Organizational Patterns in Public Libraries

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The current importance of the arts in America can scarcely be exaggerated in view of the continuing and intense love affair between the visual and performing arts and the American public. Publishers, the recording industry, educational institutions at all levels, museum directors, manufacturers of art supplies and musical instruments can attest to the current general interest in all aspects of our cultural life. A recent issue of Newsweek magazine included commentary which summarized the situation as follows:

As the arts in America have exploded into the greatest orgy of cultural activity in all of history, they have dramatized the problems and possibilities that art poses for human beings as never before. The arts in America have produced more world records than any other society can boast—more creators, more packagers, more distributors, more consumers than anywhere else; more money and more need for money than anywhere else; more lust for art, more fear of art, more confusion about art than anywhere else; more brilliant insight into what art is all about—and more balderdash on the same subject than anywhere else.¹

General or public libraries reflect this national preoccupation with the arts. Some are organized to be highly effective in their communities and all should endeavor within limits to fill the demands for information, material and services in these dynamic disciplines.

The organization of library material in the arts and the staff assigned to the various procedures and services necessary to acquire, process and use this specialized material necessarily varies with the size of each institution and with the demands and needs of each community. However, these subjects should be given most serious attention at the

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JANUARY, 1975

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administrative level and all aspects of organization need to be periodically explored in depth.

This article will comment mainly on the status of art and music collections in libraries where they are administered as a department. This is the organizational setup most effective for maximum potential for any major subject and is apparently the closest to the ideal for public library administration. Of eleven large urban libraries surveyed, nine had departments which were organized and administered for art and music united in one department. The locations of recordings, tapes, pictures, prints, slides and other audiovisual materials vary widely in these libraries. There is now a tendency to group all materials relating to a given subject together to provide the strongest possible information center. Art and music specialists ideally should have audiovisual material in their disciplines close at hand. This concentration has obvious advantages to the library’s public and a researcher on the art of Jasper Johns or the music of John Cage will be quick to point out the merits of organizing all different types of material on one subject in physical proximity and under one administrative head. Under ideal situations for a reference center, one finds the literature relating to the visual arts housed right along with reproductions of the art in whatever physical form, and the literature of music in proximity to scores, recordings and tapes.

In the public library field, there is a recent and dynamic trend towards the formation of cooperative library systems. This has presented a real opportunity for small communities to provide their users with reference service of a most sophisticated nature, greatly expanded interlibrary loans, professional consultation, and other top-notch services originating from the largest collections and the most experienced and expert staff available within each system.

Art books are truly expensive, although publications in other disciplines are quickly becoming nearly as expensive. Music scores in quantity are costly to catalog and bind with the result that smaller libraries necessarily tend to overlook these fine art materials. In communities serving up to 75,000 residents, art and music holdings consist mostly of books and recordings in regular editions and relative to the more popular movements and major contributors; occasionally a highly specialized publication of deluxe status—usually a gift—appears on the shelves.

Medium-sized cities and collections serving communities of up to 200,000 residents are organized to give some specialized service in the fine arts, but there is usually no separate department. The literature of
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art and music is housed right along with all other subjects. Book selection and reference work are assigned to the general professional staff with individual training or special interests affecting the content of one and the quality of the other. More affluent communities make a maximum effort to acquire current material in the arts to satisfy the intense demand from the great American middle class interested in art history and popular music in the broadest sense. Music scores, recordings, cassettes and framed reproductions are housed in niches, alcoves, and other limited locations with varying degrees of accessibility. Although unintentional, this is a first furtive step towards departmentalization with space and budget as the two major obstacles for most administrators. In libraries without permanent departments, the treatment of art and music materials and services can be quixotic with constant shifting of materials and attitudes. Departments established by one administrator disappear under another. A sympathetic administration with real feeling for the subjects can lead the way to an enduring collection of timeless and increasing value to the community being served. The arts continuously renew themselves, building on the past, and the peak moments in all eras of human history and civilization are recorded in the visual and performing arts. In other words, outstanding material in the fine arts only gets better with time, and an intelligent selection policy, coupled with bits of imagination and luck, contributes eventually to collections notable for their content and strength. This is especially true in the fine arts; some examples are cited below.

