21st Century Music Librarianship: Variations on a Theme

<1. TITLE SLIDE>

There is growing evidence of the decline of music librarianship in Canada. Three recent closures and mergers of Canadian music libraries are a cause for concern for music librarians. But does the loss of music libraries indicate a decline in music librarianship, or just a decrease in branch music libraries? This presentation discusses the development of music librarianship in Canada and the U.S. over the last ten years, drawn from evidence of the scholarly activity and professional practice of music librarians.

Music librarians in academic libraries are a good "case study" in examining the evolving roles of liaison librarians, as music librarians are some of the more "self-contained" liaisons, with our own longstanding journals, conferences, and associations. Music librarians are also some of the first liaison librarians to have had their identities as subject specialists challenged, problematized, and reconfigured by library administrations, and are constantly under threat of losing their specialist roles. As Paula Elliott writes in two thousand four, **quote** "we currently live and work in a library environment where specialization is under threat, and the well-trained generalist appears to be the librarian most likely to survive" **end quote**.

Before we can determine if there is a decline in music librarianship, and understand what may have changed over the last ten years, we need to know what came before. One way to do this is to look at what music librarians say they do, and what they believe in. In two thousand two, the Library School Liaison Subcommittee of the Music Library Association (the primary professional association for North American music librarians), wrote a core competencies report.

David Hunter, author of the report, writes **quote** "core competencies are the attitudes, approaches and actions that make possible the profession's long-term strategic advantages, that identify the customer benefits, and that are difficult to imitate. Core competencies not only define the present, they also ensure a future for the profession." **end quote** (MLA, 2002).

<2. CORE VALUES SLIDE>.

Displayed on the screen are the competencies under the "Professional *E*thos" category from the Core Competencies Report. As you can see, these competencies are not surprising, and would likely align with those of not just music librarians. As we will see, the scholarly and professional activity of music librarians over the last ten years indicates that music librarians are staying true to these competencies, yet are reinterpreting them in creative ways.

<3. SCHOLARLY & PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY SLIDE>

To examine the scholarly and professional activity of music librarians, I sampled the citations from two journals of music librarianship, and the programmes from two North American music librarianship conferences, from two thousand three to twenty thirteen. I then applied broad subject categories for further analysis. The evidence suggests a number of trends (or "variations on a theme", to keep consistent with the musical title of this paper), that illustrate changes to the work and identify of music librarians over the last ten years, but also reveal that those changes are rooted in the core values of music librarianship. The insights from these two data sets by no means provide a complete picture of the work that music librarians do, but pose some questions about what the future holds for North American music librarians, and more generally, liaison librarians.

<4. METHOD SLIDE>

The method I used falls broadly under the documentary analysis approach, where existing sources of information are analyzed as the primary source material, as opposed to being supplemental to another method such as interviews, focus groups, or surveys (Shenton 253). Well known research using this approach include Järvelin and Vakkari's nineteen ninety and nineteen ninety three studies, which compared the topics and methods of library and information science research from core LIS journals.

I am indebted to Kirsten Dougan's twenty ten study in which she compared the content of Notes and Fontes Artis Musicae from nineteen seventy seven to two thousand seven in a twenty ten article in Notes[1], and for the the categories she used in her analysis--displayed here **<5. DOUGAN CLASSIFICATION SLIDES>**, which I in turn used in classifying the data I collected. Rather than duplicate Dougan's work, I decided instead to compare it with the citations and presentations sampled in this study.

<6. DOUGAN CLASSIFICATION SLIDES>

Citations and presentations were assigned one category each, even if more categories were applicable. A particularly difficult category was reference and services. Following Dougan's lead, I classified bibliographies and lists dealing with specific genres of music or composers as "musicology," but items about reference sources and services for music more generally in reference and services. For many items I also struggled with deciding between the musicology, reference & services, and collection development & acquisitions categories, as many items touched on all of these aspects. For items about metadata, I classified them as cataloguing. For items about information seeking behaviours, teaching, or about the users of music collections and resources, I used information literacy.

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[1]1. Kirstin Dougan, "A View of Music Librarianship as Seen through Its Journals: A Comparison of Notes and Fontes Artis Musicae, 1977–2007," *Notes:* 66/ 4 (2010): 705–25.

<7. JOURNAL CITATIONS SLIDE>

I examined the citations in two well established publications for Canadian and U.S. music librarians: **Number One**: CAML Review - the official publication of the Canadian Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (hereafter referred to as the Review), and **Number Two**: Music Reference Services Quarterly (hereafter referred to as MRSQ), a peer reviewed journal covering all aspects of the management and use of music collections and services. Citations from the Review volumes thirty-one (two thousand three) to forty-one (twenty thirteen) and MRSQ volumes eight issue three (2004) to sixteen issue four (2013) were sampled.

