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Abstract: In 1981, Ralph Papakhian and Richard Smiraglia published the study “Music in the OCLC Online Union Catalog: A Review” in *Notes*. The paper reported on the nascent music cataloging situation in what was to become WorldCat at a time when coverage was spotty, there was little cataloging contributed by the Library of Congress, and major music libraries were struggling to make good use of the OCLC utility. The study won an award from the Music Library Association and served as an opening manifesto for what became the Music OCLC Users Group (MOUG). To honor Papakhian, Smiraglia and students in his 2010 summer session LIS 791 Music Cataloging course at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee replicated the study. Students assessed currency by checking lists of music, books, and recordings recently issued to see how quickly they become part of WorldCat. Using a random sample of score and musical sound bibliographic records contributed by the OCLC Office of Research, students assessed the accuracy and quality of cataloging for scores and recordings in WorldCat.

MUSIC, MARC, OCLC AND THE 1980S

Music cataloging in the 1980s seemed like something of a brave new world, at least when it came to the shift from manual systems to automated cataloging. The MARC (MAchine Readable Cataloging) format for monographs had been published in 1968 and implemented on a large scale by the Library of Congress (LC) for card production. The MARC music format, however, was not published until 1976, despite a very rich history of research and development in automated music cataloging. Automated cataloging support and offline card production for monographs and serials was available from the mid-1960s through the precursor of the world’s now sole bibliographic utility, OCLC, which was then called the Ohio College Library Center. Created in 1965 and incorporated in 1967, OCLC quickly became a leading purveyor of MARC-based cataloging services, but not for music. It was not until 1978 that the music format was implemented by OCLC, not until 1980 by the research library service then called RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network), and not until 1985 by LC on a large scale. So, for active catalogers of music in the early 1980s, cataloging online had a sort of thrill attached, because there were few or no precedents. Meetings of the Music Library Association Cataloging Committee were always exciting, and there was frequent interaction among heads of major music cataloging centers, such as those in the largest research libraries. For example, the Sibley Library (Eastman School of Music) and the music library at Northwestern University come to mind, along with, of course, the libraries at Indiana University Bloomington (IU) and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). It was not unusual in those days to phone a cataloger in another institution to inquire about a record one had seen online in OCLC.
(this was before the Internet—there was no email). And it was also fairly routine to call for advice before inputting a controversial record. The Music OCLC Users Group was established in 1977 to provide a venue for consultation and also for research and development among librarians at participating institutions.

It was in this exciting time that Arsen Ralph Papakhian, then head of music technical services at IU, and Richard Smiraglia, then head of music cataloging at UIUC, decided to conduct a study to gather empirical data about the coverage and quality of cataloging for music and sound recordings in OCLC. The study was published in Notes in 1981. At that time, OCLC had 2,500 member libraries, 7.4 million bibliographic records, and of those, 141,143 were scores and 118,041 were musical recordings.

To analyze coverage, we searched the entire Basic Music Library to see whether a small music library on opening day could expect to find cataloging for its holdings in OCLC. Interestingly and importantly, even at that time 91.5% of the publications included in A Basic Music Library were located in OCLC. Furthermore, all of the specific publications not located were represented by other editions, meaning that the entire essential collection could have been searched and cataloged using OCLC. This remarkable result was also consistent with results cited by Robert Michael Fling. To analyze currency we searched the “Books Received” and “Music Received” columns published in Notes in December 1979 and September 1980, and “New Listings” from the same issues of the Schwann-1 Record and Tape Guide. Virtually all books were found—98.42% of December 1979 books and 94.78% of September 1980 books. Much lower proportions of scores were found—60.71% and 31.05%, respectively. And the same was true for sound recordings—58.7% and 22.7% respectively. The disparity was likely a reflection of the influence of LC’s MARC Distribution Service, which was already covering most book production at the time, but had little impact on scores and recordings. Note, however, that for both scores and recordings the proportions roughly doubled during the seven-month interval.

To analyze the utility of bibliographic data, samples of bibliographic records for all three media were compiled using all catalog records from both libraries during July and September 1980. The sample could be criticized because it was not drawn at random. But, in each case, the entire population of bibliographic records was analyzed, so one could say that the results were representative of the cataloging being used at IU and UIUC in the specific period of analysis. To the extent these two libraries were cataloging materials similar to those being acquired by other libraries, the results might also have been representative. On average, 6 changes were being made to monographic records, 10.5 to records for scores and 15.9 to records for sound recordings. For all three categories, most changes were made to descriptive data—probably reflecting shifting cataloging rules at the time (ISBD revision of AACR1 was implemented in 1974; AACR2 had not yet been implemented widely, but was in use at UIUC), and for the sound recordings almost certainly reflecting expanded contents notes. Analysis of the sources of cataloging showed that 58 percent of the cataloging for monographs was from LC, but only 30 percent of the cataloging for scores and recordings was from LC, with the clear majority of
the copy coming from OCLC member libraries. A comparison of changes required for biblio-
graphic records plotted alongside dates of entry in OCLC showed there had been a rapid rise in
the number of changes required since the beginning of music implementation in September
1976, but they had fallen off by the time of the study.

