Music libraries in Armenia

Report of Lilit Harutyunyan's visit to Italy, 28 May-28 June 2018

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Background

This report has been prepared after one month of professional visit of Ms. Lilit Harutyunyan to the Ufficio Ricerca Fondi Musicali in Milano and the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico in Rome.

This training period was one of the outcomes of the professional travel to Armenia of Mr. Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi on 25-30 November 2017.

The training period consisted in working on maintenance of authority and bibliographic data, cataloguing music resources, talks with librarians, visits to other music libraries and sound archives, study of cataloguing standards and bibliographic models, analysis of data formats, lookups of digitisation activities.

Scope of the visit was to improve Ms. Harutyunyan's skills practising in a highly specialised context and in a country where music is catalogued at a very detailed granularity level, and to report her experience in her motherland.

More information on the context of the visit may be found in the reports of professional visits to Armenian libraries (2006-2017) prepared on behalf of IAML for the Armenian Minister of Culture by Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi and Ruth Hellen, enclosed.

Outline of the report

1. Visits
2. Outcomes of the visit
3. Conclusions

1 Visits

- Ufficio Ricerca Fondi Musicali della Biblioteca nazionale Braidense, Milano
- Biblioteca del Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi", Milano
- Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, Milano
- Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico e per le informazioni bibliografiche, Roma
- Istituto Centrale per i Beni Sonori e Audiovisivi, Roma

1.1 Ufficio Ricerca Fondi Musicali, Biblioteca del Conservatorio "G. Verdi"

The Ufficio Ricerca Fondi Musicali (URFM, http://www.urfm.braidense.it), founded in 1965 by the Italian Ministry of Education to host the National retrospective catalogue of printed and manuscript music, is the main music bibliographic centre in Italy, its main function being now to take part to the development of national music cataloguing rules and guidelines (http://norme.iccu.sbn.it), to the maintenance of the national union catalogue SBN (http://opac.sbn.it) in what concerns bibliographic and authority data, to the development of the format of data in the union catalogue, and to the maintenance and development of

international cataloguing formats and specialised controlled vocabularies. Being entitled of legal deposit of the music printed in Milan Province, one of the activities of URFM is to catalogue its holdings.

Milan Conservatory library (http://www.consmilano.it/it/biblioteca) is the largest music library in Italy, owning more than 500.000 items, 30.000 of which are music manuscripts, entitled of regional legal deposit of printed music and sound recordings.

Ms. Harutyunyan was based at URFM from 28 May to 15 June. She mainly devoted her time to:

- Revision of all Aram Hačaturyan's and Komitas Vardapet's work titles in the union catalogue
- Revision and analytic cataloguing of Khačaturyan's Collected works
- Revision of names of Armenian composers in the union catalogue
- Cataloguing different music resources in the union catalogue
- Studying cataloguing standards and the new IFLA Library Reference Model, and apply the aforesaid rules and concepts to her cataloguing activities

Part of the activities were carried out in collaboration with Attilio Rossi (URFM) and Marta Cattoglio (Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Milano).

Ms. Harutyunyan could use different local cataloguing systems (based on the national application SBNWeb, http://www.iccu.sbn.it/opencms/opencms/it/main/sbn/SbnWeb/) and the special application "Interfaccia Diretta" (http://id.iccu.sbn.it), used to centrally manage bibliographic and authority data. Online and paper repertoires were available, including the World Biographical Index and Grove Online.

The Italian union catalogue is characterised by including special data for music resources, such as a detailed list of voices and instruments for musical works and arrangements, separate subfields for work numbers, place and date of performance, coded data for musical forms, key, music incipit, and music presentation format. Many locally developed fields are now standard both in the native format, UNIMARC, and in Marc21.

The revision work on Hačaturyan's Collected works (*Sobranie sočinenij v dvadcati četyreh tomah / Aram Hačaturjan ; redaktor toma Arutjunov D. A.* – Moskva : Izdatel'stvo Muzyka, 1982-1989) followed the international standards, and consisted in replacing the transcription of English titles with the transliterated Russian titles, compiling parallel elements, adding analytic records when needed, and especially correcting all uniform titles, with the most detailed data that could be taken from the sources.

A similar work was performed on Komitas Vardapet's works, and preparatory elements for the activities in Rome were collected.

A comparative analysis of the Italian and Armenian cataloguing formats used respectively in SBNMarc and Koha Marc21, was tentatively performed, revealing some lacks of opportunities to describe and give access to music resources in Koha (e.g. in the detailed enumeration of music instruments, or in the description of data concerning music performances), and in order to figure out possible developments needed to catalogue music in detail in the Armenian catalogue. A more technical work should be carried on, to reach better conclusions.

1.2 Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense

The library (http://www.braidense.it) is the main historical library of the region, founded in 1770, with important collections acquired through donations, absorption of other private and ecclesiastical libraries, and legal deposit. Among its about 1.500.000 bibliographic units the library owns a collection of 12.000 librettos, entirely catalogued and digitised.

