
Development of a Collection: The Music Library at East Carolina University

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Although seven years' experience (which included primary responsibility for material selection and budget management in music libraries) preceded my appointment as music librarian at East Carolina University in 1982, I was surprised at the extent of challenge presented by the rather small special collection. At the core of the problem was the Music Library's history and its unique position as the university's sole branch library.

As is the case with many academic special collections, the Music Library began as a departmental collection: the School of Music purchased sound recordings and some scores, typically of the 'performance edition' genre, and housed them in the department, where they would be more readily available to music faculty and students. At the same time, Joyner, the university library, collected and housed most monographs and serials about music and some scores, including many of the large and expensive collected works editions and anthologies. The situation was altered as a result of the 1973 accreditation visitation by the National Association of Schools of Music, which recommended consolidation of music materials into a single collection. The School of Music was the recommended repository site due to the physical distance—a ten-minute walk across campus—between the school and Joyner Library, and the association justified its choice on the basis of the location's being the most appropriate to the largest community of users.

By 1976, a branch library policy was drawn up by university administration, and the Music Library was officially designated as an administrative branch of Joyner Library. A collection development policy was also written, and the transferral of most of the scores, as well as a large number of books and serials (those specifically selected by music faculty), was effected.

In the intervening years, however, two living collections continued to be developed, albeit sporadically, simultaneously. The Music Library received all materials recommended by music faculty or the music librarian and materials that

fell into the category of "serious" music. Non-serious (ostensibly) music, music-related items recommended by the reference department as part of the collection development process of the university library, and music materials requested by non-music faculty, such as dance or drama, continued to be added to the main library's collection.

Funding responsibilities were equally nebulous, and the annual amount provided by the School of Music (originally intended for the purchase of sound recordings) was being used to pay for serial titles that the main library would not assume. In fact, a study of the funding patterns revealed that library allocations for music materials had declined steadily since the Music Library's branch status, despite a not unhealthy library budget relative to institutional size and a large, active School of Music.

Other problems were evident in the mechanical aspects of collection development. Acquisitions functions for Music Library materials—processed centrally by the university library—had seriously deteriorated, and faculty were complaining of three or four year waits for materials and of requests that had simply dropped from sight, never to reappear. Even items documented as having been received were prone to disappear, and the short distance between libraries had assumed the distorted proportions of a black hole.

Finally, and perhaps symptomatic of the underlying problem, the branch collection continued to be referred to, even in official correspondence, as the School of Music Library rather than the East Carolina University Music Library. And the collection development policy, it became apparent on study, was partially responsible for the perpetuation of the library's departmental collection mentality. The document stated the Music Library's purpose as "to provide the materials necessary to support the undergraduate and graduate curricula of the School of Music." Period.

1982 held special significance for the Music Library. Faced within a year with a re-accreditation visit from the National Association of Schools

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of Music, administrators at all levels were deeply concerned with our problems, and a willingness to cooperate towards solution and a sense of direction for the collection were soon evident.

First, an assessment of the potential user community was undertaken and yielded not only the 350-odd students and 55 faculty members of the School of Music but a campus community of nearly 14,000 FTE students and 800 faculty, including those in active dance and drama departments (located, coincidentally, in an adjacent building), a new medical school, plus a campus radio station with no classical record library, all of whom might depend on the library to satisfy a broad variety of instructional, informational, and recreational musical needs. In addition, the relative geographic isolation of the university placed an extra responsibility to service on the institution, and as a special collection, the Music Library could be expected to provide a unique resource to the eastern region of the state. Indeed, many of our patrons were graduates or graduate students teaching in local school systems and who had access to no other source of musical information.

Armed with the knowledge of the collection's potential, a reinterpretation of the branch library policy was suggested, in particular:

The needs of the campus majority (not the branch clientele) are paramount ... While it is perhaps frustrating at times not to have relevant materials close at hand, it is still more frustrating to more people on our campus to have to go from one library building to another in order to pursue study. The assumption that a discipline's materials can be transferred *in toto* from a central to a branch library without impeding library services is naive ...

While the statement itself was not invalid, it seemed more naive to assume that anyone was being better serviced as practically all musical study still required the use of both libraries, as did, unfortunately, Music Library reference service. The distinction between School of Music curriculum-related areas and non-curricular areas, furthermore, was a blurred one and somewhat subjective. Finally, but of major importance, was the fact that staff with music degrees were employed in the Music Library, while the main library, understandably, included no one with this subject expertise.

These points were well taken, and while retaining curricular support as the Music Library's first priority, we were able to add the following purposes to our interim, working version of the collection development policy:¹

The collection should provide a broad base of support for general cultural interests in music and its role in the history of civilization on an international scale;

The collection will provide for interdepartmental academic needs in dance, drama, art, folklore, the study of ethnic and popular cultures, film production, and others as applicable.

