

**Careers in Music Librarianship II: Traditions and Transitions.** Edited by Paula Elliot and Linda Blair. Music Library Association Technical Reports, No. 29. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press and Music Library Association, 2004. 81 p. \$32.95 US. ISBN 0-8108-5004-4

This book is an updated version of MLA Technical Report No. 18, entitled *Careers in Music Librarianship*, published in 1990. The motivation for the new publication is “to examine perceived changes in the profession and to provide a current snapshot of the profession by describing the challenges and rewards of a career in music librarianship” (ix).

The book covers a variety of topics. The first two chapters provide a good overview of their respective themes. “A View of the Field: Landscapes and Faces,” by Paula Elliot, surveys the types of positions held by music librarians. Jean Morrow’s “Preparing To Be a Music Librarian” summarizes the knowledge and skills needed, including the core competencies developed by MLA.

Renée McBride analyzes the positions posted on the MLA Job List from 1999 to 2003. She lists the main qualifications and attributes that employers are seeking and the kinds of organizations where positions are offered. According to McBride, the “vast majority of music library employment opportunities exist in academic institutions” (49). I find this statement misleading. Music specialists are also employed in public and special libraries as well as in for-profit institutions. This would include positions that have a music component but are not entirely devoted to music, or where a music background provides the necessary skills to perform well in the position. Possibly

these jobs are not all posted on the MLA Job List, so McBride’s statistics are skewed, or perhaps the situation is different in the United States than it is in Canada.

Many of the chapters could have been written about librarians in general. Discussions of the job search process, mid-career job satisfaction, moving between academic and public libraries, or taking a job in library administration, contain little that is specific or illuminating about music librarianship. In “Job Hunt Rhetoric,” Sheridan Stormes and Gordon Theil discuss the difference between required versus preferred qualifications, and how to write an application letter. But they leave out essential information that library job-seekers need to know. For instance, a bibliographic instruction position may require a presentation as part of the interview process. I would have liked to see some guidelines on how to prepare a good presentation. Interviews also often consist of behavioural-based questions, and it would have been helpful to include advice on how to prepare answers that reflect the music library context.

Ned Quist discusses the “future professional issues, educational needs, and required skills” (99) he believes will be needed by music librarians. He provides a good summary of existing skills and how the skill set for music librarians might stay the same, or change, in the short and longer term. While it’s always a challenge to predict

the future, Quist's reflections should be quite helpful for those who will be working for another ten to twenty years and are wondering how changes in technology might affect them, as well as those who are just beginning their careers and want to know what skills they should acquire.

The book also includes chapters on MLA and IAML that give brief organizational histories and summarize their activities. The concluding essay, Susan Sommer's "The Power of Music, or Why do Music Librarians Stay in the Profession?," is a reprint with some revisions from the 1990 volume. She sums up by remarking there are "a couple of reasons for staying in the profession. Because of librarianship. Because of music" (124). It's unclear why the editors decided to publish again this now sixteen-year-old paper. There are certainly people, including Sommer, who could have provided more current content on the state of the profession.

The book is an examination of music librarianship in the United States, although this is not explicitly stated. One can conclude that only US music librarianship is under discussion based on the rather startling statement in the foreword that "Music librarians make up only about .6 percent of librarians as a whole" (x). The accompanying footnote states this percentage was arrived at by comparing the number of ALA and MLA personal memberships in 2003. Since the MLA Reports often have a wider readership than just the MLA members, it would have been

appropriate to preface this statistic with "In the United States." It also assumes that all US librarians are members of only one of these organizations. To extrapolate, CLA has 1,889 personal members and CAML has about 55, so CAML members are 0.34 % of the population of Canadian librarians. I have no idea if this percentage is accurate, but I doubt it. This suggests that further investigation was necessary.

At mid-career myself, I didn't find this book to be particularly inspiring. Several of the chapters are well-written and include some good ideas, but there wasn't much that was truly novel or made me eager to explore further. I would have liked to hear from librarians who work in environments other than academic and public libraries. I also wished to read more about how others are coping with challenges such as building a collection in multiple formats with dwindling budgets, choosing new listening technology, and faculty status for music librarians.

This book will be useful for students or beginning librarians interested in music librarianship. It may also be useful for professionals who want to read about issues and questions in the field. I would also point to the excellent and extensive bibliography by Laurel A. Whisler that concludes the volume. I would recommend this book for large public and academic collections, or for a library science collection.

*Cheryl Martin*  
*Royal Conservatory of Music*