The table of organization for larger public libraries indicates that heads of fine arts departments report to the director, or in the largest systems to an assistant director for public services or to the chief librarian for the operation of the central building housing the research and special collections. An annual acquisition budget is allotted to the department to purchase not only the literature of the subjects but also to acquire slides, posters, pictures and prints, music scores, recordings and tapes. Contingency funding is available for special purchases and passionate but reasonable pleas to the keeper of the purse may result in extra funding for a deluxe item, a definitive index or bibliography or a monumental publication available only once in a lifetime. Private funds including endowments, unrestricted gifts, or corporate sponsors help out in special situations where it is prudent not to spend public monies for esoteric, extraordinary items such as “Interaction of Color” by Albers, the facsimile edition of “The Book of Kells,” or the Bibliothèque Forney’s “Catalogue of Periodical Articles: Decorative
and Fine Arts.” America’s total community using large public libraries deserves the very best and provincial, restrictive thinking regarding acquisition only betrays public trust and responsibility.

Supervisors and administrators have not yet resolved the question of staffing departments with those who have a professional library degree versus candidates offering only expertise in the fine arts. There is no clear-cut solution to this question; ultimate performance rests on individual motivation, basic intelligence, and overall enthusiasm for the subject and local services and collections. It would be unnerving, to say the least, to have a music librarian with a non-Western background who had never heard of the Beatles when they were at the height of their worldwide celebrity. The head of the Art Department of the Free Public Library in Philadelphia opts without a moment’s hesitation for a trained art historian over a professional librarian with no subject background. Some public libraries are obliged to require the M.L.S. first and foremost for professional advancement for art and music librarians, but the trend is toward graduate degrees in both library science and the special field. Larger libraries in urban areas can attract candidates bringing this wealth of educational preparation, especially in today’s tight job market. Reference service and collection building benefit from an arrangement requiring or requesting two graduate degrees.

Service oriented public libraries are generally open during evenings and on Saturdays with some offering Sunday hours. The question of night work and weekend tours of duty presents few problems if the situation is clearly understood by new staff from the initial interview. Work assignments for music and fine arts librarians often include: (1) reference work in response to requests for information by mail, telephone and over-the-desk inquirers; (2) selection and preparation of orders for subject literature and nonbook materials; (3) in many libraries with central cataloging for books and periodicals, the classification and cataloging of considerable amounts of material in nonbook format; (4) indexing and bibliography; (5) exhibition and program planning; (6) weeding, inventory and careful refinement of all collections; and (7) direct involvement with community, institutional and professional activities and associations.

The organization of subjects varies considerably in public libraries. Older institutions do not rigidly follow Dewey decimal or LC classification schemes as subjects were arbitrarily placed in particular areas even before the turn of the century when refinements were minor. In Philadelphia, landscape gardening is located in the business
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science classification; in Newark, books on military costume turn up in social science and hymns are assigned to the religion classification. The rearrangement of established classification schemes is a healthy expression of individual judgment and institutions repeatedly adjust subjects to fit their own needs and preferences.

Ordering and processing also vary from library to library but the accepted practice is to assign the selection of material to subject specialists with a central order department placing routine acquisitions through regular channels, usually a jobber, with unusual items being ordered directly from the second-hand dealer, record supplier, or specialty publisher. A follow-up procedure is essential, especially for out-of-print material. Cooperative systems with centralized processing may eliminate some duplication of effort but this does not always work to the advantage of the larger libraries. For the ordering and cataloging of special subject material, a loose network is really more flexible and ultimately more useful. The closer the liaison between the subject librarian charged with the selection of new material and the processing staff, the more successful are the results of these most important library functions. Sophisticated collections making any pretense to completeness must have maximum support from the ordering and cataloging services. Communication must be reciprocal, constant and easily established. The risks of losing outstanding material because of order delays is especially acute in the fine arts. The classification of special material, along with decisions on subject headings, can easily go awry unless the subject librarian and the cataloger walk this hazardous course hand in hand. Here is where the smaller public libraries have an advantage over giant cooperative systems or sprawling university libraries where communication breaks down because of time and distance lags.

Thanks to the extraordinary foresight of librarians in Newark over the last century, the Art and Music Department of the Newark Public Library is currently in a strong position to offer unique collections and services to residents of New Jersey—the most densely populated of the United States. Starting in the nineteenth century with relatively modest holdings of music and art literature, the collections grew and in 1902 a regular attendant was provided for the Art Department. The annual report for that year notes: “since that time, the door into the main hall has been open during part of each day. The Art Room has thus been more in evidence and the atmosphere has become more inviting.”

