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The United Kingdom has achieved recent notoriety for the progeny of the affliction known as "Mad Cow Disease." Another equally pernicious if less well reported U.K. condition has emerged as "Mad Music Library Disease" [MMLD]. The tell-tale symptoms of MMLD involve an involuntary decline of overall funding, an involuntary reduction of staffing levels, the involuntary deletion of music librarian posts, and, at its worst, the involuntary culling of music libraries altogether. The root causes of Mad Cow Disease and MMLD are common: a Gadarene persistence to abolish standards controls and axe funding by a central Government which seems to regard all aspects of public expenditure as essential evil. In 1995 I reported a mixed year of achievement and frustration. A year later, achievements are won harder still, and frustrations ever more apparent.

MMLD is apparent at all levels of our profession. A major academic post, threatened with deletion, was saved only by a 50% downgrading. In public libraries, the longest-serving London music librarian with thirty years experience has just had his post deleted within a "management restructuring." Even the British Library has suffered severe funding and staffing cuts which will unavoidably affect service delivery to end users. The ultimate tragedy and national disgrace is the closure in July 1996 of the National Music and Disability Information Service—a unique source of information for anyone who is, becomes, works with, or is concerned for the disabled. Its two-year quest for continuation funding failed to attract either government or corporate support. This is the ultimate casualty of MMLD.

MMLD has affected the furthering of the Music LIP [Library and Information Plan], now more than two years since its extensive research and publication of its recommendations. Funding is essential for further research to be undertaken and recommendations initiated, and much store was placed in the creation of a Library and Information Commission [LIC] in 1995. It invited applications for funding, to which IAML(UK) responded swiftly, only for the Government to respond to the heresy of potential expenditure and remove its research budget altogether. A clear, understandable, and creditable response is still awaited from a funding-shorn LIC.

Music librarians nonetheless prove themselves a hardy breed with a seemingly inbred resistance to MMLD. The redoubtable Malcolm Jones has devised a computer catalogue of vocal sets held in West Midlands libraries which has the dangerous potential for the development of a national union catalogue of vocal sets. Nöelle Mann of Goldsmith College's Prokofiev Archive has devised an ambitious plan for a London-based Centre of Russian Music, working in close collaboration



with colleagues in Moscow and St. Petersburg. John Wagstaff is still embroiled in preparatory work for the eagerly awaited second edition of the *British Union Catalogue of Music Periodicals* [BUCOMP2]. Would that their apparent resistance to MMLD could be implanted into government ministers and compliant managers.

MMLD might be thought to have little effect on the continuing commitment of the Branch to outreach involvement. For the second year, we welcomed Eastern European delegates from Croatia, The Czech Republic, and Slovakia to our Annual Study Weekend at Bristol (April 1996), their attendance funded variously by The British Council and The Soros Foundation.

Exploratory visits have been researched and planned for Autumn 1996 by Margaret Brandram to Croatia and by myself to Bulgaria and Macedonia. Albania remains a major interest and commitment. IAMLC(UK) has been pleased to work in collaboration with The Music Libraries Trust [ML T] and The Contemporary Music Centre Dublin (whose manager is Secretary of IAMIC) to submit a proposal to the European Union Phare program for the creation of a new music library as an Albanian Music Information Center. Yet even here MMLD became apparent in a total and depressing failure to secure any contributory funding from U.K. sources. The application is in fact supported by a New York financier (The Soros Foundation) and a group of Swiss families (The Solon Foundation).

Perhaps the most exciting development is again a collaboration of IAMLC(UK) with ML T in addressing the current lack of any specialist professional training in music librarianship. Plans have evolved for a distance learning course to be offered by the Aberystwyth School of Librarianship which will be available not only to students of librarianship anywhere in the country but also to music librarians learning *in situ*. IAMLC(UK) is also resurrecting its program of one-day training courses, regarded as a fundamental responsibility of the Branch to its members and to the library profession as a whole. IAMLC(UK) has also already started to plan the details of the IAMLC international Conference at Edinburgh, August 6-11, 2000. It is tempting indeed, even now, to offer two pledges: no beef and no booking agencies.

At its Annual General Meeting in April 1996, IAMLC(UK) took pleasure in awarding most deserved Honorary Memberships in recognition of long and outstanding service to the Branch, to the sagacious and ever active Roger Crudge and to the workaholic but supremely fragrant Pamela Thompson. Theirs are examples we all need to follow. They are indeed living antidotes to MMLD.

Roger Taylor

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