

Pandemic Impact: Three Managers' Perspectives



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(1) Did COVID-19 affect your 2020/21 music collections budget? If so, how?

[JG] Our print materials budget was effectively frozen during FY2020/21. This was due partly to the uncertainty of enrollment during the pandemic, and partly due to the fact that our technical services department remained closed for the entire FY so we could not properly receive materials. The President prioritized spending on electronic resources that supported remote teaching and learning, and this enabled us to subscribe to some new e-resources e.g., nKoda, RIPM Jazz, ARMA from A-R Editions.

[KM] UBC Library's collection budget opened progressively over the summer of 2020 to adjust to the university's concerns regarding student enrolment consequent to the pandemic. The Library's Technical Services division continued to operate but in a limited capacity due to staffing restrictions imposed by the Provincial Health Services Authority controlling numbers of people in enclosed spaces. Initial emphasis was on sustaining and building e-resources essential to support an online distance learning environment. By fall, some print purchasing was available. Music collection spending remained focused on either temporary subscriptions to new e-resources (e.g., nkoda, MaisonOna, Berliner Philharmoniker's Digital Concert Hall) or adding permanent music e-resources (e.g., Alexander Street Classical Scores Library: 4 volumes; Oxford Handbooks Online: Music Module).

[BCM] Western's Music Library acquisitions budget was unaffected by the pandemic; however, the focus of spending and the acquisitions process changed dramatically.

(2) Were there administrative decisions regarding all collections under COVID-19 that impacted the music collection specifically?

[KM] Spring of 2020, UBC Library joined the HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS). The arrangement provides access to e-resources across all academic subject areas, materials that would have remained inaccessible to distance students because the library holds copies in print format only. However, joining the service has impacted the library's catalogue. Books and scores that UBC Library owns in print that are in the Hathi Trust eBook collection must be made available via Hathi Trust only. Bibliographic records for duplicate print copies of HathiTrust e-resources are suppressed on the library's catalogue leaving those copies inaccessible to local patrons preferring print and wishing to take advantage of the library's print delivery service.

[BCM] Western was a latecomer to HathiTrust ETAS, becoming a member of the organization in October 2020 and launching the ETAS even later in the Fall 2020 term. Having been forewarned by music library colleagues across the country about Hathi's lack of success in identifying music scores in a member's collection, I decided to exclude scores from the service. That way, users could request a print score from our collection for "curb-side pick-up" rather than try to practice from a non-downloadable, non-printable online score. I admit this decision did put at a disadvantage those students and faculty who were unable to come to campus. I heard from some Western users sheltering across the country who could not access scores online via Western Libraries, could not request materials via interlibrary loan (which was suspended during much of the pandemic), and had no access to music collections at their local academic institutions (because of a blanket decision made by Canadian universities to focus on their primary users, i.e., faculty, students, and staff, during a time of reduced capacity).

In addition, Western did offer another Emergency Temporary Access Service, one of its own making, that made all course reserves available online. In collaboration with Scholars Portal, Western Libraries arranged to have required readings not available commercially in electronic format digitized and uploaded to the official course website in a locked down PDF. This arrangement included complete music scores still under copyright. Permission was sought from rights holders before any score was digitized.

(3) Were print and electronic resources affected differently? How?

[BCM] With the entire campus shut down for long periods or, at best, partially opened, online access became the ruling principle in acquisitions. At the beginning of the pandemic, print acquisitions ceased (at Western approval plans were suspended), and later, as campuses began to reopen, health & safety measures prevented adequate numbers of staff from coming on campus to receive, catalogue, and process new physical items. By the end of 2020, these restrictions eased and

print shipments resumed. Two subsequent stay-at-home orders (and counting...) have created a large backlog and delays in making new titles available to users.

Western took advantage of the many offers vendors extended to the academic community for a limited time. These offers provided increased online access to ebooks, databases, and special reference materials (e.g., RIPM Jazz and RILM's online MGG) to the end of the 2019-2020 academic year at least. Western also trialed the score database nkoda, but costs and technical issues made even a temporary subscription not feasible.

(4) Did COVID-19 change any of your collections purchasing/acquisition habits, processes?

