

IAML-IASA Congress in Oslo, Norway

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From a relatively cool Canadian summer, delegates to the first joint conference since 1996 of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centers (IAML) and the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), were greeted with a warm welcome from our Norwegian hosts. Even warmer were the record temperatures as Oslo was in the grip of a heat wave. Those that were prepared for a northern climate and rain received a shock as the balmy conditions heated both the discussions and the rooms, many of which lacked air conditioning. The cost of living in Oslo also drew some comments. A simple meal of a chicken burger with salad and a glass of wine in a decent but not extravagant restaurant set me back about \$60.00; a soft drink could be \$8.00 at a corner store. There were better prices around, but mostly it was a case of get out your credit card and worry about it later. Norway provides extensive health care and free university education. It has also gone from being one of the poorest countries in Europe at the end of the Second World War to one of the wealthiest, courtesy of oil. But there is a cost and those that eat in restaurants and stay in hotels pay the price.

Still, the over-300 delegates from forty-one countries did not dwell on the prices and the heat. Instead, they warmed

to the task of listening, talking, meeting and greeting, with some time-out for socializing. Music and multimedia was a central theme of the proceedings. There were eight delegates from Canada including myself, Nicole Blain from the CBC, Maria Calderisi formerly of the National Library of Canada, Ichiro Fujinaga from McGill, Alison Hall formerly of Carleton University, John Roeder of UBC, Daniel Paradis from Université de Montréal and Beverly Oziewicz. The conference was held at the Blindern campus of the University of Oslo, with the modern Georg Sverdrups Hus Library as the central location. This open, glass-fronted building, which opened in 1999, also contains meeting rooms, lecture halls, and Internet access, and was the site of the trade show that ran throughout the conference. Conference delegates were able to mingle with students who were returning for the next semester, both at the Library and at the Blindern Studentehjem residence, which provided accommodation and meals for many of the attendees. Being on campus, with its concerts, pubs, dances and numerous other activities, including students just hanging out, brought back many memories.

As a Vice-President of IASA, I spent a fair amount of time at meetings and was focused more on the conference's sessions on sound recordings. Of

particular interest was the session entitled "Documentation: Whose Turn Is It Now?" that looked at the world of descriptive cataloguing and collections in the changing digital environment. The three papers—"Stepping Over the Digital Threshold: Cataloguing Perspectives Seen From the Angle of the Österreichische Mediathek" presented by Rainer Hubert of the Österreichische Mediathek in Vienna, "Archiving Analogue and Digital Sound Files at the National Library of Norway" by Lisbeth Johannessen from the National Library of Norway, and "How Flexible and Scalable is Your Catalogue? Developing a Large Database of Sound Recordings at the British Library" by Chris Clark from the British Library—looked at the changes that are taking place in cataloguing and documentation as a result of technical change and rising expectations. The demands placed on today's cataloguing systems go beyond the basic identification of an institution's holdings for onsite patrons. The Internet has broadened the client base and exposed libraries to a more diverse community. Advances in technology now make it possible to link the cataloguing record either to the item itself or a digital version of it. A catalogue needs to be flexible, adaptable, intuitive, and detailed enough to meet the client's needs. It also must be able to exchange information with a variety of other internal and external systems for storage and communication. The catalogue can't be developed in isolation from other activities, including budgeting. These are demands that almost every institution is facing and this session outlined successfully the issues and some of the solutions.

Another session on changing technology was "New Solutions for Presentation, Storage and Preservation," chaired by myself and Antony Gordon from the British Library. There were papers from Kevin Bradley of the National Library of Australia about a project to link sheet music and recorded music (www.musicaustralia.org/), Michel Merton from Belgium's Musica Numeris (www.musicanumeris.com/EN/welcome.shtml) who talked about a service to provide mass digital storage solutions for smaller institutions, and Pio Pellizzari from the Fonoteca Nazionale in Switzerland who lead a group presentation on playing fragile disc recordings using photography. The session was a good reflection of the conference theme and the various ways that music and technology can be explored.

A session on "Preserving Sound" looked at the issue of equipment maintenance and the realization that obsolescence will make access to many tape collections impossible when there are no replacement parts or trained service technicians. The same session saw the introduction of a new publication from the IASA Technical Committee, entitled *Guidelines on the Production and Preservation of Digital Audio Objects*. It is the best summary of digitization issues currently available. Ordering information will shortly be available on the IASA Web site (www.iasa-web.org/index.htm). I can also forward an order form upon request.

Other sessions focused on "Multimedia Discography Data Banks," "Collecting Sound," "Online Music Distribution Systems from a Music

Library Perspective,” a few interesting sessions on Norwegian music, and still more on the never-ending topic of copyright. Some of the papers are now on the conference Web site (www.iaml-iasa2004.musikk.no/speakers/papers.htm) and others, I am sure, will be published in *Fontes* and the *IASA Journal* in the coming months. Also as usual, both IASA and IAML held committee meetings and general assemblies.

Some sessions were of particular interest to IASA members, some to IAML. Some were joint efforts. Attending sessions gave delegates from both organizations the chance to compare notes and see what others were doing. It was interesting to see how the two groups were evolving and what their priorities were. Sometimes simple terms like “training” posed a challenge. Training to IAML seemed to be mostly internal, professional education; training to IASA means outreach and sharing of expertise, often in less developed countries. It was also clear that some institutions and individuals were at very different points on the technology cycle including issues such as the Web, metadata, digitization, digital storage, and resource sharing. In all cases, though, the enthusiasm for our work was apparent.

Both organizations had the chance to mingle at various social events such as the opening reception at the Library featuring the music of Arne Nordheim, with the composer present. There was a visit and reception at the city hall in the

centre of Oslo, that highlighted another Nordheim composition, *Ohm*, which echoed atmospherically around the central hall. The building also boasts an impressive collection of paintings and murals with many of the public rooms decorated by leading Norwegian artists from the first half of the twentieth century. There was a “Norsk” evening, half-day tours of various tourist and professional sites, a concert at the Gamle Logen, the old Masonic Hall where Edvard Grieg held many concerts, and a farewell dinner at the University. Those that took advantage of the post-conference tour to Bergen experienced a magical evening at Grieg’s summer home, “Troidhaugen,” which included a concert on Grieg’s piano in the living room, dinner, and a lovely sunset. Also included in the Bergen tour was a visit to the whimsical home of violinist Ole Bull, a trip to “Siljustøl” (the home of contemporary composer Harald Sæverud), a visit to the municipal library (which had enviable music facilities), and plenty of opportunity to wander around the historic town. Wherever we went, our hosts were gracious and welcoming; the weather was warm and it didn’t rain. Next year IASA will be meeting in Barcelona, Spain, in September and IAML will be in Warsaw, Poland, in July. I hope you will be able to attend and learn more about music libraries and sound and audiovisual archives. I am sure both will be interesting experiences and getting an international perspective on our work is worthwhile and invigorating.