The crucial problems in music bibliography do not result from a dearth of reference material. The number of bibliographical efforts in the field of music compares favorably with that in any other discipline, and in few other areas of special librarianship is a thorough working knowledge of bibliography as vitally important as it is to the music librarian. Acquisition, cataloging and classification, reference, in fact most of the activities carried on in the music library, are dependent upon it. This is so because music libraries are forced to deal with not one but three kinds of material about equal in importance: books, scores, and phonograph records. Not only are these discrete in their physical appearance and in the way they must be handled in the library, but also in the purposes they serve. Each category requires its own special bibliographical implements and methods; each presents different bibliographical problems, which resemble only in a general way those encountered in the literature of other subjects.

Books and scores, it is true, find their way into the library in conditions not unlike those of materials in other subject areas, i.e., in manuscript, facsimile, in print, on microfilm or microcard, as pamphlets, as monographs in series, and as periodical articles. They appear, too, in the same profusion of languages. And further, since music is no recently evolved art, important portions of its literature, as of that of philosophy, religion or history, are very ancient indeed. But beyond these points of similarity—location, forms, languages, and age—the complexity and bulk of the materials of music set it apart from other disciplines.

No one would contend that the number of books about music (the literature of music) begins to match the floodtide of books and articles in certain areas of literature or the social sciences; nor could one argue that they possess any unique features which require bibliographical

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treatment different from that accorded books in other fields. But even phonograph records cannot be held accountable for the vast bulk of the materials or for the special problems of the music bibliographer, even though they complicate his task and are steadily increasing in numbers. It is published music which constitutes the crux of the matter. According to the Copyright Catalogs for the years 1953–57, the total registrations for published music were 17,559 (1953), 17,346 (1954), 19,009 (1955), 17,983 (1956), and 18,289 (1957). Of course, these figures include great quantities of ephemeral, popular works which are not important, except to some future sociologist, and with which music bibliographers, perhaps, need not be concerned. Even if only ten per cent of this music were significant enough to deserve the attention of musicians, it would constitute a considerable mass of material, more than bibliographers in many subject fields are expected to comprehend and control.

Copyright registrations do not necessarily represent the total output. Europe, for years the predominant source of supply for music, still equals if not exceeds the United States in production. Although almost half the registrations for published music represent foreign publications, a complete accounting of those not registered in the United States would further augment the impressive sums noted above. For a comprehensive total of all the material with which music librarians have to deal one must add the literature about music, and the total phonograph record production which, according to Concert Music, U.S.A., amounted to approximately two thousand discs per year between 1950 and 1954.

The sheer quantity of music materials is not the only factor which creates problems for its bibliographers. There are others which arise from the nature of music itself. In print, musical works are often small in size, intended to be issued as individual compositions. At the same time a voluminous amount of music appears in collections or anthologies. Although it is essentially a language of its own, music is often utilized as an adjunct to a variety of activities which are primarily nonmusical. In the numerous instances where a text is involved it presents bibliographical problems comparable to those in literature. It is available for a multitude of different performing media, and aurally, it does not proceed directly from creator to consumer but passes through an interpreter, a performer. All of these factors lead to complexity and diversity in the bibliographical approach.

Consider the factor of issue. Musical compositions, like poetic works,
are often small in size, few are "book length." Thus the output of a major composer or poet, unlike that of an historian or philosopher, is apt to number several hundred separate works, large and small. In the case of Darius Milhaud and Heitor Villa-Lobos, to cite two of the more prolific contemporary composers, the former's published works number over five hundred titles, the latter's more than two thousand. Even this does not tell the complete story, however, for some of these works yield further subdivisions. Thus Villa-Lobos' Cirandas consists of sixteen individual pieces, and his Francette et Piá of ten. The analogy with poetry is obvious yet valid only to a point. Although it is true that musical compositions, like poems, tend to be short, they are issued in a very different way. Poets' works normally appear in tidy collected editions during the author's lifetime, while a composer's works are seldom collected for publication until very late in his career, or after his death. To put it another way, while the complete works of Poet X are likely to be available in six or seven bound volumes as issued, the complete works of Composer Y may be had only in 473 opus numbers as brought out in their original editions by nine different publishers in four different countries. All of this refers only to original editions.

