

IAML 2012: A New Librarian's Experience

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The 2012 conference of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (IAML), held in Montréal, Québec, proved to be an exciting and inspiring experience for a “green” music librarian such as myself. In what follows, I share some highlights of the conference.

Sunday

I arrived in Montréal in the early afternoon and checked into the Royal Victoria College Residence. With a couple of free hours, I registered, unpacked, and explored the city before it was time for the first event. I made my way to the opening night reception at Redpath Hall—a beautiful and historic building on McGill’s lower campus, currently used as a performance space by the Schulich School of Music. I soon ran into many of my Canadian colleagues, and mingled with the numerous international attendees as well. Speeches by Colleen Cook, Dean of Libraries, McGill University, and Jan Guise, President of CAML, set the stage for the excellent conference that was to come.

Monday

The opening plenary session, “Libraries, A Force for Change,” consisted of talks by four major figures in the Canadian library and information field: Guy Berthiaume (Chair and CEO of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec), Daniel Boivin (Executive Director, OCLC Canada, Latin America & the Caribbean), Daniel J. Caron (Librarian and Archivist of Canada, Library and Archives Canada), and Colleen Cook (Dean of Libraries, McGill University). Each speaker discussed how their institutions are coping with rapid change in our field, highlighted projects and initiatives at their own institutions in light of change, and expressed their visions for the future role of libraries and archives in Canada.

Following the plenary I attended various sessions on topics including digital music libraries, large-scale music encoding projects, and preservation of our audio heritage. I was pleased to see that music libraries around the world are facing similar challenges, and that they are using these challenges as opportunities for creating new collections and services for their patrons.

The evening consisted of a fine reception held at the Grande Bibliothèque, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. The reception had as its focus the work of the late great Dr. Helmut Kallmann and included the presentation of CAML's Kallmann Award for Distinguished Service to Dr. Robin Elliott, Jean A. Chalmers Chair in Canadian Music, University of Toronto. Dr. Elliott gave a moving speech honouring the achievements of the late Dr. Kallmann, and quite impressively did so eloquently in all three official languages of IAML.

Tuesday

Tuesday morning was spent preparing for my own talk: "Scene but Not Heard: Strategies for Collecting Local Music." The panel in which I presented—"Collecting Information, Creating Collections"—consisted of an excellent mix of presentations on issues relating to music collection development, and discussions of unique music collections projects. I was pleased by the positive feedback, encouragement and support, and advice I received from my colleagues. I was also able to connect with others from around the world who are working in the area of local music collection development, and have since been in touch with them for help and advice on my own project.

My afternoon was occupied by the very interesting "Future of IAML" session, which involved discussion of proposed changes to the governance of IAML. For this new IAML member, the session offered a glimpse into the challenges faced by international organizations. Many long-term IAML members were present and they discussed the history and drawbacks of the current governance structure of the organization. One thing that became clear from this session was that IAML members are passionate about their organization, and are willing to work hard to ensure it remains vibrant and relevant in the twenty-first century.

Following some excellent presentations on the revival of the Bolshoi Theatre Library and on CBC Radio-Canada's new online platform for delivering music to Canadians, it was time for a short break before heading to the evening concert. The venue was the stunning and historic Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours. Overlooking Montréal's Old Port, the Chapelle was once a refuge for the many sailors who arrived at the port as well as immigrants who had just landed in Canada. The concert featured the early music vocal ensemble Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, and included works by Tomas Luis de Victoria, Sweelinck, and a handful of other composers of the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries. Led by Christopher Jackson, the renowned pioneer of early music in Montréal, the concert was an excellent way to end a full day of conferencing.

Wednesday

I was pleased to be able to make it to the perennially early Alexander Street Press Breakfast, and hear the latest developments and initiatives that Alexander Street Press is taking with their online music products. I then attended sessions on digital audio in music libraries, as well as a very informative session on educational training and professional development for music library staff—a

roundtable session presented by the Commission on Service and Training. It was time for lunch, and I made my way downtown to the Centre de musique canadienne au Québec (CMC). This Open House event featured a presentation of CMC services, a lunch, and a wonderful recital of the music of current Canadian composers Serge Arcuri and Ana Sokolovic.

The afternoon consisted of the cultural and social program. I had decided to take part in the walking tour of old Montréal, which was an excellent way to see the city.

Thursday

I spent the early morning at the exhibits, meeting with many vendor contacts I had so far known only through email, and making some new contacts as well. I visited the poster sessions and then made my way to the CAML annual general meeting. On the way, I had a chance to look at an excellent exhibit of Canadian musical ephemera and sheet music on display in the McGill Humanities and Social Sciences Library. The CAML meeting was the first I had attended, and I was amazed by the amount of work that such a small organization was able to accomplish over the year. I had just one more session to attend, "Music Resources – Network, Users, Research," which was a worthwhile look into the role of research in how we develop and position services to our patrons. After a short break to catch up on some email and get a quick bite to eat, I made my way to the final concert of the conference. Featuring the Montréal-based string quartet Quatuor Bozzini, the concert consisted of works by contemporary Canadian composers Cassandra Miller and Michael Oesterle, both in attendance. I was proud to see Canadian works featured for an international audience, and performed so beautifully by Quatuor Bozzini.

Friday

During my final day of the conference, I decided to attend multiple sessions in one time slot, seeing papers on access to archival collections and on folklore. I was also fortunate to attend a session on current bibliographical projects, which included a paper presented (in absentia) by the legendary Donald W. Krummel.

With the conference coming to a close, and many delegates making their way home, it was clear that this had been a very successful conference and a fantastic experience for a new music librarian. All that was left on the program was the closing banquet. Buses picked up delegates for the forty-five minute ride to the Sucrerie de la Montagne, in nearby Rigaud, Québec. Led by the eccentric and humorous proprietor Pierre Faucher, delegates were treated to a welcome cocktail of "caribou" and a tour of the facilities. Dinner consisted of hearty traditional Québécois favourites, folk music entertainment, and amusing audience participation. All that remained was for me to reflect on the great week I had experienced, and to look forward to the next IAML conference.