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My MLA at 20

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My MLA at 20

By Lisa Rae Philpott

This year's conference, the 20th consecutive meeting I have had the good fortune to attend, attracted just over 400 attendees. As always with such a large and active association, there were many concurrent sessions: a challenge for the attendee to make choices. I wished at times that I could clone myself! What follows is a glimpse into a few of the sessions I attended.

Thursday, February 27

A User-Centered Website Redesign

In this member-proposed session, Ray Heigemeir (Stanford University) offered a view of the home page of Stanford's Music Library over several incarnations, from 2001 to the present. Thanks to the "[Wayback Machine](#)," Heigemeir was able to present images of his library's home pages, many of which looked all too familiar (with images constrained by the 600 x 800 pixel resolution of past monitors). One revision simply moved links around the page, with a search box in the top right corner, so tiny as to be invisible. Users chose to use Google rather than deal with the confusion that was the website. The most recent Stanford-wide website revision was designed with user input; the Music Library's site was the first of Stanford's libraries to go live (2012). [Link to slides](#).

Friday, February 28

Alexander Street Press Breakfast

The Alexander Street Press (ASP) Breakfast-by-invitation was the brainwave of Tim Lloyd, Chief Operating Officer at ASP, at the 2010 San Diego conference, where on-site food options were few and extremely pricey. This event has remained popular ever since, with attendance at capacity. Whether or not they subscribe to any of the Alexander Street Press databases, attendees always gain an appreciation for the range and variety of available products.

Women Representing: Exploring Roles as Scholars and Traditional Music Collectors during the 20th Century

Suzanne Moulton-Gertig (University of Denver) presented her findings on publications by women in academic music journals. Examining the membership lists of the American

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Musicological Society during the periods 1948 to 1968 and 1969 to 1999, she discovered that while women comprised slightly more than 25% of the membership in both periods, their publications in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society (JAMS)* numbered 10% and 24% respectively. Articles written by women and published in other academic music journals showed a similar distribution: from 5% to 10% for the earlier period, and from 10% to 28% for the later period. A very few women were “repeat authors” with multiple articles in a single journal; no woman had articles in more than one journal. The range of topics remained similar to those of the earlier period: American music, women in music/gender studies, ethnomusicology and music education/pedagogy. Journal titles examined were *JAMS*, *Musica Disciplina*, *Musical Quarterly*, *Music & Letters* and the *Journal of Music Theory*.

In the next presentation, “One Evening as I Strayed: Women Collectors of Irish Traditional Music, A Journey through Space, Time, and Sources,” Margaret Ericson (Colby College) spoke about her research into this niche area, which proved to be fascinating. During her 2012 visit to Ireland she was able to mine that country’s rich resources. Remarkably, at some point in the early 20th century, the Irish government had passed a law forbidding or excluding women from working as collectors of folksongs; however, children were not excluded, and one precocious young girl collected several hundred examples. Some women, though usually not Irish women, did manage to become folksong collectors without the governmental recompense; for example, Robin Roberts assisted the late Alan Lomax in his collecting activities. (It was good to see Canada represented in the presentation by images of several of Helen Creighton’s collections.) Regrettably, the technology conspired against the playing of Ericson’s musical examples, but we were treated to her lovely rendition of “The Lowlands of Holland,” in lieu of the recording by Peg Clancy Power. Link to [Ericson’s bibliography](#).

Saturday, March 1

What Not to Wear: MLA Interview Edition

Misti Shaw (DePauw University), Susannah Cleveland (Bowling Green State University), and Mark Puente (Association of Research Libraries) presented entertaining and thoughtful suggestions for interviewees. Based on the popular television program of the same name, they illustrated the presentation with examples of what does and does not work, and suggested that you should dress “one level *above* what you would normally wear on the job.” Women were advised to check Pinterest’s “Alternative Job Interview Attire” site for non-power-suit options; men were urged to avoid Dockers brand trousers; “Certain Dri” and prescription antiperspirants were recommended to avoid the obvious pitfalls; interviewees were urged to ensure their attire fits, and women were encouraged to wear slips underneath their skirts and dresses. Handy items for evading disaster include: Tide sticks, hankies, breath mints, “Static Guard,” dry shampoo, a small travel umbrella, a scarf to cover stains, a lint roller and a travel emergency kit.

