 1967.
- Growth of program offerings, collections, and student body
- Space inadequacies

2. approximately 25% be placed at the disposal of the  
did not improve, a formal note of protest would be drafted  
librarian toward the ordering of both undergraduate and  
by the Library Committee and forwarded to the University  
graduate materials (scores, reference works, etc.) at her  
librarian.  
discretion;  
A list of books, to be acquired, as suggested by [redacted] Clark,

Minutes of the [Music] Library Committee, 17 October 1967



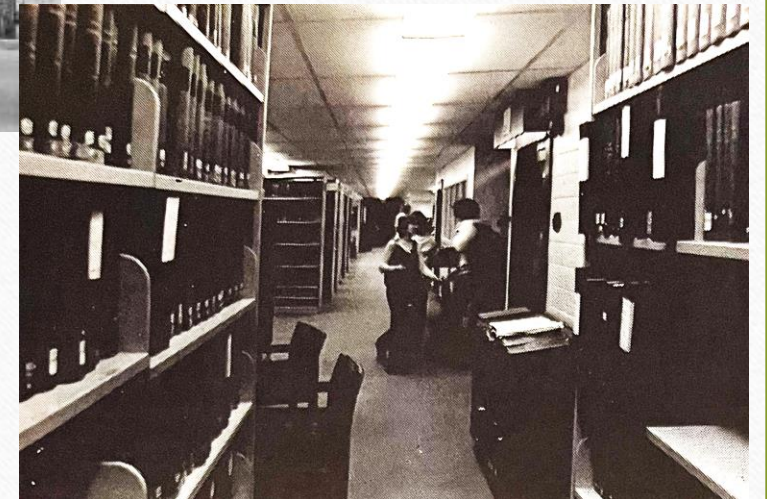
# 1964 – 1975

From left to right: Possibly Dean Helmut Blume, István Anhalt, and Dean Paul Pedersen in the newly assembled Electronic Music Studio (EMS)



Royal Victoria College, new home of the Faculty of Music was renamed the Strathcona Music Building in 1972.

Music Library in the East Wing of the Strathcona Building





# 1976 – 1990s: Period of significant growth

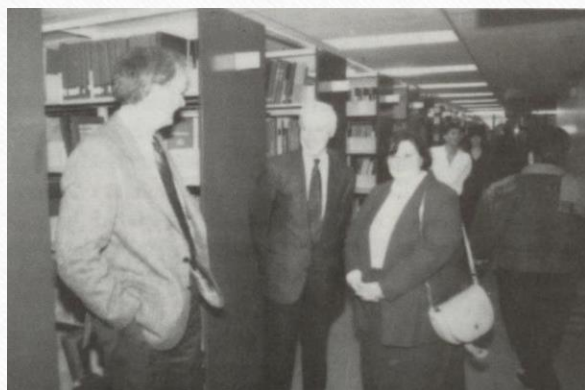
- 1978: PhD programs in Musicology, Music Theory, and Music Education introduced
- 1979: MMus in Sound Recording launched
- 1980: Music Library named in honour of late Dean Marvin Duchow
- 1981: First Canadian BMus program in Jazz established
- 1985: Kathleen Toomey departed to pursue a PhD in Scottish history





- 1986: Cynthia Leive appointed Head Librarian
- 1991: MDML relocated to a temporary location
- MDML described as the “heart” of the Faculty





Overall, the relocation of the Marvin Duchow Music Library has been a very positive experience. As a medium-sized facility serving a very large and diverse Faculty of Music, the Library must be extremely flexible. In as much as the right environment has helped us to be flexible and to provide efficient service, the Library is a success. As we look ahead, we are faced with perhaps the more difficult task of providing the scores and recordings which will satisfy our users' needs. We would hope that the next time the Music Library is faced with a space problem, it will be because our collections have overwhelmed us!

*Cynthia Leive*  
*Music Librarian*

Music McGill, 1992, p.7.



McGill

Libraries  
Bibliothèques



## 2000 – 2018

- Elizabeth Wirth Music Building construction began in 2003, and the facility opened in 2005.





## Undergraduate

Bachelor of Music

Minor Programs

Bachelor of Arts in Music

Licentiate in Music

Double majors and Double Degrees

## Master's

Composition; M.Mus.

Conducting; M.Mus.

Early Music; M.Mus.

Jazz Performance; M.Mus.

Music Education; M.A.

Music Technology; M.A.

Music Theory; M.A.

Musicology; M.A.

Opera and Voice; M.Mus.

Orchestral Instruments & Guitar; M.Mus.

Organ; M.Mus.

Piano - Collaborative; M.Mus.

Piano; M.Mus.

Sound Recording; M.Mus.

## Doctoral

Applied Performance Sciences; Ph.D.

Composition; Ph.D.

Composition; D.Mus.

Interdisciplinary Studies; Ph.D.

Music Education; Ph.D.

Musicology; Ph.D.

Music Technology; Ph.D.

Music Theory; Ph.D.

Performance Studies; D.Mus.

Sound Recording; Ph.D.

