

**Music Librarianship in the United Kingdom: Fifty Years of the United Kingdom Branch of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centres.** Edited by Richard Turbet. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003. 252 p. ISBN 0754605728. \$79.95 US

The United Kingdom Branch of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centres (hereafter referred to as the Association) was established in 1953, only three years after its parent organization, IAML.<sup>1</sup> With *Music Librarianship in the United Kingdom*, editor Richard Turbet has revealed a rich and productive history of music librarianship in the UK. The authors of the fifteen chapters are drawn not only from past and present membership, but also from the wider musical community.

For the purposes of this review, the book's fifteen chapters have been divided into three broad categories: historical surveys, specific branch activities, and special topics.

### **Historical Surveys**

These chapters summarize and place in context the Association as an organization, as well as its activities, publications and projects. The first chapter is a history from 1953-2003. Authors Redfern and Hellen are both past presidents of the Association, and have drawn upon a wealth of annual reports, promotional materials, conference papers

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<sup>1</sup>Even though the Association added the Republic of Ireland in 2002, and its official acronym is IAML(UK & Irl), it is consistently referred to in the book as IAML(UK).

and obituaries. Although the chapter provides a useful summary of conferences, meetings, and major publications, it lacks narrative drive and is largely a year-by-year chronicle.

Chapter two is an engaging history of music services in public libraries in Great Britain from 1850-1950. Malcolm Lewis has found interesting and colourful quotations among primary sources to bring forward the voices of history. This chapter sets the stage for the eventual development of the Association.

The fourth chapter is an overview of fifty years of music librarianship training. Author Ian Ledsham describes in detail two Association initiatives: a regionally taught course for music library staff, and a distance education course offered through the University of Wales. This reviewer would have liked to see a list of further readings containing course descriptions or planning documents on the initiatives.

Julie Crawley's survey of information technology in music libraries comprises chapter ten. She reports on major technological developments since 1950 and describes how music libraries and the Association have responded over the years. Several Association policy statements and publications are cited. Crawley wisely chooses to relegate tangential details to an appendix, and headings are provided to give organization and flow to the narrative.

In chapter eleven, “Co-operation in Music Libraries,” Pamela Thompson provides an excellent survey of the Association’s collaborative projects and initiatives. Many of these are treated in other chapters as well, but to see them brought together in one chapter makes an impressive list. Of particular interest is the discussion of the Association’s planning activities, including the Music Library Information Plan (1993).

Former Association president Roger Taylor uses his experience in Albania in the mid-1990s to illustrate his theme of international outreach in chapter fourteen. Taylor’s narrative style quickly engages the reader as he outlines some of the rewards and pitfalls of volunteer work.

### **Specific Branch Activities**

Chapter five, “Musaurus and Musbib,” is problematic. First, it is largely a reprint of the Introduction from the 1991 edition of *Musaurus* (a music thesaurus) that should have been revised and brought up to date. It is not made clear whether 1991 was the first edition, whether there have been others, and who uses it. Second, although the authors’ stated goal of simplifying the various music thesauri is laudable, this reader is unconvinced of their success. Their insistence on a subject rather than an alphabetical listing, and their use of an “=” sign instead of the now-familiar “UF” abbreviation, seems to obfuscate rather than clarify meaning. *Musbib* was a bimonthly index to music literature begun in 1991, and the chapter does not indicate whether this project is ongoing.

Malcolm Jones, in chapter seven, gives a concise (six-page) history of *Brio*, the Association’s journal. He traces the changes in editorship over nearly forty years (the journal began in 1964) as well as the resulting changes in manifesto. Jones draws on his experience as editor of *Brio* from 1973-81 as well as his involvement with the Association (President, 1986-89).

In chapter eight, John Wagstaff gives a readable and well-researched history of the Association’s library. The SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is notable as a clever and concise way to summarize information about the library. It would be interesting to know if other music library associations have their own libraries, and what role they play.

Chapters twelve and thirteen focus on two Association projects: Cecilia and Encore! Each chapter’s authors present the evolution of their respective projects, place the projects in context of user needs in the UK, and identify setbacks caused by changes in funding or local government policy. In chapter thirteen, Jones and Gough do an excellent job of describing the variety of Encore! users and provide usage statistics as well. Although continued funding for both projects was in question at the time of writing, a check by this reviewer of the Web sites indicates that both are still online and searchable.

### **Special Topics**

The third chapter, “Music information skills at the University of Reading,” describes the information skills program

at the University of Reading's music library. It is unclear why this chapter was included as library instruction articles abound every year and Cipkin presents no new models.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Reference Services Review* publishes an annual bibliography of recent articles in library instruction. See Anna Marie Johnson et al., "Library Instruction and Information Literacy—2003," *Reference Services Review* 32, no. 4 (2004): 413-42.

Chapter six is based on a paper author Kirsteen McCue gave at an Association session in 2000 in which she recounts her creation of a bibliography of George Thomson's issues of Scottish folk songs in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She tracked down extant editions in libraries all over the UK, looked at relevant correspondence from the period, and conducted exhaustive research to determine Thomson's relationships with his publishers, printers, engravers, and illustrators.

Chapter nine is a tiny three-page description written by the editor on the first edition of William Byrd's *Gradualia*, housed at York Minster Library. Turbet laments the fact that although the existence and location of this piece was documented in several catalogues over the centuries, there has been no critical scholarly examination.

In chapter fifteen, author Eric Cooper focuses on the profession's resistance to change in general and to information technology in particular. His perspective seems at odds with the rest of the book, which highlights the track record of innovation by the Association in all areas of music librarianship over the past half century. Not only is this a rather pessimistic choice as the book's finale,

the author loses credibility as an authority by not citing sources more recent than 1970.

The chapters on special topics, interesting though they are, seem out of place to this reviewer. Turbet's two-page introduction to the book gives only the briefest detail about the role of each chapter and its relationship to the Association, and does not elucidate the reasoning behind his inclusion of the special topics chapters. Additionally, readers outside the United Kingdom may be bewildered by the unfamiliar jargon and acronyms that are sprinkled throughout.

These minor grievances do not, however, detract from the work as a whole. This book is a fascinating exploration not only into the history of Association and its activities, but also into the history of music librarianship in the United Kingdom. It will serve as an important resource for ideas and best practices in the field.

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