Women were encouraged to wear layers, with a cardigan on top. Lastly, potential interviewees were urged to “Feel Confident!” [Link to slides](#). [Link to handout](#).

RDA and Public Services: Library Systems and RDA Implementation for Music

Presenters: Elizabeth Hille Cribbs (Northern Illinois University), Sonia Archer-Capuzzo (University of North Carolina at Greensboro), Patricia Falk (Bowling Green State University)

Sponsored by MLA’s Bibliographic Control and Public Services Committees, this session provided a heads-up for those who need to know how RDA will change our library catalogues. Foremost among those changes will be the new policy for abbreviations, most of which will be spelled out. In particular, RDA calls for data to be transcribed the way it appears, instead of saving space or keystrokes by abbreviating words. So words will only be abbreviated in a bibliographic record if that is the way they appear on the item being catalogued. As well, RDA replaces non-intuitive abbreviations with terms that are more understandable to users. Examples of this user-friendly approach include:

1st ed. = First edition

arr. = arranged

196 p. : ill. ; 30 cm. = 196 pages : illustrations ; 30 cm

fl. = active

Abbreviations for music terminology will be retained: op., no., vol., min., sec., SATB, etc. Music’s handy, bracketed GMDs—those General Material Designations such as [sound recording]—will disappear, but will be replaced by three new fields for indicating content, media, and carrier. Another big change for music is that the librettist, rather than the composer, will become the “main entry” for a libretto, so Kurt Weill’s *Threepenny Opera* will be found under “Brecht, Bertolt.”

Stop Reinventing the Wheel: An Online Repository for Music Information Literacy

Presenters: Andi Beckendorf (Luther College) Sara J. Beutter Manus (Vanderbilt University), Clayton Crenshaw (Baylor University), Brian McMillan (McGill University), Nancy Zavac (University of Miami)

In this session, the Instruction Subcommittee of the Public Services Committee proposed the creation of an online repository for music-specific information literacy materials. The presentation examined the pros and cons of existing repositories, laid out the parameters of the subcommittee's proposed repository, and gave a glimpse of a preliminary design. Another major purpose of the session was to hear feedback from the audience: lots of time was devoted to discussion and all attendees were encouraged to complete a survey at the end of the session to guide the subcommittee's next steps in the project.

The three existing repositories considered were PRIMO, MERLOT II, and LOEX Instruction Resources. Each had strengths and weaknesses. [PRIMO](#), an ACRL site, has fewer than 300 items which undergo a rigorous peer review process before being added. Unfortunately, it has little music-related content and is focused entirely on online resources. By comparison, [MERLOT II](#), affiliated with California State University, lists 40,000 items in 19 categories. MERLOT II offers much more music content in nine areas (450+ titles) including theory, history, ear training, composition, and world music. It also presents a model peer review policy on its website. However, MERLOT—like PRIMO—focuses on online learning objects rather than exercises or learning strategies. The third database, [LOEX Instruction Resources](#), developed in 2000, seems inactive and out of date, with little more than twenty exercises.

To meet the specific needs of music librarians, the subcommittee recommended a new repository. It brought up several topics for discussion. First, what would we expect to find in a repository for music information literacy? Discussion was wide-ranging and offered many useful suggestions, including in-class exercises, assignments, PowerPoint presentations, class outlines and course syllabi, case studies, library guides, lesson plans, assessment tools, and exercises using different approaches, such as gaming. Attendees voiced their desire to see failed exercises as well as successes, since process is also important. Supporting documents and worksheets should be available in the proposed repository, not just descriptions. Next the question of peer review was raised. Who could contribute materials and what sort of review process would the submissions undergo? General consensus leaned towards some level of peer review. Some attendees also hoped for a comments field or open forum in the repository to allow users to comment on their success (or failure) with the materials. Other discussion topics included the type of platform (an open-journal system was suggested as a means to facilitate sharing documents) and the desired metadata to facilitate searching in the repository (e.g., a searchable list of equipment and materials needed for a particular exercise was added to other metadata suggested by the subcommittee). The final question asked was, "Should we move forward with this project?" The answer from the session attendees was a resounding "Yes!"