Music was given a pat on the back when forty-eight citizens subscribed $511 in 1906 “to establish a department for the free circulation of
music" and the money was to be used to purchase scores of "value to the various classes of musicians in the community." The subjects were united in one department which has been successful ever since with current collections of about 100,000 cataloged books and scores and supporting collections of phonograph albums and tapes, periodicals, microfiche, posters, one million pictures, vertical file material in quantity, original prints, autographs, manuscripts and slides. In its official capacity, the library is the Metropolitan Reference Center for Northern New Jersey and the department's services and collections are available to 4 million people residing in seven diverse counties. Once again, thanks to the guidance of earlier administrators, the collections are now recognized as a state resource and comprise the largest and most effective collection in music and fine arts in any public, or general, institution within the state. This short history has a two-fold purpose: (1) to establish a frame of reference and scale for the discussion of materials and services which follows; and (2) to encourage administrators, as well as art and music librarians, to promote actively these disciplines with a long-range goal of major significance in mind. In the struggle to build and maintain worthwhile collections, the skirmishes are frequent, a few scars are deep, and the serenity of Parnassus is often shattered, but the rewards passed on to the library's great and vast public underscore once again the unique contribution public libraries make in educating millions and making life more enjoyable for millions more, year in and year out.

ART COLLECTIONS: BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND VERTICAL FILES

BOOKS

The heart which still keeps any art and music department alive is the book collection, and here the wealth of current material is truly impressive. Some of the most beautifully produced books appear in the visual arts classification with special designers engaged to harmonize fonts, page layout, binding, end papers, and sumptuous color plates. When these elements are blended with a notable text, the final product is truly memorable and libraries have a struggle to keep up with the current crop. Acquisitions need to be continuous and without a break for it is virtually impossible to catch up, both because of prices and availability, if a year or even a good publishing season is missed. The art book collection includes many titles retained permanently for reference because of definitive scholarship, scarcity, uniqueness of topic, popularity of subject, or high price. There are some decided
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advantages in having specific, special material available to visitors whenever a library is open and a large reference collection assures this arrangement. The monumental art reference encyclopedias, indexes, dictionaries and special tools appearing in all bibliographies are usually shelved near the center for information in art departments and the same holds true for the great standards in music reference. All art librarians are eagerly looking forward to a new edition of the celebrated “Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler” by Thieme and Becker which is announced to appear in a few years. Important new reference works in music and art are published regularly indicating extended public interest. The acquisition policy needs to be broad, leaving leeway to purchase unusual, experimental and unique materials. The law of averages will assure that a sizable portion of thoughtful selection will have ultimate importance. Thinking only in financial terms, it is reassuring to realize that Newark librarians purchased an original print from the artist John Sloan in 1915 for $5.00. It would now take about $1200 to acquire the same print and the same general story is repeated for Picasso, Matisse, Miro, Kandinsky, Lichtenstein, etc. A book illustrated by Kokoschka was purchased for $2.30 in the early 1920s and has increased in value 1000 times. Hundreds of art titles in particular, purchased over the years, have appreciated 50 times over. The point here is not the money involved, but the fact that a professional librarian selected and acquired material which time and the tastemakers have shown to be of lasting and permanent value in the development of some phase of the arts. Free rein within reason should be the policy of administration when it comes to the selection of materials for collection building by dedicated specialists. In the arts, today’s ugly duckling frequently becomes tomorrow’s resplendent peacock.

PERIODICALES

Art periodicals greatly enrich the literature of the subject while providing a vast reservoir of reproductions. Foreign art magazines are full of illustrations of new ways to design and look at things. Art students, designers and the general public get ideas by merely browsing through publications from Switzerland, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, India, Japan and other less familiar locations. The contents of art periodicals are currently available through a number of highly useful research aids, clearly pointing out the growing interest in the visual arts.4
The indexing of special material is a regular staff assignment in many art and music departments. Listing the very special contents of esoteric periodicals provides unique reference tools and unlocks quantities of unique material not otherwise available. The Kennedy Quarterly deals with historic American painters and The Old Print Shop Portfolio is devoted to historic prints and the graphic artists who created or printed them. Indexes to these fine magazines are not available and must be done by individual libraries. Cartoonist Profiles is indexed regularly at the Newark Public Library, and the New Jersey buildings covered in the American Architect and Building News are now listed in a useful file covering issues up to the year 1938. Notable song books are indexed for a file of song collections. One copy of each publication indexed is retained as reference so that the listings in this file are always available.

