



Facilitators of Creativity and Life-long Learning:

Position statement on Music in Public Libraries

Music is a universal language that belongs to everybody. It enables us to reach a deeper sense of our existence and to express ourselves beyond rational boundaries. Music is an essential part of being human. Music plays a crucial role in our society. Its ability to build bridges between people from different social and cultural backgrounds is of utmost value. It is an important part of our cultural heritage and imparts a feeling of unity and belonging.

Public music libraries fulfill an important mandate by providing access to music in its varied forms and formats to the wider general public. They are open institutions that share music resources and expertise with a multi-faceted range of users of varying age groups, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, and with highly different levels of music literacy from newcomers to seasoned experts.

Music holds a unique position within libraries, as it is a language with its own notation system and its own forms of publication. Sheet music, audio- and video-recordings, whether in printed or digitized form, are the principal types of material in a public music library, but the collection will be significantly enriched by music instruments and music technology, and complementary material such as literature, journals, and reference databases.

In order to provide a good service, public music librarians need to possess both the ability to read music and a substantial knowledge of music history, repertoire and terminology. Subject-specific knowledge is vital, not only for reference work, but in order to manage such areas as acquisitions, cataloguing or interlibrary loans. Moreover, skills in organizing public music performances and experiences in handling music instruments and music technology for music maker spaces are becoming increasingly important.

Librarians with music expertise enhance the provision of public music library services and increase the impact of those services by, for example,

- Incorporating music in early language and literacy programs and activities
- Building music collections that meet the varied needs of the community
- Guiding patrons of all ages on their varied explorations of music using those collections
- Developing creative STEM programming and activities incorporating music and its basis in and relationships with science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and the other arts
- Creating and providing entertaining yet educational music programming for lifelong learning, including workshops, musical performances and other formats
- Helping the public achieve music making throughout their lives with the provision of scores, instruments, and music technology

- Preparing people for the creative economy by helping them develop their knowledge base and skills with the library's music collections, programming and maker space activities

The overarching goal of public music libraries is to inspire creativity and to foster life-long learning. Librarians with subject-specific knowledge are essential in fulfilling this mission on a daily basis.

"Libraries have this incredible promise—that you can build your future in here. You can be your best person inside this building." [Tommi Laitio](#), Executive Director for Culture and Leisure, Helsinki, Finland