## Graduate Certificate

(Cert.) Performance Choral Conducting

McGill-UdeM Piano-Vocal Arts Residency

## Graduate Diplomas

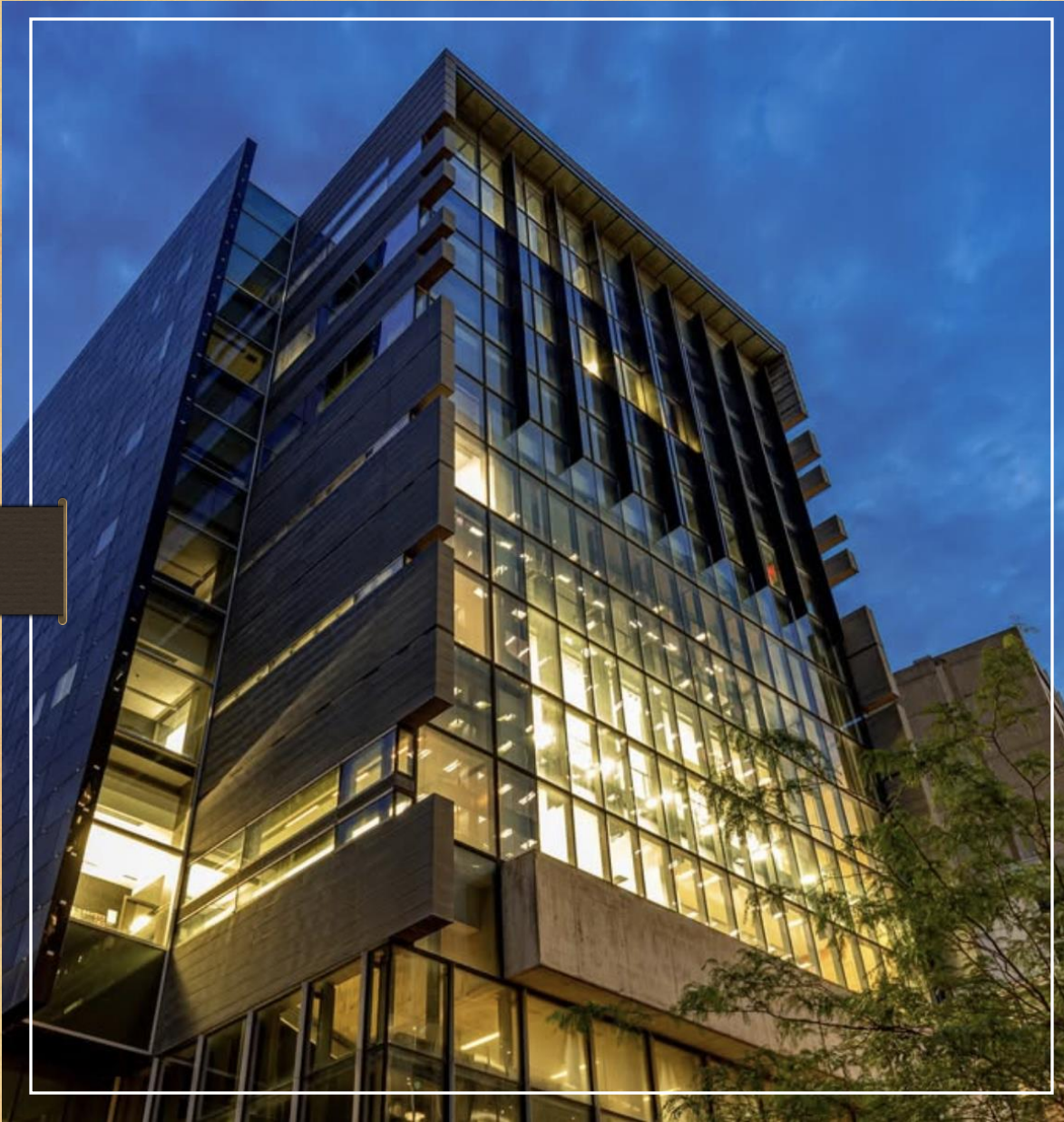
Graduate Diploma in Performance

Post-Graduate Artist Diploma in Performance

## Graduate Courses

Graduate Studies in Music Seminars







# My sabbatical project



# Timing of my sabbatical

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- Chance discovery of Music Library Advisory Committee minutes from 1965
- Early generations of MDML workers and stakeholders now in their 80s or 90s
- Major shift in organizational archiving practices around 2000





# Importance of music library histories

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- Bridging institutional knowledge gaps.
- Promoting music library's support for music scholarship over time.
- Informing strategic leadership and service planning.
- Strengthening advocacy, outreach, and donor engagement efforts.
- Raising music library's profile at local, national and international levels.
- Trends come and go—**good service** is the constant!



# Data sources and methodology





# Data collection activities and procedures

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- Non-restricted archival sources
- Semi-structured interviews
- Published secondary sources
- Informal consultations



# Interviews

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- Former and current MDML librarians and staff with 10+ years of service.
- Former/current deans and key administrators of Schulich School of Music and McGill Libraries.
- Select SSoM faculty with strong library ties, offering valuable perspectives.



# Methodology

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- Thematic analysis
- Data organization and triangulation
- Constructionist approach
- Appreciative inquiry



# Appreciative inquiry

“Fundamentally, [appreciative inquiry] seeks, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities ... [and] assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive.” (Cooperrider and Whitney, p. 613)

Cooperrider, D. L., & Whitney, D. (2000). A positive revolution in change: Appreciative inquiry. In R.T. Golembiewski (Ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior, Revised and Expanded* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 611-629). Routledge. <https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9781482290011>

# Study outcomes

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- Paper presentations at McGill and music library conferences
- Short pieces (e.g., Canadian Encyclopedia article, MDML blog post)
- Peer-reviewed article(s) in *CAML Review*



# Discussion

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- National significance: **How can one tell the story of the whole in any substantial detail when the history of each individual entity has not yet been compiled?**
- The study has allowed me to step back from daily operations and objectively listen to others' perceptions and experiences of the Marvin Duchow Music Library.

# Thank you!

Houman Behzadi

Email: [houman.behzadi@mcgill.ca](mailto:houman.behzadi@mcgill.ca)