Major art magazines of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a unique character and quality of production which sets them apart and makes them worthy of special attention and extra shelf space. Libraries including the original magazine should never replace these documents of a bygone age with filmed editions unless their physical condition is so hazardous as to warrant such drastic action. The feel of the paper, the arrangement of fold-out patterns and illustrations, the scale and size of the pages, the engraved illustrations and the subtle colorings are all part of a total periodical presentation now vanished. These vintage periodicals record the development of America’s magazine history and the technological revolution in the printing arts and skills and as such should be preserved because of their physical format as well as for the obvious research value of the contents, both in text and illustration. A few examples follow:

*Architect, Builder and Woodworker.* Published from 1868 to 1895 and concerned with the history, design, furnishings and ornamentation of American architecture with authentic and invaluable material for interior designers, architects and those working in the preservation of high Victorian structures of great variety.

*Camera Work.* Published in New York from 1903 to 1917, this periodical, more than any other publication, raised the quality and general appreciation of photography to the heights of accomplishment and popular enthusiasm which the art enjoys today.

*China Decorator.* Published in New York from 1887 to 1901.
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Hundreds of designs, related advertisements, news and articles combine to provide a thorough picture of late Victorian china decorations in America. The color studies of roses and pansies were avidly copied from coast to coast.

Godey's Lady's Book. Published from 1830 to 1898, the parade of nineteenth century fashions is unparalleled and the wide influence on America's taste in the arts exerted by this magazine cannot be overestimated.

VERTICAL FILES

The art and music vertical or information files consist of tens of thousands of exhibition catalogs, clippings, leaflets, newspaper and magazine articles, song sheets and photocopied portions of books. These provide a most valuable adjunct to the art and music department's book, periodical, picture and graphic arts collections in satisfying the information needs of patrons. The information file derives its distinctiveness from the nonbook form of its materials and also from the inaccessibility of the many items through standard library listings. Thus, these items contain mainly information that is too recent or too ephemeral to appear in books or magazines or if it does appear, it has not yet been made accessible through card catalogs, indexes and other searching tools.

The information file is compiled from materials received by the department from a wide variety of sources including gifts, subscriptions, and memberships, or received directly from publishers, galleries, museums, schools and any organization catering to or affiliated with the arts. Individual pieces are selected for inclusion and classified according to established subjects by members of the art and music staff at the rate of approximately 150 items per month. They are then arranged alphabetically by subject and placed in large folders in filing cabinets that are open to library users.

The coverage of biographies of artists is extensive as this area is one of ever-increasing public interest and the information file has material on 5,500 individual painters, architects, sculptors, illustrators, photographers, cartoonists, and designers. An alphabetical listing of the names in the biographic sections is kept in a notebook which is readily available to reference librarians. The great standard popular songs are maintained in a collection of 2,700 song sheets arranged by title and spanning the lively history of American popular music from the turn of the century to current rock hits.
As a supplementary, and frequently the only, source of information on a given topic, the information file, with its multilingual character, its large section on regional art and music, and its vintage as well as very current material, forms an essential and highly valuable documentation repository for researchers, browsers and reference librarians.

**Visual Materials: Pictures, Prints, Posters and Slides**

The picture collection maintained by the Art and Music Department has evolved over a period of nearly 75 years and provides visual material to a vast and changing public with needs ranging from a single illustration of an everyday subject to groupings of complex visual themes of a most sophisticated nature.

New pictures are selected, classified and processed on a continual basis and these are selected from picture publishers, periodicals of all vintage, and from books and other material which come as gifts or through regular discard procedures in a large public library system. As changes evolve in political geography, science and sociology, new headings are established. Pictures are reclassified for emerging nations in the world and scientific developments in automation and space exploration require new headings.

The picture collection files are open to direct access by the users and, after a minimum of experience, searchers have an understanding of the basic classification scheme and thus are able to browse and discover material for themselves. By the same token, classifiers, filers, and others working with the collection become familiar with the headings after a minimum of experience.

The collection now includes over one million items and takes in strong supporting materials of various format including portfolios of plates, prints, postcards, posters, and picture sets.