[KM] Even before the pandemic, I was aware of an interest within the UBC School of Music for e-scores. However, I am surprised at the usage stats for our e-score collections during the pandemic. They are very strong considering the numbers of students on campus and high usage stats for the library's print delivery service. The question going forward is once everyone is back on campus will the usage stats for e-scores hold? Making temporary e-score subscriptions permanent post the pandemic will require moving funding away from traditional print resources.

[BCM] Western did not subscribe to any new e-score services. Nonetheless, the pandemic forced me to put aside any print book purchases if an ebook were available. While the electronic format is technically "preferred" in Western's approval plans, librarians have the discretion to purchase print. The preference of music performers and researchers has traditionally been for print materials. Like Kevin, I wonder if the pandemic will mark a shift toward online consumption of music materials.

(5) Were there other factors external to the budget that impacted music collections?

[JG] Our entire technical services department has been closed throughout the pandemic. Cataloguers and acquisitions staff are all working remotely, with minimal staff going on site to receive new materials. A massive backlog of new music materials is accruing in the technical services department. Early in 2021, they started shipping new materials to the music library in a slow trickle, and music library staff began processing and shelving the new arrivals. However, the U of T Libraries shut down again, completely, in mid-April 2021 due to a spike in COVID cases. This backlog will take many months to clear once the pandemic is over.

[BCM] We are facing a similar situation at Western.

[KM] Staffing was definitely an issue with the ordering, receiving and cataloguing staff working remotely and unable to address music resources as they once did in-person. However, I work in a large, multi-branch library system. Another big issue impacting the music collection is how print materials are being returned by patrons to the library. Patrons are returning music materials to the

closest library branch at hand and not directly to the music branch as was the norm. Not all library branches are familiar with handling music resources and some scores are making their way back to the music collection with parts missing...or disappearing in the mail altogether. I can see the need to run a missing report sometime in 2022 to really gauge the impact of patron behavior and the mail delivery system on our music collection.

(6) How did COVID-19 impact access to your collections? How did COVID-19 affect access to other services within your library?

[BCM] Western opened its Music Library one week after Labour Day and stayed open until the December break. Hours were reduced to four hours per day, Monday to Friday. The collections were roped off from the public, reducing the accessible area of the physical space to one-fifth and total user capacity to eighteen. To facilitate possible contact tracing, all visitors had to register at the library entrance with a “conciierge.” who would book them in specific spots depending on what they wished to do: check out items requested in advance, study, or use the printers and photocopiers. Only Western community members (e.g., faculty, staff, and students) were allowed in; no unaffiliated users (musicians in the community, alumni, etc.) had access to the physical library.

A province-wide shutdown beginning on Dec. 26th prevented the Music Library from reopening in January, and two months later, when the shutdown ended, health and safety concerns kept the Music Library closed. We are currently contemplating a limited reopening of the physical space over the summer. Throughout the pandemic, a reduced staff complement have worked on site daily to handle online requests for physical items (to be picked up at Western’s central Humanities & Social Sciences library), digitization, and reshelving returned items while the rest participate in Western Libraries’ regular online services from home. A date for reopening the collections to the public has not yet been determined.

[KM] Spring of 2020, UBC Library closed its physical spaces to be in compliance with BC Health Authority’s regulations. Limited support staff have been allowed to return to their regular work environments over time to maintain important services: bookable study space, print materials pick-up, printing job pick-up, Interlibrary Loan, and book returns for recalled items. Librarian support, online workshops, and electronic resource access continue uninterrupted. UBC is planning for a return to on-campus instruction and increased levels of on-campus research activity Winter Session, Term 1, September 2021.

[JG] In March 2020 the U of T Libraries shut down completely. The large humanities, social sciences, and science libraries re-opened for curbside pickup and reduced study/computer space in the summer of 2020. The Music Library re-opened for curbside pickup and reduced study/computer space in late August 2020. We also launched a virtual help desk (via Zoom) and

improved scheduling for research consultations. While the curbside pick-up service was heavily used (with approximately 100 requests a week), the music library study and computer spaces were not well used. In November 2020 we reduced open hours to four hours per day (M-F only), reduced on-site staff to one person per day, stopped offering study and computer space and only offered curbside pick-up services. The curbside service was used consistently throughout the 2021-21 academic year with 70-80 requests per week, dwindling to about 40 per week by the end of term in April 2021. While staff field dozens of reference and policy questions per week via e-mail, the virtual help desk has seen little use.