More serious complications arise from the proliferation of variant editions of music by most of the so-called standard composers. Take some of the keyboard works of Bach for example. In 1957 there were 18 editions of his Two and Three Part Inventions, 13 of his French and English Suites, 11 of his Partitas, and 21 of the Well-Tempered Clavier, to say nothing of individual pieces extracted from these composite works.

Although literature, drama, classics, and poetry all give rise to variant editions of certain texts, widespread and continual re-editing is a practice to which music publishers are particularly addicted. Except for an occasional abridged edition of a work, there is nothing in most other literatures to match the quantity of music "arranged" for different media, or "transposed" to a key different from that in which it was originally cast. Music bibliography must not only lead to the control of the original edition of a composition, and its subsequent re-editions, but it must be geared to handle the countless re-workings of the original, the "reductions for piano," the arrangements for piano four hands, two pianos four hands, simplified arrangements for "young musicians," and numerous other derived forms. Here the descriptive cataloger has joined forces with the bibliographer.
in providing the device of the conventional title to help bring unity out of diversity.

To the person who does not read music the symbols in a score are as foreign as American slang to a Siberian peasant. These symbols transmit the language of tone, which, like its verbal counterpart, has undergone many changes in the way it has been written and spoken throughout history. The ability to cope with musical notation in its early and obsolete forms is one of the more difficult requirements for the musician-bibliographer, but in one respect he is able to use the notation of today to advantage in his bibliographical endeavors. There are kinds of music which cannot be properly described and organized without precise melodic differentiation. The thematic catalogs of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and the rest are familiar examples of the use of notation to clarify bibliographical entries. Less generally known but of tremendous importance to the scholar are the thematic inventories of manuscript sources, or the listings of musical incipits of anonymous works or works of doubtful attribution. Much work remains to be done in this area, but the 350-item Checklist of Thematic Catalogs, compiled by a committee of the Music Library Association, is a clear indication of the importance of the thematically illustrated bibliography.

The thematic catalog is only one approach to what might be called “content analysis” of the materials of music. Other keys are required to unlock the treasures in the numerous sets and anthologies. For more than seventy-five years music historians have been active in reclaiming the music composed before 1800, ferreting it out from manuscripts and early prints, transcribing it and publishing it. The resulting Denkmäler and monumental editions confront the user with enormous problems of access, correlation, and analysis. Before the publication of Anna H. Heyer’s Historical Sets, Collected Editions and Monuments of Music: A Guide to their Contents this area was a virtual terra incognita to any but the highly trained musicologist. Valuable as Miss Heyer’s work is, it calls for more detailed expansion in certain areas and will probably have to be redone every decade, at least, to keep abreast of the activity of music research scholars and editors.

In contrast to what might be called “internal” controls needed for such anthologies and collections, there are “external” controls to be applied to music as it relates to other spheres of human activity. Bibliographies of sacred music are representative of this category, as
are lists of music for Shakespeare's plays, for the dance, for funerals, for Christmas and other holidays—the list could be extended indefinitely. At this point the work of the music bibliographer verges toward that of the subject cataloger, who must also try to anticipate the multifarious paths which lead the human mind to, or project it from, the art of music. But the subject cataloger can best provide this service only in terms of a particular collection. By their very nature subject catalogs are provincial; what is significant in one situation may be quite irrelevant in another. The bibliographer works above and beyond the catalog or classification schedule of any individual library. His first duty is toward his subject matter, wherever it may be found, and the results of his work have an application as wide or as specific as he chooses to make them.

The scope of music bibliography is further enriched, or complicated, by the fact that music can be approached in terms of a wide variety of performing media and combinations thereof: the human voice with all of its various individual and combined timbres, amplitudes, inflections, and textures; a vast array of plucked, blown, struck, and bowed instruments, all of which may perform singly or in groups of various sizes. In the complexity and variety of the elements which enter into its performance, music has no parallel in any of the other arts, with the possible exception of drama or the dance. But these arts are seldom approached in terms of the precise components of their performing groups. We live in an era of Haunmusik, in a country where thousands of people, young and old, sing or play instruments and have experienced the delights of ensemble music. Where can they find trios for flute, viola, and cello? What music is available for horn and string quartet? Bibliographies such as Wilhelm Altmann's valuable but outdated Kammermusik-Katalog have a genuine utility in answering such questions.

