
CAREERS IN MUSIC LIBRARIANSHIP III REALITY AND REINVENTION

Edited by

Susannah Cleveland and Joe C. Clark

Co-published by

 Music Library Association

and

 A-R Editions, Inc.
Middleton, Wisconsin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
<i>Paula Elliot</i>	
Preface	ix
<i>Susannah Cleveland</i>	
1 Music Library Environments and Positions Types	1
<i>Misti Shaw</i>	
2 Training and Education in Music Librarianship	21
<i>John Wagstaff</i>	
3 How to Make Friends, Influence People, and Maybe Even Get a Job in a Music Library: Perspectives from Recent Graduates and New Professionals	49
<i>Lindy Smith</i>	
4 Breaking into the Field in a Tough Job Market	73
<i>Joe C. Clark</i>	
5 Success Is a Science: Tips for Applying and Interviewing for Music Library Jobs	93
<i>Susannah Cleveland</i>	
6 Faculty Status and the Music Librarian	111
<i>Jennifer Ottervik</i>	

7	Career Flexibility: Moving between Position and Institution Types <i>Amy Pawlowski</i>	139
8	Upwardly Mobile: Music Librarians Leave the Nest <i>Ned Quist</i>	153
9	Staying Current: Keeping Skills and Knowledge Relevant in a Dynamic Professional Landscape <i>Holling Smith-Borne and Mark A. Puente</i>	163
10	Professional Associations and Societies for Music Librarians <i>Ruthann Boles McTyre</i>	181
11	Selected Resources <i>Lisa Shiota</i>	193
	About the Contributors	204
	Index	209

1

MUSIC LIBRARY ENVIRONMENTS AND POSITIONS TYPES

MISTI SHAW

Within academic institutions, public libraries, and archives, music librarians tackle a diverse range of responsibilities. For anyone planning to pursue a career in music librarianship, it can be difficult to determine what personal attributes and traits best correspond with a particular facet of music librarianship. Often students enrolled in library degree programs are urged to decide what their area of specialty will be, a decision that can be especially intimidating in the early stages of a library training program when there is still much to be learned. Understanding the variety of work responsibilities and contributions of music librarians, coupled with recommendations from music librarians about the personal attributes that flourish in each field of librarianship, can help those new to the profession make choices about education and employment that will result in a situation that will resonate with them personally.

WHERE MUSIC LIBRARIANS WORK

Music librarians work in a variety of library settings. Many public libraries—especially those in populous cities—contain collections of music in various formats. The music collections of public libraries vary widely and depend on a variety of factors, most often the unique needs of the surrounding community. But what all public music libraries have in common is that their patron base is diverse, composed of people who come from a variety of cultural, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Academic music libraries may be found in colleges, universities, and conservatories. Most music librarians work in academic institutions of higher education;¹ from 2002 to 2010, 82 percent of advertised music librarian vacancies on the Music Library Association's Placement Service were for positions in academic institutions, and in 2011–12, that percentage jumped to 88.² In university settings, some music collections are integrated within a larger collection of a main campus library. In these environments, music collections might be housed in disparate locations; music books might be shelved along with the other books in the library, the sound recordings and DVDs might be housed in a general media collection, and the scores might be shelved in their own area. Some academic libraries place all performing arts resources—including those for music, dance, and theater—in one area. Often, a music and performing arts librarian oversees these materials and provides reference services for them.

Some universities have a branch music library, often in the same building where music teaching takes place, but still falling under the auspices of a campus library system. In branch libraries, all music collections are housed in one area. Yet even when there is a branch music

library, some support services may be shared between libraries. For example, interlibrary loan might be centralized in the main library, but branch music library personnel assist in fulfillment of music requests. Or the music librarian who catalogs music items might also catalog media items for the main library, or the music reference librarian might provide reference services for performing arts collections located elsewhere. The music libraries of some campuses and conservatories exist as their own building, and often the personnel fulfills all aspects of their library services, including acquisitions, mending and preservation, cataloging, and more. All academic music library collections and services are administered by personnel who share the common goal of supporting the education and training of students studying music.

Though many libraries in higher education institutions contain archives and special collections in music, some stand-alone archives are devoted to collections containing recordings, scores, documents, and more. Some of these serve the general public, while others are maintained by professional societies or other private entities. These collections often include rare or fragile items, such as first-edition scores or reel-to-reel tapes that require specialists to oversee their continued care and optimal storage and preservation.