REPLICATING THE STUDY THIRTY YEARS HENCE

To honor Ralph Papakhian, we decided to try to replicate the study, and in particular we de-
cided to incorporate the study as a class project for the students enrolled in Music Cataloging
for the summer 2010 term. The idea was to provide an opportunity for these students to be-
come acquainted with Papakhian’s contributions to research about music cataloging as well as
his reputation as an educator and mentor of young catalogers. But also it was pedagogical, to
help the students assess the actual impact of their cataloging on the bibliographic apparatus in
general—that is, how the quality of the copy one generates influences its use in other libraries—
and in the OCLC WorldCat in particular. On the other hand, there was no need to replicate the
search of A Basic Music Library, because it was clear that essential coverage was now available
in WorldCat. When the present study was designed, in May 2010, OCLC had 72,000 member
libraries and 183,028,917 bibliographic records, of which the OCLC Office of Research esti-
minated 4,000,000 were for musical recordings and 3,400,000 were for scores.

We decided to attempt to replicate the check for timeliness of coverage, albeit in a slightly
different way. (The Schwann guide had long since ceased publication, and the influence of the
World Wide Web had to be taken into account). Therefore, students searched:

- The “Music Received” columns published in the December 2009 and March 2010 is-
  sues of Notes; each had six pages of approximately twenty entries.
- The “Books Recently Published” columns published in the December 2009 and March
  2010 issues of Notes; each had twenty pages of approximately twenty entries.
- Billboard “New Releases” (http://www.billboard.com/new-releases#newline-releases); we
  searched two hundred albums under “New Music Releases” from June 2010, in reverse,
  through December 2009 (twenty screens, each with ten albums).
- Classical Music Sentinel (http://www.classicmusicsentinel.com/gates.html); using the
  site’s navigation tools to locate the latest releases for June 2010, approximately twenty-four
  albums.

Students worked together in groups of three or four: one group was assigned to scores,
two groups split the books recently published, and two more groups split the sound recording
searches. Bibliographic records were located using the OCLC Connexion cataloging interface;
results of the searches were entered on Excel spreadsheets, and each group was encouraged to
contribute a narrative of any interesting results.

To analyze the part of the study focused on the quality of bibliographic data, a random
sample of bibliographic records for scores and sound recordings was constituted. Sample size
calculations were made based on the proportion of LC copy in the original study, which was 30 percent, and the mean number of changes made to bibliographic records for sound recordings (the larger figure), which was 11. It was determined that with 95 percent confidence and an acceptable error of 5 percent, a sample of 322 bibliographic records each for scores and recordings would yield generalizable results. The OCLC Office of Research provided a random sample of 323 bibliographic records for scores and 309 bibliographic records for sound recordings. Students were once again assigned to small groups of three or four (in different combinations) and each was assigned a segment of each sample. Students were asked to find each bibliographic record by record number in WorldCat and to record for each:

- date entered and the latest date replaced
- inputting library symbol
- all other symbols in field 040
- cataloging rules used
- encoding level

As before, groups were asked to provide brief narratives of interesting observations.

**RESULTS**

**COVERAGE**

Coverage was nearly universal for books and “popular” sound recordings. That is to say, OCLC contains bibliographic records for 99 percent of the resources our groups searched. For books the figure was 99.6 percent, for sound recordings listed in *Billboard* it was 95.27 percent. Table 1 contains comparative figures.

The figure was much lower, however, for recently released classical recordings and for scores. Table 2 has comparative figures.

What is going on here? It seems likely there is some disparity between coverage and recency for resources that are in the higher end of the economic demand stream, and coverage is a bit slower for other resources, including Western art music, but there is evidence of increased coverage over time. Table 3 contains the comparative data from both studies.

Coverage for monographs and popular sound recordings clearly is not at issue. Coverage for scores has improved but still lags far behind coverage for monographs. And coverage for recently released classical recordings is at about the same level as that for scores. Thus it is interesting to note that three decades after the first study there still is some lag in the bibliographic coverage of music scores and newly released classical sound recordings. Does this reflect somehow the relationship between music schools and their libraries, on the one hand, and the commercial sector, on the other? Or is it a reflection of the contents of the “Music Received” lists in *Notes*? We have no data available to answer either question, but both are surely provocative questions for further research.
**Narrative Comments from the Researchers about Coverage**

Students were encouraged, as researchers usually are, to make notes as they went along, and each small group was encouraged, in kind, to discuss these notes and report observations along with their data. Probably the most frequent observation concerned the duplication of coverage. Many, if not most, resources had multiple records. This is a result of the several recent mergers of online systems into OCLC, such that it is now possible to find bibliographic records from several national libraries alongside contributed records for almost every resource. Duplication is now a problem in OCLC. The students noted that many of the titles they searched under the category of “books recently published” included electronic resources—CDs, CD-ROMs, and DVDs. Thus the list of “books” is really more a list of “not music,” and there is much diversity among the media represented.

Students who searched *Classical Music Sentinel* reported the majority of bibliographic records found were from Baker & Taylor, a vendor, and had minimal descriptive cataloging. For several sound recordings, multiple records were present with conflicting MARC 100 fields (composer vs. performer). Many of the recordings were quite difficult to find using name-title searches, possibly because of incomplete cataloging. Most often the Universal Product Code was used to locate the actual bibliographic record—something of a sad state of affairs for the world’s single bibliographic utility. Students who searched *Billboard* reported similar problems and also found it difficult to decide whether divergent bibliographic records actually represented the same resource. Students also had some difficulty distinguishing cases of multiple records (minimal, and full, for example) from cases of multiple instantiations (deluxe editions, imports,

| Books December 2009          | 99.5% |
| Books September 2009         | 99.7% |
| *Billboard* February 2010    | 98.8% |
| *Billboard* May 2010         | 99.1% |

Table 1. Coverage of monographs and sound recordings in OCLC.

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<tr>
<td>Classical Music Sentinel</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Music Received” December 2009</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Music Received” March 2010</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2. Coverage of newly released classical sound recordings and musical scores in OCLC.

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