Two remaining factors add difficulties: first, the union of tone with text brings to music bibliography many of the problems encountered in the bibliography of literature. Here is a field which is ripe for the cooperative enterprise of specialists in two disciplines, but the sad truth of the matter is that specialists are loath to cooperate. Far too little has been done to provide bibliographical links between the work of the poets and the song writers, for example. Have all of von Eichendorff's poems been set to music, and if so by whom? What settings are available of lyrics by Robert Herrick, of John Donne? Questions such as these are not infrequent in music reference librar-
ies. So, too, are inquiries involving the literary-musical ramifications of opera, another area where sure bibliographical control is yet to be achieved. Second, there are problems created by the fact that the aural comprehension of music depends upon the presence of an intermediary, the performer. This aspect is particularly acute in connection with the bibliography of sound recordings in which the performer or conductor plays an essential role in the musical complex. It is not surprising that discography emphasizing the performer approach has achieved its highest development in the field of jazz recordings where the musician is supreme and the composer a virtual nonentity. Few jazz listeners either know or care who wrote “When the Saints come marching in,” but they are prepared to discuss to the last detail the relative merits of Turk Murphy’s or Kid Ory’s rendition of it. A similar approach is favored by devotees of early opera singers, to whom Melba’s voice is more significant than her repertoire. It is an approach destined to gain in importance as future music historians begin to take advantage of the tremendous documentary resources offered by the disc, resources that were not available before the end of the nineteenth century.

Some time has been devoted to outlining the problems and opportunities confronting the music bibliographer. It remains to show to what extent these problems and opportunities have been met. As has already been indicated, the tools have been developed in considerable number, but the over-all results are not of a kind to encourage complacency on the part of musicians and librarians. Many of the tools are inadequate in one way or another, even for the purposes for which they were devised. Sometimes their compilers were musicians but not bibliographers, or bibliographers but not musicians. Sometimes they were both and simply ill-advised. Whatever the fault, there are numerous checklists, catalogs, inventories, and indexes which do not cover comprehensively the field they purport to cover or analyze sufficiently the material they include; which overlap and duplicate other bibliographies, leaving great areas completely untouched; or ignore the standard methods of description and analysis which workers in any field have a right to expect of a bibliographical tool. The collective product, viewed in its most negative aspects, is a bibliographical patchwork quilt of dubious splendor in which at certain points there are no patches at all, or only very thin ones, while in other places they may range a dozen or more in depth; few of them relate by hue or pattern to other patches elsewhere in
the quilt, and few appear to have been chosen and trimmed with much regard for the over-all design and purpose of the spread. Much of this lack of coordinated bibliographical effort stems from a failure of communication, which is very difficult to overcome. As yet there is no effective national or international clearinghouse or information center for music bibliographers, although the Music Library Association’s Committee on Bibliography is taking steps to alleviate the situation.

