

## THE CANMUS LISTSERVER: A NEW MEDIUM FOR COMMUNICATION

-Jana Wyber

Chair, Technology Committee

CAML has entered the electronic age! After the overwhelming success of CAML1-L, a listserver set up last fall for the use of Board members, CAML decided to set up CANMUS-L, a public listserver dedicated to Canadian music. Although the list is sponsored by CAML, subscriptions are not restricted to CAML members. Any music professional interested in discussions of Canadian music is welcome to join. During the next few months, special invitations will be sent to the members of CUMS and ARMuQ encouraging them to subscribe. Members of other associations whose primary focus is Canadian studies will also be approached.

Why did we decide to set up a listserver? The usefulness of this technology is manifest in successful ventures like MLA-L. However, with over 700 subscribers and a decidedly American flavour, MLA-L is not a forum for discussions about Canadian music. CANMUS-L is a way to enhance our reference resources by creating a network of knowledgeable, experienced professionals in all aspects of Canadian music. Just imagine getting help with all those difficult reference questions, finding out about regional music retailers, gathering festival and concert information and comparing notes about the latest reference tools on the market. In this network, each member chooses the level of participation. One can actively participate in discussions or just quietly listen in. On CANMUS-L, one also chooses the preferred language of communication. It is an ideal way to reach out to our francophone colleagues.

This sounds wonderful but is there one nagging question lurking at the back of your mind...What is a listserver? Unfortunately, this is the kind of question that invariably turns a seemingly normal person into a jargon-spouting computer science nut who's every utterance is indecipherable. Fear not, you don't really need to know much about how a listserver works to use it effectively. After all, we're not all expert car mechanics but that doesn't prevent us from driving. Suffice to say that when you subscribe to CANMUS-L, you are asking a specific PC at the University of Calgary to put you on an electronic mailing list. This PC distributes the

messages you send to the list to everyone else who subscribes. Think of it as a kind of continuous electronic conference call. You can listen in anytime you wish and whenever you find something particularly interesting, you can join the discussion by sending your own message to the list. It doesn't matter what kind of electronic mail system you belong to -- Unix, Bitnet, vax or any other variety of e-mail -- you can subscribe to CANMUS-L.

Before telling you how to subscribe to CANMUS-L, let me say a few words to those of you without electronic mail addresses. Getting access to e-mail is not expensive and not nearly as difficult as you may think. In fact, almost all libraries, academic or public, already have access to the internet and therefore to listservers. Before you assume you are unable to get a connection, ask around. In my experience, if you don't ask, your institution may never know how much interest there is in e-mail. You may start the revolution in policies regarding electronic access! You don't even need your own PC to use the system. Any antiquated 'dumb terminal' will do the job just as well and at a fraction of the cost. The back rooms of every library are full of these terminals and they are usually just sitting around gathering dust. Even if you have to resort to getting e-mail access through your PC at home, connection costs are very reasonable. For more information on this subject I recommend an excellent article "But I don't have access to e-mail!" by H. Stephen Wright in vol. 92 of the MLA Newsletter. And while you are investigating the intricacies of e-mail access, you won't be left out. There will be a regular column in the CAML Newsletter summarizing activities on the CANMUS-L listserver.

Now it is time to tell you about some actual listserver commands. To join CANMUS-L, just send an e-mail message to:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UCALGARY.CA

Leave the subject line of your message blank. The text of your message should be:

subscribe CANMUS-L <your last name, your first name> (leave out the brackets, of course)

Bill Sgrazutti, as the official moderator of the list, approves your subscription and adds you to the list. Please note that your subscription is sent to the listserver management address:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UCALGARY.CA,

not the specific CANMUS-L list address:

CANMUS-L@LISTSERV.UCALGARY.CA. After you have been added to the list, you will receive a copy of the welcome file in your mailbox. This will tell you a little more about how to use the listserver, for example, how to send mail to the list, and keep copies of your own messages. There are also instructions about retrieving archive files. Although there are no archive files at the moment, this has the potential to be one of the most useful applications of the listserver. For example, all messages sent to the listserver are saved and from time to time placed in an archive file accessible to all subscribers. This archive function will also allow us to mount other files for ready access. For example, files containing the minutes of CAML's Annual General Meeting, information about Canadian copyright law or lists of special collections in Canadian libraries could be stored here.

This utility can provide an inexpensive and readily accessible alternative to traditional methods of publication. The CAML Publication and Technology Committees are exploring the possibilities. Notices

regarding newly mounted files and their retrieval will be posted to CANMUS-L and announced in the CAML Newsletter.

CANMUS-L is now ready to use. If you have any questions or feel hopelessly confused, don't be shy ... ask for help. Bill (sgrazut@acs.ucalgary.ca) and I (jlwyber@acs.ucalgary.ca) will be glad to help. Send us an e-mail message or even call us on the old-fashioned telephone ((403)220-6162). Let me assure you that no question or problem will be ignored. We have all made mistakes when it comes to new technology and since a problem you are experiencing may not be your fault, please ask us to investigate. To tell you the truth, the main reason why Bill and I get to look like such systems specialists is almost entirely due to the support, guidance and enthusiasm of Academic Computing Services at the University of Calgary. Just to highlight the commitment of these folks, I think you should know that they are providing the listserver software and its maintenance free of charge to CAML.

Now that you know about this wonderful new listserver, I expect all of you to make a beeline for your terminals and subscribe to CANMUS-L. Help make CANMUS-L a vital new resource in the Canadian musical community.

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Kirsten Walsh

Music Library, University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC V5V 2W3  
(604) 822-6835 : E-mail kirsten\_walsh@library.ubc.ca : Fax (604) 822-3893