Music Library Association Conference 2013: Incorporating Faculty Collaboration, Active Learning, and Hands-On Experience into Music Library Instruction to Improve Student Learning Outcomes

MISTI SHAW, GUEST EDITOR

The 82nd Annual Meeting of the Music Library Association (MLA) included several conference and poster sessions focused on music library instruction, which delved into a variety of topics including the use of in-class assessment techniques, instruction in non-traditional environments, online learning and live-action video tutorials, and active learning. The session, "And Now for Something Completely Different: New Exercises to Keep Your Students Engaged in Library Instruction," included presentations by music librarians Scott Stone, Misti Shaw, and Katie Buehner; their presentations are summarized in the following essays along with a contribution by Sara Manus, Music Librarian for Education and Outreach at Vanderbilt University. Together, these essays discuss how music librarians are using collaboration with music history faculty, peer teaching, and in-class hands-on activities to teach students of varying research capabilities how to evaluate and use music resources and become information literate in a digital age.

One challenge music librarian instructors continue to tackle is how to teach our digital-native students to become information literate using both print and digital resources for music history research—often in the constraints of one fifty-minute music history class session. When determining the subject matter to be covered, librarians face the additional challenge of assessing the current research skill set of the students. In higher education, it can be easy to overestimate the research skills of today's digital-native students. Many librarians have read about the work of the Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries (ERIAL) project—an ethnographic study of what students, librarians, and professors think about the library and each other at five institutions.[1] One of the findings suggests that the majority

---

1. Background, findings, publications, and personnel described at http://www.erialproject.org/.

of students struggle with nearly every aspect of the research process. Librarians who overestimate students' research skills leave them feeling too intimidated to ask for help, while professors who are idealistic about their students' research abilities often do not send them to ask librarians for assistance with research projects.[2] In essence, we're throwing students in the deep end before we teach them to swim. ERIAL research team members Miller and Murillo suggest that "professors play a critical role in brokering students' relationships with librarians."[3]

Music and Performing Arts Librarian Scott Stone works closely with music faculty at Chapman University to provide recurring library instruction in a classroom setting. He explained his preference for peer teaching and in-class resource evaluation activities in order to facilitate learning for students of varying levels of ability. By having his students evaluate resources and then present their findings to classmates, students remain actively engaged with library instruction. I shared my experience of designing a hands-on library instruction activity for undergraduate students in music history seminars at DePauw University; the activity enables them to learn how to use—and when to use—specialized music tools and resources, including thematic catalogs and composer works lists. Searching for sound recording reviews and scholarly digital archives helps them to hone their evaluative skills in a relaxed environment with a librarian's guidance. Katie Buehner discussed the in-class activity she designed for the copyright portion of the graduate-level music research class she teaches at the University of Houston's Moores School of Music. She explains that by moving away from a lecture to a hands-on activity, students gain practice in searching for and evaluating information to solve copyright queries while relying less on their instructor for answers. Thus, students who intend to become performers are prepared to seek out, evaluate, and apply copyright information after they graduate.

In lively question-and-answer period followed the presentations, Sara Manus discussed a successful collaborative project with professor of musicology James V. Maiello to create a course, "J. S. Bach: Learned Musician and Virtual Traveler," in which she had a role as embedded librarian. She created an accompanying hands-on capstone project so students could make deeper connections with course materials. By integrating library instruction into a

2. Partial findings summarized by Steve Kolowich, "What Students Don't Know*," Inside Higher Ed*, August 22, 2011, accessed June 2013, http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/08/22/erial_study_of_student_research_habits_at_illinois_university_libraries_reveals_alarmingly_poor_information_literacy_and_skills.

3. Susan Miller and Nancy Murillo, "Why Don't Students Ask for Help? Undergraduate Help-Seeking Behavior in Three Academic Libraries," in *College Libraries and Student Culture: What We Now Know*, eds. Lynda Duke and Andrew Asher (Chicago: American Library Association, 2011), 60.

music history course, Manus asserted that students learn more than they do in one classroom library instructional session.

Feedback from audience members reveals that music librarians relish the opportunity to collaborate with music history faculty to deliver effective library instruction to students. Instruction librarians also relay that they continue to reevaluate the content they cover and their methods for enabling learning. The following papers, which include detailed descriptions of the classroom activities, support the possibility that along with faculty collaboration, active learning, in-class activities, and hands-on experiences may lead to successful library instruction outcomes.