Portfolios of plates are filed adjacent to the picture collection and are accessible to the public through the regular catalog where they are entered under author, subject and title cards. The portfolios provide a link between the art books and the picture collection and supplement both. Some of these portfolios are elaborate and unique publications providing a wealth of visual material in the areas of ceramics, costume, furniture, illumination, needlework, rugs, stained glass and textiles in addition to architecture, decoration, painting and sculpture of all periods and cultures. Each portfolio is assigned the picture collection subject heading which most directly relates to its contents, and this heading determines its location on the shelves.
Prints are maintained in two separate collections: a circulating print collection of 1,400 reproductions, and a fine print collection of more than 12,000 works of graphic art. The Newark Public Library established its circulating print service about 65 years ago to enable people to borrow reproductions of fine paintings by major artists and to have the opportunity of living with them for an extended period. The fine print collection is primarily a study collection of the various media used by graphic artists. Intaglio, relief, planographic, stencil, photography, and experimental techniques are represented by a wide range of artists and the collection grows by regular additions. Specialized types of visual material are processed for inclusion in this collection, including music covers, valentines, historic maps, bank notes, drawings, Chinese and Japanese prints and books of design, trade cards, Victorian vignettes, and original works including regional and local iconography. Prints are cataloged with artist, title, process and subject cards based on the picture collection headings.

The history of poster design is preserved in a collection of posters which is housed in oversize files. In the interest of preservation, posters are stored horizontally as frequent handling of paper material in this large format results in rips and tears. They are arranged by topic with separate groupings for World Wars I and II, travel arranged by country, museums and gallery announcements, music subjects, and regular commercial advertising. The renaissance of poster art including op art and psychedelic designs has resulted in an active acquisition policy in this area of visual record.

Selectivity is of major importance in the postcard collection which preserves views of buildings, monuments, landmarks and scenes which have disappeared or radically changed. Reproductions of paintings and other artworks are kept in the postcard file only if the work is not readily available in other visual collections. Millions of pictures have been located, consulted and borrowed over the decades and with the improved photolab facilities and instant photocopy services now available, their “in-house” use continues to grow.

The trend to using slides for lectures, classroom presentations, or individual study is intense and here the medium is sometimes of major importance to the borrower. Nothing else will do and the slide format is essential. In Newark, the growing slide collection includes about 15,000 color slides exclusively on art subjects—painting, architecture, sculpture, graphic and decorative arts—and they span the major periods of art history from prehistoric works to the latest contemporary trends. The collection was begun to fill a need for this
type of material which was not available in quantity and without charge from any facility in the area or in New York City. The demand for slides increases regularly with a jump of 33½ percent in use over a 2-year period. Slides are classified by Dewey and Cutter numbers and are loaned without charge to adult card holders or others bearing interlibrary loan forms. Borrowers travel some distance for this type of material and college and university faculty and students use this visual resource for disciplines other than art history. A slide camera and stand are available to visitors who provide their own film and flashbulbs, and by using this simple, inexpensive piece of equipment the one million illustrations in the picture collection are readily available in slide format. Cassette tapes which sometimes accompany art slide sets and phonograph albums on art topics, such as Louise Nevelson describing her career and aesthetic, are part of the art collections as are additional nonbook material, and are a fine amalgam of contemporary subjects and new media.

CURRENT MUSIC SPECIALTIES: RECORD ARCHIVES AND SONG COLLECTIONS

Public libraries currently have a rare opportunity to provide collections and services to a public totally intrigued with the new music. For young people, popular music is the most spontaneous reflection of their lives and times. Our orchestras are the best in the world and we have entered into a golden age of opera. In 1972, the retail sales of records and tapes amounted to 2 billion dollars. Millions of people attended live concerts of all types including the 11 million music fans who heard symphony concerts. Electronic and experimental music have experienced two decades of intense activity and a whole generation has grown up with the sound of amplified guitars, reverb, tape delay and electronic synthesizers in its ears. Electronic and other recording studios have grown by the hundreds and these remarkable developments, coupled with the vast public interest in the history and performance of the traditional standard or classical repertory, create an era of great excitement which is directly felt by music librarians in public libraries. It is a cause for consternation to hear librarians discussing whether they will acquire the new music or not. There is no question that the new performers, composers and musicologists belong in all public collections, and anyone whose selection policy is contrary is out of step with the times and exercising personal prejudice. Public librarians and those spending public monies have no right to neglect a field of unparalleled public preoccupation.

