Conference Notes and Impressions:
The Music Library Association's 81st Annual Meeting, Dallas, Texas, February 15-19, 2012

by Carolyn Doi
University of Saskatchewan

The 81st Annual Meeting of the Music Library Association (MLA) convened at the Fairmont Dallas Hotel in Dallas, Texas. The conference planning committee compiled an engaging program featuring a variety of sessions, business meetings, networking opportunities and cultural activities.

Pre-planned sightseeing and cultural activities gave conference attendees the opportunity to learn more about local history and the arts scene. As part of the organ crawl, participants were treated to a private performance by resident organist Mary Preston, on the Lay Family Concert Organ located at the Meyerson Symphony Center. A tour of the impressive Dallas Arts District featured behind the scenes visits to the Meyerson Symphony Center, Winspear Opera House, and Wyley Theatre. A dessert reception was held on the Meyerson Symphony Center's east terrace followed by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in concert, conducted by Jaap van Zweden and featuring Severin von Eckardstein on piano. MLA members were able to enjoy the concert from seats in the Choral Terrace, located behind the orchestra. In keeping with MLA tradition, the conference closed with a reception and banquet where attendees enjoyed music by the MLA Big Band.

This year's Annual Meeting featured sessions spanning a range of current issues in music librarianship. These included plenary sessions on jazz collections at the University of North Texas and shared resources for online music sources. Individual, sponsored and poster sessions covered a variety of topics including copyright, new discovery and access tools for music materials, and best practices in service, reference and instruction. Included below are summaries of selected sessions.

Touching the Cloud: New Tools to Discover

This session was delivered in "lightning round" style, with short 10 minute talks given by different presenters.

Rebecca Belford (University of Buffalo) introduced VuFind, an open source next-generation discovery tool developed at Villanova University. Belford spoke about benefits and challenges that came with implementing the tool at the University at Buffalo, where the basic module was introduced in 2010. Integrated as a layer on top of the Aleph-run library catalogue, VuFind searches

the catalogue data but with slightly different indexing. As with all next-generation discovery tools, VuFind relies heavily on customizable facets. Belford spoke about several facets particularly important for navigating the music collection: one derived from call numbers, another from various fields indicating dates, and a third from format, where customizations and additions were made to support searching music and media.

Jenny Colvin (Furman University) spoke about the potential for music libraries to use Spotify, an online music streaming service, to allow users to access full length albums. The Spotify collection contains a wide variety of popular music, although there is also classical and jazz. Colvin currently uses the service to create and share playlists of required listening collections with students. Several concerns with the service were raised during this session, including privacy issues resulting from requiring students to log in using their personal Facebook accounts. While the current model is free to all users, Colvin wondered how long it will be until a paid subscription model replaces the free version. At present, due to copyright restrictions, Spotify is not available in Canada.

Stephen Henry (University of Maryland) spoke about technical aspects of accessing WorldCat data using API requests. APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) are source code based specifications that allow software components to communicate with each other. Henry spoke about the construction of RESTful API structures that, when properly constructed, can be used to create and recreate queries, saved searches or lists. Henry also mentioned Yahoo Pipes, a composition tool that can aggregate, manipulate and mash up content from the web, power widgets on websites (such as LibGuides), or create RSS feeds. Henry maintains a growing online bibliography of related articles on the subject of APIs and Libraries: http://www.mendeley.com/groups/1910831/music-apis-and-mashups-for-libraries/papers/.

Nara Newcomer (East Carolina University) introduced the Music Discovery Requirements (MDR) draft document, a product of a subgroup of the Emerging Technologies and Services Committee. The group was tasked with providing thoughtful documentation of issues and recommendations for solutions related to discovery interfaces. The main body of the document is organized with an eye to FRBR, looking first at the various attributes and relationships important for finding, identifying, and selecting musical works. The second section examines expression and manifestation-level attributes and relationships. The MDR document speaks to the importance of music works as primary literature, and the complexities of music-specific discovery for scores and recordings. The document is now available on the Music Library Association's web site: http://committees.musiclibraryassoc.org/ETSC/MDR.

Misti Shaw (DePauw) spoke about DePauw University's use of QR codes to allow students to access online course reserves. Instead of the traditional list or binder of course reserve information, students can scan the QR codes using a smartphone QR reader, providing immediate access to course reserve content.

An Open-Source Solution for Audiovisual E-Reserves and Class Websites

Speaking about his experience managing audiovisual e-reserves, **Winston Barham** (University of Virginia) introduced Kaltura, an open source, flash-based middleware tool that manages delivery of multimedia content to instructors and students. It was introduced at the University of Virginia as a solution for streamlining access to e-reserves within a course management system and later used to create a complex course website with integrated multimedia content. The tool was selected primarily to allow the user to easily manage and deliver media while fully considering privacy, copyright, and licensing issues. The Kaltura plugin allows for both audio and video uploads, preserves lossless data formats, allows for direct uploads from a hard drive or built-in camera, and offers a default streaming access setting.