(7) How did you inform users of changes to your collections and services during the pandemic?

[KM] An email collections marketing campaign was initiated in October 2020. The purpose was to let the UBC School of Music know that the acquisition of current music publications continued unabated by the pandemic and that several e-resources had been added temporarily to support teaching, learning, and research. As well, it was hoped that the campaign would boost the usage stats of temporary resources so as to support a claim for their permanent acquisition.

[JG] We started a blog called Notes from the Music Library <https://music.library.utoronto.ca/music-library-blog> in the spring of 2020. Our Music Archivist and Collections Management Librarian write the majority of the posts, but other staff contribute regularly. We use that space to update users on changes to services during the pandemic, new acquisitions, and to highlight special collections users can view online. We send e-mail notifications of service changes to music faculty and students through the Office of the Dean of Music. I make bi-monthly reports on library services and collections to Faculty Council, and I write a monthly update for the Student Association newsletter.

[BCM] I, too, relied heavily on email communication to the Don Wright Faculty of Music community. I also delivered updates to the Music Faculty Council via Zoom. As a member of the Western Libraries Collections team, I had a hand in creating a few online guides to our expanded ebook resources and free pandemic-inspired music websites (e.g., performances). Of course, Western Libraries published a COVID-19 information page and released news items regularly.

(8) Did COVID-19 impel you to come up with creative solutions to long-term or immediate collections issues?

[JG] One interesting opportunity that came up for us was to re-visit our policies around what circulates and what doesn't circulate. There are many items in our stacks stamped "non-circ" and while some of these are obviously expensive or otherwise special items, many of them defy explanation as to why they were so marked. Since only circulatable items are requestable in our

curbside pickup service we decided to relax our policies somewhat to allow more items to circulate. It was a great chance for staff to come together and discuss our service values, why some of these legacy decisions were made, and what kind of access we wanted going forward.

[BCM] Western has a number of non-circulating scores in its general collection. I currently have 3 trolleys of these fragile items sitting outside my office awaiting their fate! This summer, we will take advantage of the closed stacks to select little-used items for transfer to storage.

[KM] The pandemic has certainly made me aware of the need to circulate some materials previously classified as non-circulating. I'd love to open up parts of our music collection for sure. However, what would impel a patron to return valuable and unique materials? I have experimented with pushing interesting scores out to the circulating stacks only to watch as patrons who sign them out refuse to return them. The future of non-circulating materials is tied for me to fines policy. Without some process of accountability, do I dare continue to allow irreplaceable non-circulating resources circulate as I did during COVID-19?

(9) Is there anything that you would take away from this unusual year consequent to COVID-19 into the future re: music collections?

[JG] Music scores continued to be important for our users during the pandemic, but we struggled to provide adequate access. Users expect us to be able to provide a scanning service for scores, yet our institution takes such a conservative approach to fair dealing that we cannot provide even legal scans. This must change as we move out of the pandemic. Our team has some pilot projects in mind to pitch to the Chief Librarian regarding scanning public domain scores and moving them to our off-site Downsview location. Then we will consider in-copyright scores and find a way to pilot a legal scanning service for these.

[BCM] I agree with Jan that the pandemic may have finally given musicians and publishers the momentum necessary to adopt e-scores broadly. There are still a number of obstacles to overcome for libraries to be able to provide scores to all users in a way that balances the rights of composers, users, and the distributors (us!). I look forward to witnessing what the future brings.

[KM] For the collection that I manage, it really feels like the purchase of electronic resources has outstripped those in print format by a mile. Very little I'm buying is in print format with the exception of music manuscripts and facsimiles...which end up in another branch, Rare Books and Special Collections. That's how I feel today. Will I feel the same way once I'm back in the office in September? Will I be so sure that the future here is 'e'?