

ACQUISITIONS OF MUSIC MATERIALS: THE VIEW FROM 1981

Music librarians fortunate enough to have been in New Haven, Connecticut, for the annual meeting of the Music Library Association, found it preceded by a one-day workshop devoted to acquisitions. Walter Gerboth, from Brooklyn College, introduced the meeting by giving a resumé of a typical day in the life of a music librarian of fifty years ago. Because of the pressure of other duties, the librarian of 1931 probably had to do most of his selecting at night. He had no reviewing aids such as are found in NOTES, CHOICE, etc., only masses of dealers' catalogues. It was also a period in which librarians were struggling to obtain out-of-print materials since it was the "Pre-R-R era," that is, the time preceding "rampant reprints."

Today, music librarians are being pressured by both monetary and staff shortages. Contrary to the situation prevailing in the sciences, our subject materials never become outdated, so we cannot even save space or money by ruthless weeding. We must acquire an ever-increasing number of scores, regardless of size, format, or type of notation. The year 2001 will see our predicament only compounded by twenty years. And so, music librarians are turning in increasing numbers to dealers and agents to help them in their acquisition programs.

A panel of just such dealers and agents continued the discussion by explaining their objectives, services, and capabilities. Current publishing trends, with their short press runs, high costs, poor catalogues, etc., are creating difficulties for librarians which these dealers are prepared to meet. Added problems are encountered by those trying to obtain materials from Eastern European countries where all publishing is controlled by the government. Dealers often specialize in obtaining such materials, and it pays to make use of their services.

The third session gave an overview of the typical problems encountered by a music librarian attempting to construct a blanket-order profile or a collection policy.

The afternoon sessions were devoted to small-group discussions of various topics: sound recordings; network and commercial acquisition modules; dealer services; antiquarian materials; centralized acquisitions processing and music materials; academic research libraries; small college libraries; public libraries; performance-oriented libraries and conservatories.

The day, one of the most profitable of the week, also provided opportunities for discussions with other librarians, for contact with the dealers and agents who also attended the meeting, and for the examination of materials displayed by the various companies in the exhibit area.

Sister Louise Smith.