



Association internationale des bibliothèques, archives et centres de documentation musicaux (AIBM)

International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (IAML)

Internationale Vereinigung der Musikbibliotheken, Musikarchive und Musikdokumentationszentren (IVMB)

Service and Training commission Report from 2009 conference in Amsterdam

The Commission on Service and Training presented two sessions at the Amsterdam Conference, comprising six papers given by a total of seven speakers. These were the first sessions organised by the Commission's new committee: Geoff Thomason (Chair), John Wagstaff (Vice chair) and Jürgen Diet (Secretary). Both sessions focussed on the theme of training both library users and library staff to work with music materials.

Our first session on 8 July "Training for specialists and non-specialists" began with a minute's silence observed in memory of Wolfgang Krueger, the Commission's former Chair whose death early this year was a sad loss to IAML and whom we honoured not least for the high standards which he has set us. It was fitting therefore that one of the morning's papers built on the training programmes which Wolfgang had developed in Stuttgart. First, though, John Valk's paper "Sheet music for dummies" outlined a project at the Rotterdam Public Library aimed at training non-specialist staff to deal with music-based queries. The library's long opening hours entail staff working on a rota system, dealing with a variety of subjects. The music collection is substantial and contains some 50,000 items of sheet music. "Sheet music for dummies" introduces staff to topics such as musical terminology, formats, notation as well as common hard copy and online search tools. Non-specialist staff are paired with specialists in fielding genuine queries, learning, for example, how to construct a reference interview in order to ascertain the information need to satisfy a request. This hands-on experience is complemented by specially designed training presentations and back-up documentation. The whole is reminiscent of the UK and Ireland branches "Music for the terrified" course.

Jürgen Diet's paper "Combining music librarianship courses for masters students with professional training at the Media University in Stuttgart" began by explaining that the Media University was one of three in Germany currently offering specialist courses in music librarianship and paid tribute to Wolfgang Krueger who did so much to establish and develop it. It offers both B.A. and M.A. courses, with the latter containing an optional module in music information management, taught in the main by tutors engaged for their expertise in areas such as copyright or digitisation. To make up numbers, these four-term masters courses are opened as well to those already in the profession who are able to take individual modules as part of their professional development. Much of this is done via distance learning using Moodle, although students do attend an on-site seminar in February. Entrants need a first degree in library and information studies or relevant professional experience. At present the course, which is now in its third year, is in German only but there are plans to develop an English-language version.

In "Spreading the message" John Wagstaff gave an insight into two very different distance learning courses in music librarianship. One is at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth, which John coordinates from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This is the only UK course with a music option and attracts between eight and ten students per year. John's home base at Urbana Champaign is one of five in the USA to offer such a course. A credit-based system, it is built around two compulsory core courses with an additional range of options. Numbers have increased since the course went online in 2008, enabling students to log on from anywhere in the USA. Moreover, students at US or Canadian institutions which are part of WISE (Web-based Information in Science and Education) can be registered at their own university but gain credits at another WISE-affiliated one. With not a little humour, John informed us of some of the minor problems he has experienced, such as connecting as a tutor with students who are not physically present. Distance can also be a problem for out of state students attending on-campus days. John confessed that he had had to develop new approaches and feared that in the long term classroom skills might be lost.

The second session "Training inside out" took place on Friday 10 July and opened with Ria Warmerdam's intriguingly entitled paper "Tales of a travelling show". Admitting that she had drawn the short straw, she reported on the outcome of a decision by Dutch IAML to form a committee to investigate the training of music librarians as no library schools in the Netherlands had offered specialist courses since the 1980s. Taking its cue from the UK & Ireland branch's "Music for the terrified" course a project developed to take the training to the Dutch libraries where it was needed. So far four such courses had run, each with a specific theme such as world music, popular music or dealing with enquiries, each delivered by a specialist in that field. Newer courses covering topics such as music cataloguing were being developed, but risked becoming more expensive as they became more formalised. Currently the fee is 150 euros for a three-day course. Not the least entertaining part of Ria's presentation was its humorous tips for dummies on the iconography of CD covers as a clue to their content.



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“Understanding your music collection and your users” was both the title and the thesis of Katie Lai’s presentation on how she undertook the first in depth survey of the music collections in the 50-year history of the Hong Kong Baptist University. As its first specialist music librarian she inherited a collection which had grown largely to reflect academic biases. Using the Conspectus survey tool she analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the collections from the twin viewpoints of the need to maintain a balance and the need to meet users’ needs. To do this she needed to adapt Conspectus to cater for Dewey rather than Library of Congress classification and to assess holdings by genre rather than LoC subject headings. 67% of users responded to the survey, which analysed perceived importance against frequency of use.

The final paper “Musicology and beyond” was given jointly by Willem Rodenhuis of the University of Amsterdam and Joost van Gemert of Utrecht University and focussed on the training of teaching information literacy in an academic context. Willem stressed the need to focus on students’ own curiosity and how they prefer to seek information, which may be at odds with the more traditional methods espoused by their teachers. The online information environment had created a need to understand the mindsets of those searching for information. One outcome is that teaching has to be less top-down and more interactive. Joost posed the question as this can be put into practice. One solution was to dispense with all but the minimum of introduction and to allow students to think for themselves from the outset. His experience was that what was taught in long lectures and seminars was often not retained by students. It was also useful to link training to specific courses. He offered several possible approaches in addition to the above, such as getting the students to work in groups to assess the pros and cons of different search engines or their suitability for different information goals.