Citations were exported from RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (the main citation database for the music disciplines) for the period **January First Two Thousand Three to December Thirty-First Twenty Thirteen**. As not all articles in these journals may have been indexed and abstracted in RILM, I cross checked the RILM citations against copies of the journals themselves, to ensure that nothing was missed, or conversely, that nothing was included that did not fit my criteria.

<8. CRITERIA JOURNALS SLIDE>

For journal citations, I included original articles, and review essays in my sample. Reviews, editorials, and conference reports were excluded, as I wanted instead to focus on work that represented the core scholarly and professional activity of music librarians. Articles were examined by their title, RILM-assigned subject headings, and abstract (where present), and were assigned to one category.

<9. RESULTS JOURNAL CITATIONS SLIDE>.

I collected one hundred nineteen citations from MRSQ, which consisted of original articles and only *substantial* items from the electronic resources column. I collected thirty seven citations from the *Review*, and excluded reports and book or sound recording reviews, which have traditionally made up the bulk of *Review* issues. **<10. MRSQ, 2003-2013 GRAPH SLIDE>.**

The top three categories of papers in MRSQ in the sampling period were Musicology, at 19.3%, followed by Technology, at 17.6%, and Collections of Music, at 16.8%, the three categories combined making up for just over half (or 53.7%) of papers sampled.

<11. REVIEW, 2003-2013 GRAPH SLIDE>.

Papers in the Review were predominantly categorized in Musicology, at 24.3%, followed by Collections of Music, at 21.6%, with Printing & Publishing and Cataloguing both tied for third at 10.8% each, the three categories combined making up for just over half (or 56.7%) of papers sampled.

<12. CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS SLIDE>

I also examined the conference programs for the two main music librarianship conferences in North America: **Number 1**: the Canadian Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centres (CAML) conference and **Number 2**: the Music Library Association (MLA), from two thousand three to twenty thirteen. The two thousand five CAML conference was held jointly with the MLA conference in Vancouver, so presentations for that year were counted in the MLA program.There was no separate CAML conference in twenty twelve, as CAML hosted the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centres (IAML) meeting in Montreal that year, so that year was not also not included.

<13. CRITERIA CONFERENCES SLIDE>

I included presentations and posters in this sample. I excluded committee meetings, tours, receptions, performances, and sessions composed entirely of non music librarian speakers in order to keep the focus on the work of music librarians. I excluded any sessions that appeared to be more of information sharing and discussion (such as "town halls"). For panels or roundtable sessions where separate presentations were not listed, I only counted these once. For joint conferences (such as joint CAML and Canadian University Music Society conferences, or the joint Society of American Music and MLA conference in two thousand seven), I only counted presentations where speakers could be identified as music librarians. I also did not collect presentations from Music OCLC Users Group (MOUG) meetings, which are typically held in conjunction with MLA, as I felt the primary focus on music cataloguing may skew the results.

<14. RESULTS CONFERENCES SLIDE>

I collected five hundred sixty presentations (seventy nine from CAML conferences, and four hundred eighty one from MLA conferences), and this represents the largest portion of the data collected.

<15. CAML, 2003-2013 GRAPH SLIDE>

Presentations at CAML conferences were nearly evenly distributed between Collections of Music, at 17.9%, followed by Printing & Publishing and Technology, tied at 15.4% each, and Collection Development & Acquisitions in third at 14.1%.

<16. MLA, 2003-2013 GRAPH SLIDE>

For MLA conferences, Musicology was again a dominant category, representing 29.5% of papers, followed by Reference & Services at 11.4%, and Cataloguing at 10%.

<17. 2003-2013 ALL SOURCES GRAPH SLIDE>

In total, the data collected consisted of seven hundred fifteen entries, the bulk of which were conference presentations (at 78%). Musicology is the dominant category, at 25.3%, followed by Technology at 11%, and Collections of Music at 10.9%, the three categories combined comprising nearly 50% (47.2%) of all presentations or citations from these sources. The bottom three categories were Printing & Publishing at 4.7%, Libraries at 4.4%, and Preservation & Formats at 3.5%. In all years sampled except twenty thirteen, musicology was the dominant category--Information literacy was the top category in twenty thirteen.

The total conference presentations or journal citations for this period remained fairly consistent, with a low of forty five in twenty twelve, to a high of seventy eight in two thousand three, and averaging sixty five per year. One notable trend was a marked decline of Musicology papers or presentations from twenty one in two thousand nine, gradually decreasing to nine in twenty thirteen. There were also the occasional large increases or decreases in certain categories. Such instances are a result of such factors as "themed" journal issues or conference programming, and on the whole the categories were surprisingly consistent. One explanation for this could be that since the majority of data collected were from MLA conferences where most presentations are submitted via a committee (for example, the Emerging Technologies & Services Committee), categories are artificially balanced as a result of the submission process.

