



*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)*

# United Kingdom & Ireland, report 2012

The UK & Ireland branch has had a very busy year, with lots of important work being undertaken by its members on behalf of music libraries throughout our two countries. These are undoubtedly challenging times, but the commitment of those who work in our profession has ensured that we have lots of achievements and work in progress to report. At the outset therefore I'd like to thank and express my sincere appreciation to all of my fellow IAML colleagues who have given freely of their time to make all of this possible.

Financial issues in the public sector continue to exert pressure. One of the most serious challenges we faced this year was to ensure the best possible outcome for the future of the collections formerly held by Yorkshire Library and Information Services at Wakefield. One of the country's biggest and most important lending collections of vocal and instrumental performance sets, solo and chamber editions, and play sets, was under threat as the 12 local authorities who manage the service gave notice that they could no longer do so. IAML(UK&Irl) lobbied hard, with the support of user communities represented by groups such as Making Music [an association that supports all forms of non-professional music making: <http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/>] to try to find a solution that preserved the integrity of the collection, and provided adequate access and related services, with proper, professional staffing. In the end, a compromise was reached, with most of the collection finding homes in two locations in Leeds and Huddersfield. Unfortunately, the staff from Wakefield were made redundant but the branch has already made contact with those who will run the service at Huddersfield as a social enterprise, to give all possible support and guidance. Among other things, this taught us the importance of engaging with users in support of library services: inevitably they speak with louder voices than those who, it is otherwise (and wrongly) suspected, are just trying to protect their own jobs.

The branch was also in dialogue with local authorities in Bromley, Kent, over lending charges, and Hertfordshire, over the relocation of music library facilities within the county. We note, too, with more than a little alarm that, just as last year we reported that in the UK the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council [The civil service department responsible for libraries within the Department of Culture, Media and Sport] had been abolished completely, so the Library Council of Ireland has been abolished, and COLICO3 [Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland: <http://www.librarycouncil.ie/colico/> (link is external)] too, which has supported such projects as MusicPAL (link is external), a cataloguing and access programme that operates across



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both Northern Ireland and the Republic. We are all the more pleased, therefore, that IAML (UK&Irl), through its associated Music Libraries Trust, has made a modest contribution towards the costs of a feasibility study for Find Music, a proposed union catalogue for music materials in Ireland. Such support as this may serve as essential sustenance until more prosperous times.

Another major issue addressed this year – or rather, just begun – is the transition to electronic communication. Here the branch is considering in parallel and, at a more local level, issues that our IAML is already considering internationally. We have already ceased to publish our *Newsletter* in paper form. Instead, it is available from our website. Congratulations to Anna Pensaert for overseeing this change. We also now produce our Annual Report electronically, and circulate documentation for our AGM by these means, too. For the moment our journal, *Brio*, and Membership Directory remain in printed format while we consider next steps. ‘Pas a pas, on va bien loin.’ We need to consider the implication of ceasing print runs of *Brio* for those who subscribe without taking out memberships (mainly institutions), and to consider data protection issues in relation to membership information.

Very much tied up with these developments is our review of the branch website. We feel it needs updating. We are not rushing with this, either, though, but instead, patiently deciding for ourselves what the essential and desirable functionality might be, and taking care to distinguish between the two. So far we have identified that we want to find a way of presenting the information in ways that are intelligible, useful, and convenient both for library professionals and everyone else, alike. This is as much a question of writing style as web design. Also important is the need for a members-only area where dialogue, documents, and more confidential communication and debate may take place. Like IAML, our branch also aspires to electronic voting for elected posts within the branch. A survey of members’ views is being planned, asking top-level questions such as what they want to see more / less of on the website. We would be delighted to receive ideas we haven’t yet thought of, and we don’t want to ask specific questions which might be too leading and result in answers to those questions alone.

This year, too, we have been drawing breath after organising the Dublin conference last year. It was a great honour and pleasure for us to be able to reciprocate the hospitality that we have received from our colleagues abroad on an annual basis, and were delighted to raise awareness of all of the activity taking place in the field of music and libraries in our bi-national branch. Strictly, of course, our branch encompasses more than just 2 countries (though the exact number is currently a matter of some debate), and so it was to Wales that we travelled for this year’s Annual Study Weekend in April. The welcome and hospitality we received there were superlative (sincere thanks particularly to Professor David Wyn Jones and Charity Dove and



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their colleagues) and it was once again a pleasure to hear at first hand about musical life in Wales from a number of guest speakers. One of the recent local successes was the award to Cardiff University, working with RISM, IAML, and the British Library, of a grant from within the higher-education sector to catalogue three significant historic library collections. Projects such as these illustrate the value of partnerships and collaborations.

It was at Cardiff too that the presentation ceremony took place which conferred awards for excellence of service by libraries and librarians within the UK and Ireland. We were extremely grateful to Professor Jan Smaczny (Queen's University, Belfast) and his colleagues from all sectors on the judging panel for their support of this. The awards are an invaluable way of recognising the vital work that music libraries and librarians do – work which it is all too easy to overlook or take for granted.

One of the guest speakers at Cardiff was Annie Mauger, the Chief Executive of CILIP [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals], who gave us some valuable food for thought about how to make the case for resources for music and libraries in these difficult times. Our branch is 'in association' with CILIP, and we intend to make this relationship as meaningful as possible. On that score, the branch is giving thought to how it can present the essential services that libraries offer, and the vital role that music plays in all walks of society, in the most persuasive manner. IAML is a vital tool of advocacy in all of this. We need to provide our members with the materials to support their work, explain its importance, make new contacts, and, above all, provide users with the services that they want.

Membership (December 2011): 212, of which 101 were institutional (53 national, 48 international) and 111 personal (61 national, 50 international). The branch President is Richard Chesser (British Library), the President-Elect is Peter Baxter (Surrey Performing Arts Library), the General Secretary is Catherine Ferris (Dublin Institute of Technology) and the Treasurer is Claire Kidwell (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance). Our publications and editors are: *Brio*, ed. Katharine Hogg; *Newsletter*, ed. Anna Pensaert (both two issues p.a.); and our website [www.iaml-uk-irl.org](http://www.iaml-uk-irl.org)([link is external](#)); webmaster Antony Gordon.

*Richard Chesser*

*President, IAML (UK and Ireland)*