Thanks to the head of the digitisation department of the library, Aldo Coletto, Ms. Harutyunyan could overlook digitisation activities of historical periodicals, and during her tour to the stacks see the collection of Armenian books of the library of the 19th Century, printed in Venice. Mr. Coletto provided the pages of the inventory of these books; as an outcome of the visit, a collaborative project has been envisaged, to have them properly catalogued in the national union catalogue, and possibly digitised.

1.3 Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico

In Rome Ms. Harutyunyan devoted most of her activities to the work on authority data, and to the issues of the transliteration conventions.

Following the work on names carried out in Milan, in collaboration with the responsible of the maintenance of authority data in SBN, Giuseppina Leolini, Ms. Harutyunyan controlled all names of Armenian authors in the catalogued, adding bio-bibliographic data and identifying elements, controlling international repertoires such as VIAF (https://viaf.org/) and ISNI (http://www.isni.org/), so to raise the encoding level of records to the highest degree.

The transliteration of Armenian remains an issue, as Italian cataloguing rules give the only indication to use the ISO standard, which is not ideal, as some special characters are not included in the virtual keyboards of the cataloguing applications, and some may not be searchable in the managing system and through the OPAC. Furthermore, ISO transliteration does not seem to be clearly understandable (see https:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Armenian and https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ Wiktionary:Armenian_transliteration), and other systems (such as Hübschmann-Meillet-Benveniste) seem to be clearer and more generally used. Contacts through Ms. Harutyunyan will continue in the future, as transliteration issues are common for other alphabets.

Ms. Harutyunyan spent some time in the division on digitisation (http://www.internetculturale.it/), assisted by Marco Scarbace. She focused on analysing the managing metadata standards, METS and MAG, on the applications used to generate them from bibliographic and image/sound-technical data, on the different resolutions and formats of digital files for online distribution and preservation, on the content managing system, and on all the preparatory work needed to publish the digital files on the web and to connect the images to the catalogue.

In the division on manuscripts, the head Lucia Negrini introduced Ms. Harutyunyan to the cataloguing activities of MANUS Online (https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/), the census catalogue of Italian manuscripts, focusing on internal and external description, on the different degrees of granularity of the data that may be inserted, on the search interface.

1.4 Istituto Centrale per i Beni Sonori e Audiovisivi

The former Discoteca di Stato (http://www.icbsa.it/) is the Italian National sound archive, owning more than 450.000 published and non published, contemporary and historical sound recordings. More than 410.000 items are described in SBN, with over 1.400.000 analytic descriptions of sound tracks.

During her visit, Ms. Harutyunyan could see the historical museum, displaying carriers and apparels from the origin of sound recording to the present, and the stacks where carriers are preserved in the best possible conditions, and the digitisation studio. Long-term preservation issues of sound recordings and digital files were discussed. Technical devices were shown and technical issues discussed with members of the staff, Francesco Baldi, Antonella Fischetti, Luciano D'Aleo and Giulia Piperno. In order to show the digitisation process, an unpublished tape recording of a concert of the Armenia pianist Svetlana Navasardyan held in 1980 in the Auditorium of the Institute was digitised, and two encores of Armenian music identified; uniform titles were corrected accordingly.

2 Outcomes of the visit

Many of the following observations concern not only Ms. Harutyunyan and her work in Italy, but may involve a broader participation of the Komitas Museum-Institute, and other institutions in Armenia, such as the National Library of Armenia.

Ms. Harutyunyan could work directly in a highly specialised context and make practice of different aspects of the professional activities in music libraries and in a shared cataloguing, both as a local librarian and as a central system manager. She will report on her impressions and on what should be desirable in the Armenian cataloguing context, for local and international users, in order to make the Armenian music heritage more easily accessible.

Some projects have been envisaged, such as cataloguing and digitising Armenian books in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, where the help of skilled Armenian cataloguers is more than desirable. That may not only be an advantage for the Italian library, but for the knowledge of the Armenian culture in the widest possible context.

Issues of transliteration of the Armenian alphabet have been highlighted; it would be desirable to find the most shared solution, possibly internationally.

Many multilingual controlled vocabularies, e.g. terms for musical forms and music instruments, may be enriched by adding variant terms in Armenian. Collaboration and help is offered, and welcome.

Armenian cataloguing rules for music and essential repertoires, such as IFLA's *Names of persons* seem to be outdated. It would be desirable to undertake an updating process.

3 Conclusions

The visit was very interesting and productive, a fruitful experience on both sides. Many issues were raised, many solutions found or envisaged, but much remains to be done. Hopefully the collaboration will continue, remotely, or in person, in Italy or Armenia, with the aim to offer an experience that should make the Armenian heritage more accessible to all.

Useful links

http://www.iaml.info

https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/faife/publications/ifla-world-report/armenia.pdf

Related reports

- Report of the IAML delegation, 9-15 October 2006
- Report of visit, 25-30 November 2017
- Report of visit, 17-20 October 2018

Respectfully submitted

Massimo Gentili-Tedeschi

IAML, June 2018