Radio libraries mostly house sound recordings and are located at radio stations or on university campuses that operate radio stations. The collections of radio libraries depend on the station's programming; popular or indie music radio stations will contain jazz, rock, folk, or other popular music recordings, while other stations might have substantial classical recording collections. Some radio libraries employ personnel who conduct research or compile program notes used for radio programming or themed shows. Competencies for radio librarians vary; those who are interested in working in a radio library should contact individual radio stations to inquire about position openings, internships and training opportunities, and their desired qualifications.

Performance and ensemble libraries include the music collections of orchestras, wind symphonies, opera companies, and military bands. Because the number of full-time performing symphonies and other ensembles is dwindling—there are fewer than twenty full-time orchestras in the United States in 2012—positions in music ensemble libraries are becoming difficult to attain and almost always require experience through apprenticeships or internships.³ Ensemble librarians work in performance environments, and the majority of their duties involve acquiring and preparing music for performance while maintaining and organizing performance collections. Some ensemble librarians oversee a small reference collection, and a few research and write program notes. Because the work of an ensemble librarian is so specialized, it will not be described in this chapter. Instead, those interested in pursuing ensemble librarianship will find McGill University ensemble librarian Erika Kirsch's article helpful, as well as Russ Girsberger's manual on performance libraries.⁴ The website of the Major Orchestra Librarians' Association is also useful; the page "The Orchestra Librarian: A Career Introduction," featuring descriptions of work responsibilities that apply to nearly any ensemble music librarian, is particularly informative.⁵

PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services involve a librarian's direct interaction with patrons. These services often include circulation assistance, reference assistance, instructing users and providing user guides, and maintaining a web presence. Public services can also include aspects of marketing, including the creation of displays and special programs, and communicating with patrons about news, events, and updated services. Outreach activities with the community also fall under public services. A social media presence has become increasingly important for libraries to maintain, and it is often the librarians in public services who update Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and other social media platforms to promote library offerings. Though many librarians will have some responsibilities in public services, some music libraries employ librarians whose very job title is "public services librarian."

Ray Heigemeir is the public services librarian at the Stanford University Music Library & Archive of Recorded Sound. His philosophy of public services centers on awareness and access: make patrons aware of what we have, then get those things easily into their hands.⁶ Advertising collections and services is one of Ray's biggest priorities. He notes that in university settings, students continue to have an easier time studying and working without leaving their dorm rooms. Collections and services that benefit students are of no use if they do not know about them, so the onus is on librarians to engage with off-site patrons and advertise how the library can help. Public services librarians often view themselves as advocates for both the collection and the patron; they are passionate about connecting people to useful collections and needed information.

Public services librarians often oversee circulation (lending of materials), manage circulation personnel, and think of innovative ways to meet the needs of patrons. In university settings, this can also include delivery of course reserves in print and online. According to Ray, a circulation department should always strive to simplify and be unobtrusive. If a patron walks away from the library thinking, "That was easy," then circulation has done its job. A library that can make checking out and renewing items as convenient as possible increases patron satisfaction, and innovative services help ensure that patrons will continue to visit for years to come.

A convenient experience at the circulation desk is ideal, but what about the patrons who have trouble finding the materials and information they need? Ray believes that while circulation services should be provided seamlessly without drawing attention, reference and research services and materials should be easily noticeable so that patrons are aware that they are available. Public services librarians assist patrons by creating guides and finding aids to make it easier to identify and locate needed information. A good research or subject guide provides the most important information without overwhelming the patron. A talented public services librarian excels at breaking down a complex issue, identifying the most important components, and simplifying presentation and delivery of tools and information. For example, when Ray created a library guide to jazz resources, he began by evaluating the best tools for jazz research. But then,

ever committed to the patron's ease of use, Ray took a step back and asked himself, "Is this too much? Am I giving patrons a foothold? Is there a big red arrow on the guide telling patrons 'start here'?" He goes on to say, "You have to meet patrons at their level, on their playing field. They come from a variety of places. You must recognize and appreciate that they have varying experiences and backgrounds with using libraries."

