

THE ORIENTATION OF FRESHMEN TO AN ACADEMIC MUSIC LIBRARY: CONFESSIONS OF AN EVANGELISTIC MUSIC REFERENCE LIBRARIAN.

From the beginning (i.e. during my job interview) I was led to a firm belief in the power of witnessing, of instructing the young in the rituals of the library faith. My role as reference librarian was not simply to give guidance but also to spread the good word that others might find their own way. I confess that I did not come to this belief for altruistic reasons alone; as the old saying goes, "The more you do today, the less you must do tomorrow."<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt that first-year students at a music school need instruction in the use of the resources available to them in the music library. How much instruction they require and how much information they can assimilate are the questions which perplex the reference librarian (or the person responsible for giving library instruction). An explanation of library procedures can be the "straw that broke the camel's back"<sup>2</sup> for a student who is being systematically disoriented by a veritable bombardment of information in the form of "orientation" to various quarters of his new environment. All one can honestly say about freshmen is this: "They stand in need of more than they can stand."

In my search for the one best method of reaching the freshmen, I have in the past relied on those sanctified methods tradition offers: the Tour, the Lecture, and the Handout. This year I have replaced the Lecture with a series of weekly "sermonettes," each devoted to a single aspect of library ritual and each no more than ten minutes long. In so doing I hoped to give the students more time in which to "drink in the wisdom of my teachings." Although much of what I covered could have been as capably handled by faculty members in their classes, I felt that my presence was desirable so that the students could make the necessary leap between theory and the person who could help them put theory into practice.<sup>3</sup> My presence also gave me the opportunity to become better acquainted with the students.

The topics I included in this year's series of lectures were intended to fulfill the following purposes:

1. to give the students a general introduction to the library and to its staff; to explain the handouts<sup>4</sup> and outline what I would be discussing throughout the series;

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<sup>1</sup> By the time this article is in print, this saying will be at least two weeks old.

<sup>2</sup> Note the cleverly disguised reference to the association responsible for this article.

<sup>3</sup> The cooperation of the faculty was obviously vital to this venture; the lectures were given during class-time in the freshmen music history classes.

<sup>4</sup> Including a nine-page handout entitled, "How to use the Main Card Catalogue."

2. to describe the uses of some of the more important reference tools, such as Grow's, Baker's, and HDM;
3. to stress the importance of compiling bibliographies and to suggest steps one might take in compiling them;
4. to discuss the more important music histories and their usefulness as a point of departure for researching essay topics;
5. to point out the value of periodicals as an abundant source of current information and to explain the use of the various indexing tools;
6. to explain how one can find individual works in collected editions, historical sets, etc.;
7. to suggest how one can make use of books in foreign languages, such as MGG, without a comprehensive knowledge of the languages.

It is doubtful that anyone will ever devise a totally satisfactory method of giving first-year students all the information they need; but by spreading the process out into well-defined segments such as those outlined above, I tried to make the ordeal this year somewhat more palatable. As always there was an uncomfortable number of those eye-rolling, foot-shuffling students, placed there by our Lord and Comforter (L.C.) that I might ponder my foolish pride and wonder if I were merely prolonging the agony. I confess that I am not completely convinced of the superiority of the new approach, but I am convinced that new approaches must continually be tried.

Merwin Lewis