Actually the picture is not quite as discouraging as the quilt simile may suggest. Bibliography as it applies to library service is not something that can be developed in the abstract; it is a means to an end, the answer to a concrete and present need. Complete bibliographical control is an illusion because no one can predict what the over-all design will be. The pattern is constantly changing as new requirements emerge and old interests become obsolete; nor will bibliographers ever be equipped with the psychic vision to keep abreast of the output in their field, however specialized it may be. But the music reference librarian, to whom falls the task of utilizing and implementing the bibliographer’s work, may take encouragement by looking back to the decades around the beginning of the present century, a period which might well be called “the Golden Age of music bibliography.” Here within a comparatively short space of time were published Robert Eitner’s Bibliographie der Musik-Sammelwerke des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts, to be followed by his great Quellen-Lexikon, Emil Vogel’s Bibliothek der gedruckten weltlichen Vocalmusik Italiens, and a variety of catalogs of important music collections. The impetus for this development came in large part from the quickening and establishment of a new academic discipline, historical musicology, which demanded more effective avenues of access to its source materials. Two wars intervened and cut short the promise suggested by these early years, but the tide has turned once more, and we may be justified in regarding the 1950’s as marking a renaissance in the production of music bibliographical works of primary importance, witness the publication of The British Union Catalog of Early Music, Claudio Sartori’s Bibliografia della Musica Strumentale Italiana, new editions of the Grove, Baker, and Riemann music dictionaries, plus Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, a new bibliographical tool of the highest order, and new thematic catalogs of Bach, Schubert, Beethoven, and Haydn. As of 1960, we are on the eve of the publication of the first volumes of a
new International Inventory of Musical Sources under the joint auspices of the International Association of Music Libraries and the International Musicological Society, which will serve the purpose for which Eitner's Quellen-Lexikon was intended, and do so more effectively.

Some of the lacunae that remain are particularly frustrating to the reference librarian. It is not necessary to describe them all in this essay, for they are noted in some detail elsewhere. Suffice it to say that one of the greatest needs is for a comprehensive, retrospective index of music periodicals, as well as for a key to the great wealth of material of musical interest to be found in nonmusical serials. There is yet no comprehensive American trade bibliography in the music field, analogous to the indispensable Cumulative Book Index, that lists materials by media and supplies information as to price and availability. Even more useful in educational and research institutions would be a tool that would carry on in the tradition established by Eitner's Verzeichnis neuer Ausgaben alter Musikwerke...bis zum Jahre 1800 and Lott's Verzeichnis der Neudrucke alter Musik, giving a cumulative picture of what modern editors have done to restore the music of the past.

Bibliography is not to be conceived as an isolated subdivision of music library activity. There is no area in music library practice which does not depend upon it. It is the starting point in collection building, whether the library is oriented towards music history or performance, toward college students, research scholars, amateurs or school children. A generous part of the acquisitions budget must be allotted for the purchase of catalogs, concordances, indexes, guides, checklists, etc., if for no other reason than that a reasonable selection policy cannot be implemented without their use. The dependence of the reference librarian on bibliographical tools is obvious, and need not be enlarged upon here. There are equally pressing needs in the areas of cataloging and classification. Few musical works can be added to the collection without careful scrutiny to determine the conventional title, original medium, original tessitura (if vocal), original language of text, date of publication (since much music is undated), and the relationship which a particular work bears to the composer's opera.

If we are justified in placing music bibliography at the core of music library activity, it follows that instruction in this area should likewise be at the heart of the training program for music librarians.
As conditions are at present this statement must voice a pious hope rather than describe an accomplished fact. As Gordon Stevenson points out elsewhere in this issue, within recent years courses in music bibliography have found their way into the curricula of several graduate music departments and a few schools of librarianship, but the opportunities are too scattered and too uncoordinated to permit any generalizations except the obvious one; namely, that the most effective training in music bibliography is self-acquired. It would be a happy circumstance if both music and library schools were cognizant of the special bibliographical difficulties to be faced in the music field and would cooperate to prepare specialists to meet them. Somehow a force of uncommonly well-trained music bibliographers must be found to meet the needs outlined in the preceding pages of this paper.

The point of view adopted here has been to stress the importance of music bibliography as a tool, as an instrument vital to the work of all concerned with music whether they be librarians, research scholars, performers or laymen. No apology need be made for this approach, which is central to bibliographical activity in any field, but perhaps it is justifiable, even in a discussion of reference bibliography, to cast an eye in the direction of music bibliography as an open-ended discipline in itself, to be pursued for its own sake. There is a domain here fully as rich and as challenging as that which has attracted rare book specialists in language, literature, or science. But in music the principles of bibliographical description as applied to manuscripts, and early printed music, and the study of music printing and publishing, have scarcely reached the same level of refinement. Perhaps it may not be too visionary to hope that before many years have passed music bibliography may rise to studies of the kind that W. W. Greg and Fredson Bowers have contributed to the field of literature.

References