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LIBRARY TRENDS
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Most music collections in public libraries have similar problems and satisfactions with the rising interest in the discipline revealing itself in many ways. The massive waves of nostalgia so prevalent result in constant use of popular sheet music both for lyrics and music. Until recently, interest was in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, but now the songs of "the good old days" frequently refer to the hits of the 1950s and even the 1960s. In Newark, a strong basic collection of great songs is regularly expanded by selections from the counter of one of New York's long-established music stores.

Recordings and tapes for the Newark Public Library's Music Division are regularly selected from subject review media. Selections are also made directly from the bins of a major metropolitan outlet. A needs list is carefully studied to fill gaps in all the music collections. Individual scores are selected with an umbrella concept of collection building. Time spent in fitting particular scores to specific needs is more rewarding than time spent blindly ordering all the works by one composer merely because they are available in a library shelf arrangement. College collections frequently order this way and in doing so often neglect responsible selection. Even the greatest composers had their weak moments and not all their creations are notable works by any standard.

Scores are fully bound in hard covers allowing them to lie flat on music stands. Binding expenses are valid. Score collections not carefully bound quickly show the ravages of use and are therefore carelessly handled, fall apart, are difficult to shelve and generally suffer.

In addition to enormous circulating collections of records and tapes, larger public libraries are building archives of recorded music by selecting major performances by musicians of all periods and designating these recordings as reference copies not for circulation. There is little doubt that these recordings will have tremendous value for the music historian as well as the sociologist of the future, and an archival approach to music recordings is a growing trend in larger collections. Newark's documentary approach covers two fields of music: (1) traditional and classic—the "heritage" collection, and (2) jazz, blues, pop and rock—the "pop" collection. Together the two collections total more than 1,000 albums with a larger selection in the popular field. Representative heritage selections include Paderewski, Gershwin, von Karajan, Heifitz, Caruso, Dietrich, Rachmaninoff and Scott Joplin. The pop category begins with W.C. Handy and early jazz, parades through the 1920s, sweeps through swing and Sinatra, and
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explodes with the postwar excitement generated by Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Jackson Five, the Supremes and hundreds of other major music figures. These thoughtfully selected albums are in great demand; visitors sometimes wait in line to use the ten listening machines. A gift of 600 long-playing albums from a retired disc jockey resulted in the expansion of an "easy listening" category where the albums are short cataloged by the departmental staff and put out for circulation with a minimum of processing.

The American public has enjoyed millions of hours of music by using facilities and collections in public libraries. Countless musicians have composed, performed or made other lasting contributions to our musical heritage aided and abetted by the literature and scores borrowed or consulted in public collections, and the use is still growing. Larger public libraries have material of value to graduate students and musicologists pursuing advanced and original research. Music teachers, the leaders of jazz combos, song writers, historians, opera buffs, instrumentalists in small orchestras, beginning guitarists and faculty members assigning music topics all may find material in music collections in public libraries along with the multitude of people who like to listen simply for pure enjoyment.

VIDEOTAPE

The use of videotape as both a document and as art work is in the embryonic stage in public library collections, but it seems that this new medium will be found more and more in public library collections. Videotape is valuable as an archive of the opinions and creations of living artists and musicians. They may freely and openly discuss their lives and works as there is a minimum of burdensome equipment and special lighting connected with videotape; spontaneity comes easily in such natural surroundings. There is a fascination in watching George Segal create a sculptured figure or listening to Roy Lichtenstein discuss his technique while painting. Tapes come in relatively small reels which are simple to operate and may be viewed privately on a television monitor. Many artists have been searching for methods of avoiding the exclusive decorator object and some artists are making works which are video art and which can be quickly reproduced in unlimited copies.

Slides, photographs and videotapes have acquired new importance in art collections, for visual documentation is essential to assuring the permanence of the work of art. The artwork itself often disappears, but the visual documentation endures. Documentation and the work of
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art become mutually sustaining while the archive is frequently the only physical evidence of the artwork. In the case of vernacular art, the documentation is the only assurance of permanence due to the highly ephemeral nature of the original. The field of visual documentation through slides, photographs, films and videotape is rapidly expanding and art libraries in particular are struggling for the establishment of standards for documentation and classification, a standardization of procedures, and some base for centralized cataloging and cooperative projects. This is a stimulating, challenging development offering new opportunities to art librarians. The three major obstacles clogging the road for public libraries in developing visual media collections are the old cliché monsters: shortage of space, lack of equipment and insufficient funds. Administrators would be well advised to keep abreast of this trend which has enormous potential for the visual and performing arts.