Barham spoke about his recent involvement in a project at the University of Virginia where, at the request of a faculty member, he created a WordPress based course page for an upper-level undergraduate seminar. The course page included almost 300 audio tracks and video clips of required listening, drawn from a variety of sources (internet, personal collection, library resources). Using the Kaltura plugin to embed content allowed Barham to build an integrated multimedia course website while still respecting copyright, licensing, and privacy. Each listening example features a clear title, an embedded player, and item-specific guides to listening. The course page improved ease of use and access to content, replacing the 40-page PDF document that was used the year before. One of the biggest drawbacks to this process was the time commitment required by Library staff to develop the site, but feedback from students and faculty was overwhelmingly positive.

In response to questions about the usability of Kaltura in Apple's mobile devices, Barham mentioned the latest release of Kaltura software, which has built-in functionality to incorporate HTML5 standards.

Plenary II: Wrangling the Information Universe: Moving from Institutional Portals to a Shared Resource for Online Music Sources

This Plenary session addressed the impact of Internet resources on the work of music libraries, featuring several panelists who introduced new tools for sharing, preserving and discovering music sources. **David Day** (Brigham Young University) and **Jenny Colvin** (Furman University) began with a look into the changing research environment and made the case for inclusion of the bibliography as an essential tool in the study of music. Day and Colvin went on to introduce MusRef, an online bibliographic reference tool for researchers, graduate students, and librarians. It aims to provide an exhaustive review of music reference sources and currently contains more than 7,300 bibliographic entries (primarily Internet resources, but also including print, CD-ROMs and microform). Each entry

has been assigned basic metadata and tagged with category and publication type designations. Some entries include reviews or annotations. In addition to the bibliography, the site also contains guides to major categories of reference works (bio-bibliographies and composer resource manuals, discographies, and thematic catalogues) with more soon to come. Future projects will include a cleanup of data inconsistencies, the ability to search with Boolean operators, and a new faceted search sidebar.

Michelle Oswell (Rutgers University) presented the Online Music Resources Wiki, an initiative of the MLA Reference Sources Subcommittee. The Wiki is a portal of online resources maintained and managed by members of MLA, intended to support research in all areas of music scholarship. Using the new wiki form template, users can now easily submit new entries while avoiding use of wiki markup. The Wiki can be found online at: http://committees.musiclibraryassoc.org/RSS/HomePage.

Kerry Masteller (Harvard University) spoke about the newly revised website for their Online Resources for Music Scholars (ORMS). This site was built specifically for Harvard in the 1990s, but has since gained popularity with other institutions. In 2010 Harvard library staff identified a need to update the site and developed plans to make it a more flexible, relevant, and adaptable resource. The site has been redesigned with new search functions including multiple access points and clear annotations. ORMS was created using a custom Harvard platform, giving the benefit of in house support while also providing compatibility with Harvard's content management system. The site features tag clouds by subject and resource type. Subject tags are much more numerous than resource type tags, and include geographic area, time period, personal name, instrument, and free form tags. Access the site at: http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/onmusic/.

Lending and Borrowing Media Materials: What are the Practices of Music Libraries and How Can We Work Together?

In this session, **Lindsay Hansen** (of Indiana University at the time of the conference) and **Deborah Campana** (Oberlin College) examined the interlibrary loan procedures and practices among libraries and presented findings from a recent Interlibrary Loan Survey, sponsored by the Reference Access Services Subcommittee. The survey focused on determining how and if music libraries lend out multimedia items. Results found that the majority of libraries do not lend multimedia resources at all and of those who do, lending periods tend to be quite conservative. Following the presentation, the audience was invited to participate in an active discussion on the topic. A number of attendees called for more libraries to introduce lending of multimedia materials through interlibrary loan. Many also spoke about the challenges associated with packing and shipping fragile materials such as LPs. There was a suggestion that MLA could take the lead on this issue by providing documentation of best practices in loaning music materials.

Incorporating Active Learning Techniques in Library Instruction

In this lively and interactive session, **Tom Bickley** (California State University, East Bay) and **Andi Beckendorf** (Luther College) spoke about and demonstrated examples of active learning techniques for library instruction. These techniques aim to create a learner-centred environment that takes the student from passive note-taker to active participant. By incorporating hands-on projects, class games, small group discussions, and other active learning techniques, the instructor is able to facilitate learning and bring the student into the process of his or her own education. Bickley cited the importance of introducing learning outcomes and targets to students from the outset. If students know what is expected, they will be more willing to embrace pedagogical activities. Beckendorf recommended tying activities to an assignment, having the instructor present as a library advocate, and clearly defining learning outcomes to the class in advance.

Conclusion

The conference program offered diverse and thought provoking presentations along with many opportunities for learning, discussion and debate. In particular, the sessions highlighted new approaches to accessing and organizing multimedia content, accessing e-reserves and sharing music collections. Others focused on the use of experiential learning techniques in the classroom to enhance learning and connect users with music research tools.

The results reveal that our colleagues continue to find original and creative solutions to issues related to access, preservation and presentation of music information and collections. It is apparent that while we often encounter challenges while working in the music library environment, there are also many opportunities to create and connect.

As the conference in Dallas came to a close, the conference planning committee passed on responsibilities to the organizers of the 82nd MLA Annual Meeting, which will be held in San Jose, California, February 27 – March 3, 2013.