Caring about patrons is a given within any facet of librarianship, and those who seem keenly aware of their surroundings might have a leg up in a public services environment. Being extroverted helps a public services librarian engage with patrons to receive feedback, but anyone who has ever sat in a bustling coffee shop and watched the customers and staff knows that you can learn a lot by actively observing any service point. Ray points out that paying attention to his patrons and their struggles can inform where there are services needing innovation or improvement. He also suggests that as consumers, public services librarians can observe customer service while grocery shopping, visiting the bank, or buying coffee. He asks himself, "What's good about this service? What isn't good? Do the signs help me or are they confusing? How did I feel after my interaction?" and adds, "Sometimes librarians think that our service is unique, but really, our patrons don't necessarily differentiate our service from what they get at Starbucks. Service is service."

Though Ray works in an academic library, what he recommends for aspiring public services librarians also applies to those who will work in the public library setting. Steve Landstreet is head of the Music Department at the Free Library of Philadelphia, and has public services responsibilities including circulation, reference, and outreach. Steve agrees that it helps to be extroverted and outgoing in a public services environment, but adds that in a public library, you must be especially adept at communicating with a variety of patrons. Because he serves the community, his patrons are diverse, coming from different socioeconomic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Steve suggests that when working in a public library, it is essential to remain sensitive to those who struggle socioeconomically and to treat all patrons with respect and dignity.

REFERENCE

Music reference librarians work in most libraries that contain music collections—branches, conservatories, central libraries with music departments, public libraries with music collections, music archives, and more. Some music libraries employ full-time reference librarians, while others employ part-time reference librarians or full-time librarians who devote some portion of their time to reference duties. Working with patrons directly can help librarians identify the ways in which library services and access to information can be improved. Thus, in some music libraries, all music librarians are responsible for at least one reference shift per week—even those who work in technical services. Donna Arnold has been serving the patrons at the University of North Texas as a music reference librarian for many years. Donna's approach to reference work is practical: "The reference librarian is supposed to help you find what you want." She fields a

wide array of questions from patrons of all types—the sixth-grader with a school project about music, the amateur bluegrass performer seeking songs to perform, the undergraduate who procrastinated on a paper, the doctoral student seeking copyright permissions for music examples in her dissertation, the faculty scholar seeking rare scores from distant research libraries. Donna can recall several instances when patrons phoned her and proceeded to sing songs and ask for help in identifying them.

Good reference librarians are committed to being approachable, because they know patrons can be nervous about asking questions or become intimidated by library personnel. It is also important to remain neutral and nonjudgmental when working with a patron. At her library, Donna says, “We try to treat everyone the same—namely, very well. You can see people visibly relax sometimes when they know we’re going to help them and it’s going to be fine.” The reference-librarian mentality can be compared to that of a salesperson. A successful salesperson is welcoming, friendly, engaging, and likes people. How many customers want to seek services from someone who seems annoyed by a request for assistance? Donna adds, “If you’re not a happy person, you don’t need to be a reference librarian.”

Laura Moody echoes much of Donna’s sentiment about treating patrons well. Laura is the public services librarian at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum Library and Archives in Cleveland. In addition to her other responsibilities, she works reference shifts most afternoons. Situated on a community college campus, the library serves the public—researchers, rock enthusiasts, and everyone in between. Laura’s approach to serving her diverse clientele is to treat each patron with kindness and respect, no matter what their informational need might be. She adds that a reference librarian must possess a “goes the extra mile” personality when it comes helping patrons. Such service helps her accomplish her goal in reference work: “I don’t want to help them just once. I want people to keep coming back.”

People well suited to music reference work will have a broad knowledge of music, which is why earning a graduate degree in music may be an asset for the librarian and her patrons. Assisting researchers will demand advanced research skills, and reference librarians must be willing to tackle in-depth questions with tenacity. Reference librarians need to feel comfortable working with both print and electronic resources, which together provide the best arsenal for doing music reference work well.

Librarianship tends to attract those who want a career in service and to help people. Reference work attracts those who enjoy helping by directly interacting with the public—which is not for everyone. If you find it difficult to overcome extreme shyness, if you find it challenging to relate to people, or if you prefer working alone in predictable environments, reference work might not be the best fit as a primary area of responsibility. There are many other fields of library work that do not take place exclusively in public settings—including cataloging, digital projects, archives, special collections, and preservation—that a service-oriented person might find fulfilling.