The issue of a split collection was thus addressed. A systematic transfer of the music items remaining at Joyner was begun along with an interim practice of housing in the Music Library all items that class in L.C. classification "M" (i.e., M, ML, MT), as well as all sound recordings of musical materials regardless of funding or selector source.²

At this point, a publicity campaign was undertaken to acquaint the campus community with the collection and services offered. A Music Library newsletter was begun, and we spoke to various campus groups, Friends groups, committees, and essentially, anyone who would listen. That the campaign was successful and our message received was made evident by two annual allocations from the East Carolina University Student Government Association for the development of a contemporary jazz recordings collection, for use in the Music Library by the campus community.

Ironically, while aggressively promoting the catholic quality of our collection and services, a study of the objectives of the School of Music was concomitantly undertaken to better determine how the existing collection was meeting instructional support needs and how it might better meet those needs. Through conferences with School of Music administration, departmental chairmen, the departments as groups, and finally, with individual faculty members, it was possible to obtain a clearer picture of our strengths and weaknesses, as well as to anticipate future directions which were under consideration.

For a variety of reasons, principal among them the idiosyncracies of funding mechanisms, it was apparent that faculty had wielded much power in past collection development practices, as was to be expected given the collection's history. The existing collection showed little overall direction and was insufficient in many areas. While it was a delicate undertaking to quickly switch the balance of developmental responsibility from primarily user dominated to primarily librarian dominated, it seemed, in my opinion, the most pressing objective for the moment. A potential taint of autocracy was somewhat obviated by the earlier conferences, a continuing dialogue

between the Music Library and the faculty, and the reassurance that no department's special interests would receive priority except as against the overall needs of the collection.

At this point, a collection assessment project had been completed. Designed to evaluate the present level of the collection and to determine in what ways it was inadequate, assessment was made through use of specialized bibliographies and discographies, by comparison with collections at institutions of similar size, user communities, and programs, as well as on the basis of information gathered from faculty conferences and discussions with graduate and undergraduate students. Gaps were identified, a prioritized desiderata file established by the type of material, and suggestions made as to the extent of retrospective development necessary to bring the collection to a level consistent with our needs and stated purposes.³ Areas requiring intensive attention were scheduled into a developmental timetable that will ensure them major concentration in their turn.

With this information, it was little trouble to prepare two documents on the funding requirements of the Music Library. The first, a proposal for limited term special funding for retrospective collecting, was developed on the basis of estimated costs of needed materials. To date, approximately 40 per cent of this proposal has been funded. The second, and more complex, reflected the level of continuation (i.e., annual) funding necessary to maintain the collection. Borrowing the university library's materials allocation plan, which assigned a percentage factor to such data as number of students, faculty, credit hours taught, as well as information from the publishing trade, it was possible to request a more appropriate level of support for each of the material types collected, namely monographs, serials, scores, and sound recordings.⁴ In addition, responsibility for this support between the School of Music and Joyner Library was more clearly defined.

Two and a half years later, the Music Library is well along in its developmental schedule, including retrospective collection, and the results of earlier efforts are readily apparent. The final version of a collection development policy is nearing completion, written with extensive input from the School of Music Library Committee⁵ and faculty, as well as the Head of Collection Development at Joyner Library.⁶ Although library funded music materials continue to be ordered and processed centrally, the working relationship between departments is excellent: as awareness

and understanding of the Music Library's special needs increased, so did communication, cooperation, and consequently, service. The eagerly awaited 1983 report of the National Association of Schools of Music identified the Music Library as one of the School's three main strengths, commenting that the institution was well on its way to having an excellent music library and adding its blessing "it is hoped the improvements continue and that the library will become a truly fine one." Less easily documented but of even more significance is the perceptible attitude of understanding, respect, and cooperation that has evolved among the three principal factions directly involved. As a result, the Music Library's role as a branch library is clearly defined, its goals and directions outlined, and its commitment to continued development assured.

Postscript

The reader with experience in large university libraries or long established special collections will no doubt realize that most of these observations are obvious enough to go without saying. That they needed to be said, and said emphatically, is perhaps an indication that there are yet situations, particularly in smaller institutions, where physical separation, misconception of or ambiguity of purpose, ambivalent commitment, and perceived divided loyalties may operate to the detriment of the branch collection. Often, identification of the problem is the first step to a solution.

References

1. University of Texas at Austin. General Libraries. *Collection Development Policy*. 2d ed. (Austin, 1981): Music, was the model from which additional statements of purpose were borrowed.
2. The exception is that music reference tools deemed necessary or appropriate to the Joyner Library reference collection are duplicated by the reference department. As the university collection development policy is in process of revision, many practices have been adopted as interim.
3. Retrospective development here refers to the acquiring of materials, most typically in print, necessary to bring the collection up to a desired level. For the most part, antiquarian materials are generally not required for our purposes.
4. Other factors such as circulation statistics and past development experience were included. While the figures have fluctuated somewhat as work on the collection development policy continues, they provided a base from which to begin.
5. The Music Library Committee was restructured in 1983 to include one faculty member from each of the school's five departments rather than randomly appointment members. Its function also changed to an advisory group charged with dissemination of information.
6. The position was created in 1984. Until that time, responsibility for direction of collection development was divided between the reference and acquisitions departments.