The dominance of the musicology category is consistent with Dougan's analysis of *Notes*. The top category from Dougan's analysis of Notes was Musicology at 29.9 percent, which she explains as a result of the fact that **quote** "Far fewer music librarians than musicologists must compete in the tenure and publication process, so it is not surprising that Notes, as a peer-reviewed journal, attracts material that would be equally at home in musicology journals." **end quote**. I believe that this may also be an explanation for the dominance of musicology in my data, in addition to the fact that many music librarians come from backgrounds in musicology.

Another comparison can be made between the topics covered at conference presentations versus those published in journals. It is possible that emerging topics and trends are more likely to be presented about at conferences, than they are to be in journals. Given the predominance of conference presentations in the data, it is likely that emerging topics and trends are more strongly represented than if I had used journal citations alone.

From a closer look at individual paper or presentation topics, I have identified two trends that illustrate the development of music librarianship over the last ten years.

<18. TREND ONE - FOCUS ON THE USER SLIDE>

An increased focus on the users of music library collections and services is evident from this research. The information literacy category (where I also included user studies and anything related to teaching and learning), not only grew over the sample period, but paper and presentation titles and abstracts indicate increasing emphasis on understanding users in order to better serve them.

In the last ten years we see the development of music information literacy standards, an increased emphasis on integrating library instruction into the curriculum, and efforts to better understand how users engage with music materials through such methods as ethnographic studies, examinations of information seeking behaviours, and from gaining insight through user feedback.

This observation is consistent with the first trend identified in the twenty thirteen ARL Report, entitled "New Roles for New Times: Transforming Liaison Roles in Research Libraries" (ARL 2013), which states that **quote** "The traditional tripartite definition of liaison work as collection development, reference, and library instruction is being completely reconceived; with the user at the center of library services" **end quote** (ARL, 5). This also illustrates some of the new ways that music librarians are living up to one of their core values to **quote** "Recognize the diversity of musics, library users...staff and the wider community, and encourage all in their musical endeavors and enquiries" **end quote**. Music librarians are not unique in their move towards making users the centre of how services and collections are developed. Music librarians are likely engaging in wider changes to the library profession at large, and are also part of the shift in thinking from collections as being the primary focus of music librarianship, to users.

<19. TREND TWO - NEW COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES SLIDE>

A closer look at the paper and presentation titles and abstracts for the three dominant categories (musicology, technology, and collections of music), reveals a trend from two thousand three to twenty thirteen indicating the continual development of new collections and services for music library users that reinvent the traditional collections and services offered by music librarians.

The development of streaming media services for teaching and research, increased engagement by music librarians in the development of digital projects, and efforts to involve music libraries in broader societal trends (such as social media) were some of the areas that stood out. One of the core values of music librarians to **quote** "Continually assess the effectiveness of provided and potential materials and services" **end quote**, is indicated by this trend, as it is evident that there have been numerous new collections and services developed by music librarians aimed at better meeting the needs of their users. This trend is also not unique to music librarians, and is consistent with some of the wider changes to liaison librarianship that challenge liaisons to develop new areas of expertise, and engage in moving their collections and services closer to the point of need of their users.

<20. FUTURE DIRECTIONS>

As I was unable to obtain abstracts for conference presentations, I had limited information to determine categories. I often needed to rely on presentation titles and my judgement alone to determine classification. For MLA conferences I was also guided by the name of the committee or roundtable that sponsored a given session, but since many MLA committees cover multiple areas, it was not an exact method.

Further research will involve obtaining submitted program proposals, which would contain at least brief abstracts. This would allow for a more detailed analysis of presentation topics, and considering that conference presentations were my largest data set, it is my hope that this analysis would reveal more in depth information about the transforming professional practice of music librarians, in addition to better defining broader trends. A limitation I identified while classifying citations and presentations was the issue of indexer reliability. In developing this research further, I would use multiple indexers to classify the citations and presentations collected, in order to confirm category agreement.

I hope to further develop the work presented today into a more extensive study that looks at other sources of data (such as music librarian listservs and job ads), and to experiment with other methods of analysis (such as text and discourse analysis), and perhaps employ a mixed methods approach using interviews or surveys of practicing music librarians.

Music librarianship does not appear to be in a state of decline, and it is clear that the work and identify of music librarians has changed over the last ten years, while music librarians have found creative ways to vary the work they have traditionally done on behalf of their users, while keeping true to the core values of music librarianship.

Thank You.

<17. THANK YOU SLIDE>