Services

Service has been the keyword for public librarians since the rise of the free library system in the United States in the nineteenth century; this is reflected today in huge circulations of all types of material, much of which is drawn from art and music collections. The larger library systems have an effect on widely spread geographic areas and the Newark Public Library lent close to 10,000 items through interlibrary loan arrangements in 1973. Many of these loans were needed to fill demands for material in the special areas of art and music. The complexity and diversity of reference queries in these subjects are always surprising, and librarians are given a real workout on a daily basis when it comes to answering questions which come by mail, by telephone and from individual visitors. Specialized services in the music and art departments include photocopying, listening facilities, and providing equipment such as slide viewers, taping machinery, and cameras for taking photographs in slide format.

The scheduling and installation of art exhibits is another service regularly undertaken by public libraries, particularly in communities where new buildings have appeared. The Newark exhibit program includes 3 galleries for art exhibits with a total of 450 running feet to display an average of 18 different shows annually. The subjects treated include new accessions to the print collections, graphic media of various types including photography, group shows by local and regional artists, and timely or topical exhibits such as a 1974 adult art
education exhibit on “Art Deco and its Revival.” This was organized from superb material acquired by the library in 1925 from the Paris Exposition and assembled after witnessing block-long lines waiting to get into an Art Deco exhibition at New York’s Radio City Music Hall in early 1974.

Exhibits are prepared with a love of the material and a dedication to showing the widest range of topics and periods of art history, and with an active involvement in the art community over a wide geographic area. Library art exhibits supported by opening receptions, publicity, and word-of-mouth public relations bring thousands of people into public libraries on a regular basis and a continuous art exhibit program helps to establish these libraries as cultural centers. Using an original print collection as a basis, the Newark Public Library received grants from the State Council on the Arts to prepare major exhibits which circulated all over the state for 24 months. The scheduling and details were arranged by the council, and the library’s prints were shown in banks, colleges, schools, community centers and other libraries. These shows were of museum caliber and included major works by such artists as Stuart Davis, Warhol, Lichtenstein, John Sloan, D’Arcangelo, Shahn and Vasarely and they stimulated an interest in the graphic arts in a very real way. Fortunately, the organizational framework was already established for the unusual services needed for this type of art education activity, including the design and printing of catalogs, matting and framing, and the construction of shipping crates.

Associations

National professional associations for both art and music librarians are firmly established. They provide excellent and pertinent services for their members in the United States and Canada. The associations serve effectively as rallying points for new ideas and clearinghouses for projects of vital concern to each of the specialized professions in addition to presenting fairly elaborate annual meetings replete with tours, panels, lectures, reports and highly specialized papers. The Music Library Association usually stages its annual conference in the same city and at the same time as the ALA. One of its great glories is the magazine, Notes, which is published quarterly by the MLA. Notes provides a staggering amount of highly useful information in each issue and serves as a model for any association wishing to publish articles, bibliographies, discographies and lists of real and lasting value to subscribers. Substantial new books of music literature are reviewed.
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in depth as are scores for a variety of arrangements and instruments. New material in the area of popular music is given excellent coverage. The association's organizational set-up supports sixteen special committees including those working on advanced notation, the bicentennial, popular music, and a survey of musical instrument collections.

Art librarians in the public library field are joining the new Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) by the scores as the dynamic new organization fills a long-time need for art subject specialists in the library profession. In addition to a fact-packed newsletter, ARLIS has a full program at its annual conferences which run concurrently with the January meetings of the College Art Association (CAA). In many respects this is an ideal blending of interests as most of the papers, seminars and exhibits at CAA are of great importance and relevance to all art librarians. Recent conferences presented new research on visual documentation, photographic history, research in Afro-American art, art book publishing today, the stylistic zoo of animals in the art of North American Indians, and problems in art book circulation.

