

CAML 2017: Conference Diary# 1

By Tom Harding

Tom Harding reflects on his experience at this year's [conference of the Canadian Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres](#) (CAML), during which he served as a volunteer. Tom graduated in April 2017 from the University of Toronto with a Master of Information, with concentrations in library and archival science. He is currently completing an internship at the University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections.

The 2017 CAML conference, part of a joint meeting entitled *Canada 150: Music and Belonging*, was held from 25-27 May at the University of Toronto's Edward Johnson Building, and featured an eclectic range of speakers from across the country discussing an array of topics. As this was the first professional conference I had attended, it was a unique and informative experience. The conference also offered an opportunity to meet other people working in the field and speak with them about their work.

Thursday, the opening day of the conference, consisted of a day-long [workshop on Wikipedia](#). This session began with a panel discussion featuring a group of speakers not limited to music librarians. Each of the panelists had had some experience both editing Wikipedia and organizing editing events, known colloquially as "edit-a-thons." The discussion centred on the potential value of Wikipedia for libraries and archives. My takeaway from the conversation was that Wikipedia is often the first resource to which people turn when researching a topic; therefore, if an institution is affiliated with an individual or organization represented on a Wikipedia page, the page can serve as an access point and promotional tool for the institution's collections. In the event the library or archive holds the papers of an individual who does not have a page, it may be valuable for the institution to create a page to increase the visibility of that individual.

Friday morning featured two sessions, each consisting of three presentations. One presentation was by Houman Behzadi and Steve Marks of the University of Toronto, discussing a new model for collecting recordings. Noticing that use of CDs was dropping, their project sought to develop a model for collecting digital recordings. Per this new model, the library would purchase from a



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provider the digital files of a recording, and would then preserve the files and make them available for listening. Marks, a digital preservation librarian, indicated that his side of the project was relatively easy, and that the difficult part of the project was the legal negotiating to acquire the files. This presentation was extremely interesting, and opened my eyes to the possibilities of universities collecting born-digital objects within the music realm.

That morning's second session featured another engaging presentation tending more towards musicology. Maria Calderisi, formerly of the National Library of Canada, and James K. Wright of Carleton University presented on the legacy of Helmut Kallmann – librarian and musicologist. Calderisi introduced Kallmann's life and work, and Wright elaborated on Kallmann's mission to help Canada develop a unique national culture instead of importing that of our southern neighbours. The challenge of fostering a sovereign Canadian culture remains as relevant today as it was in the era of the Massey Commission, and the presenters suggested that as we celebrate our sesquicentennial we should consider Kallmann's legacy when asking questions about our nationhood and culture.

The final presentation of the conference, delivered by Houman Behzadi and Caitlin Tillman from the University of Toronto, along with Bonna Boettcher from Cornell University (via Skype), discussed upcoming and past initiatives involving shared collections. Discussion began with the speakers addressing the difficulty Canadian university libraries face with a continually dropping dollar whilst making most of their acquisitions in American dollars. As acquisition budgets are generally not increasing, this means that libraries are effectively able to purchase less each year. A solution to this problem is shared collections. Per this model, libraries in a certain region would form consortiums to amalgamate their holdings, into a consortium, making items held by one institution available at another.

On Saturday evening, after the conclusion of the conference proper, the society held a final dinner in the Alumni Hall dining room in Old Vic. The dinner offered a last chance to speak with other members and discuss topics that arose during the conference.

Volunteering at and attending the conference proved to be a valuable experience. Over the three days I was able to listen to discussions about relevant trends and topics in music librarianship. It was informative to hear about the projects on which librarians across the country are working, and to see the similarities and disparities between them. The transition to digital resources was a conspicuous theme across the presentations. All librarians seem to understand that students are using fewer physical items, and libraries are therefore working to navigate this changing reality. Exacerbated by an uncertain economic landscape, librarians are having to conceive innovative means to deal with a rapidly shifting environment.