ARLIS was established to fill the subject gap in ALA. Some art librarians felt that ALA did not meet their needs, and wanted an organization of their own to accommodate individual members and to search out topics of timely interest and high relevance to a growing profession. ARLIS/NA currently has over 500 members, all of whom have joined since its founding in January 1973, and the future of this organization, which represents pride in the profession, is bright indeed and a source of great satisfaction to experienced art librarians.

GENERAL POLICIES AND TRENDS

Entering the final quarter of the twentieth century, public libraries and their various subject departments are in a strong position to offer more services and larger collections to millions of Americans. Urban communities, large or small, are the centers of our business, industrial, technological and cultural life, and it is here that masses of people congregate every day and where many important ideas are generated.

The public library is indeed a university for all people, and the philosophy of continuing education is taken for granted via liberal circulation policies and extensive reference services. At the CAA meeting in New York in 1972, it was appalling to hear several university, museum or special libraries boldly boast one after another
that they were not the least interested in serving the general public. Their collections were too specialized and their services too limited for general use. Public library art and music departments have the advantages of the support of ancillary services and large collections in other disciplines and do not think of themselves as special at all. Some university art libraries lend nothing to students and take the point of view that reference collections fill all real and serious needs. At the 1973 CAA meeting, one panelist noted that studio people get books dirty and soiled as they actually use them in their creative work. This use was an argument for noncirculation policies, but for public librarians this smacks of censorship from an elitist posture. Enforcing a policy of noncirculating material is one way of building a marvelous collection, but at a fearful price to the larger community of library users. A policy of such restricted and limited use is an approach to service which is appalling to most public librarians in any subject area and is viewed as an anathema in a democratic society based on humanistic principles. Public libraries think of serving the user who wants to read when the spirit moves him—in the laundromat, waiting in the car, in the quiet of the late night hours, or at those brief moments anywhere when the mind is keenly receptive. For most readers, the public library approach is inspired and perfectly tailored to a society based on an awareness of the needs and wishes of people.

Art and music collections in public libraries of most major cities lend material in quantity and with great frequency to college students on all levels and to specialists and teachers. They have a long and sustained history despite wars, depressions and recessions, riots and civic turmoil, and there is a growing predominence of serious use of the art and music facilities of public libraries by all kinds of individuals in the community.

For some years, there has been an unprecedented national trend bordering, at times, on the frantic to collect antiques and works of art on a personal as well as on an institutional basis. Art librarians in the public library field are prepared to provide biographic and bibliographic information on artists and objects of art from all periods with an emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More people now have the time and inclination to learn to draw, cartoon and paint, often using the latest synthetic materials. Individual creativity is appreciated and the demand for literature on the crafts is pronounced. There is currently an exciting demand for information relating to all aspects of photography, especially the history and technique of this complex art. In music, the lyrics and scores for popular songs of the
 twentieth century are much requested as are recordings and tapes by popular performers. Many people want to learn to compose music and to play musical instruments. In urban areas, art and music librarians have been greatly encouraged to note that young people on the college level are branching out in these disciplines and are not limiting themselves to the study of the cultural history or creative art heritage of only one group or era.

There is serious thought being given to the concept of a network of research art libraries assigned to various geographic and cultural centers across the country. This concept was developed in 1973 by Wolfgang Freitag of the Fine Arts Library at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, in a letter to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Building on existing strong art book collections in university, public, or museum libraries, the plan would establish expert and excellent library collections and services in the fine arts to all levels of readers from grade through graduate school, amateurs and professionals, studio artists, art historians, and collectors while filling recreational as well as educational needs. Many public libraries have outstanding art and music departments and many more have enormous potential in these subject fields. With this in mind, a system of regional centers or consortiums as outlined above would be welcomed by many public librarians.

Writing on the role of metropolitan libraries, Lowell Martin noted: "The special challenge to the public library is not only whether it can follow change as it has in the past, but whether it can be part of a movement that leads our civilization from a revolution aimed at productivity to a revolution aimed at value." Art and music departments in public libraries are in a prime position to meet this challenge. Lasting value both on the individual and collective levels has always been a clearly acknowledged aim and has been encouraged in the visual arts and music. The public is enthusiastic about the arts and hungry for information in the field. Public librarians are keenly receptive to the trend and are aggressively providing new collections and services to accommodate this vast clientele which supports public libraries as part of a way of life and also as part of our national heritage.

References

3. ———. Unpublished typescript. 1906.


Additional References


