Building A Nonspecialized Collection

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Any public library today will feel, in some degree, the impact of the new attitudes toward the arts which are abroad in the land. These attitudes are symbolized by such phenomena as the increased federal programs in support of arts activities; the state arts councils and artmobiles; the proliferation of symphony orchestras and museums; and the greater involvement of laymen in all parts of the country in such activities as painting, collecting, performing and filming. All ages and all degrees of expertise in the amateur-professional scale are represented. In many areas this impact will be shared by a variety of institutions and types of libraries. In other areas a large part of the impact will be felt by the public library of the central city serving a sizable metropolitan area.

Every American public library which has existed for any period from one-half to one century possesses a nucleus of material around which it can build a collection calculated to serve current interest in the fine (or visual) and performing arts. This nucleus will be found in the books already classified, according to Dewey, in the 700s, occasionally excluding such areas as photography, games, sports and recreation. In some instances, according to local whim, a librarian's view of the organization of the collection for maximum public convenience and usefulness will dictate also the inclusion of the play texts and dramatic criticism from the 800s. Subject-classified biographies will swell this nucleus if cataloging policy permits, and in considering existing resources the considerable body of information which the resourceful librarian can extract from general periodical indexes and general references works such as encyclopedias and biographical dictionaries should not be forgotten.

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1. An expanded reference collection, using as selection guides such bibliographic tools as Vincent Duckles's *Music Reference and Research Materials*, Mary W. Chamberlin's *Guide to Art Reference Books*, and E. Louise Lucas's *Art Books: A Basic Bibliography of the Fine Arts*. To these can be added recently published bibliographic guides to such special fields as film and puppetry. In addition, the checking of regular reference book reviews and reference book surveys in the standard review mediums should begin to reflect a greater emphasis on selection of titles in the arts. Librarians who have relied largely upon *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Wilson Library Bulletin* for their selection of arts books should now, in the interest of adding depth to their collections, give serious attention to the reviews in *Choice* and in the arts periodicals.

2. An expanded periodical list based in large part on the special indexes such as *Music Index*, *Art Index*, and the new *Film Literature Index*. It will, however, be important to include also a good representation of the periodicals which respond to the current explosion of interest in the pop arts and mass media: *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *J.E.M.F. Quarterly*, *Sing Out*, *Rolling Stone*, *Guitar Player*, etc. The interests of antique and memorabilia collectors should be remembered with such titles as *Antique Trader* and *Relics*.

3. A new or reconsidered collection of recordings. Many public libraries were lending recordings long before they felt any need to offer a more structured service in the arts. This collection was often a catch-all, mixing rock, Mantovani, Tchaikovsky, shorthand dictation, Shakespeare and birdcalls. Though overwhelmingly musical in content, it usually was not tied in library service terms to books about music nor to musical scores. Now, with audio and video cassettes offering the library a whole new world of nonmusical subject coverage, it would seem to be time to sort out these recordings which afford a direct experience of the arts over a wide range, and make them a functional part of the library's arts resources. The time has also arrived for recognizing that many recordings are documentary and should be treated not as ephemeral lending material but as part of the library's stock of long-term reference resources.

4. A picture collection. This is not a novel idea but one which should be reexamined in terms of an updated concept of the library's arts resources. Such collections in larger libraries have served the
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needs of commercial artists, designers and teachers for many years. Now they can become part of a whole new concept of visual documentation. It is interesting to note that many new books now list their iconographical sources as carefully as their bibliographical ones.

5. A collection of 2 by 2 inch slides. Once considered a service belonging only in the realm of the art classroom, the slide collection now can be counted an important element in the library's battery of educational and recreational media. It is a logical extension of the art experiences and resources afforded by the picture and print lending collections. Libraries may opt for circulation by packaged set (with script or tape, either commercially or staff-produced), or by slides individually selected by the borrower. A combination of the two approaches may be optimal. Slides are the perfect vehicle not only for art history and survey but also for handicraft instruction, documentation of local artists' work, and collectibles.

All of these expansions of the library's arts services will require a corresponding expansion of funds, space, equipment, staff, and perhaps most importantly, at least in the case of scores and recordings, of cataloging—needs administrators tend to overlook in their eagerness to introduce nonprint programs. The need for special binding for music and special shelving for art books, recordings, and musical scores contributes additional problems.

The cataloging of music materials, whether books, scores, or recordings, does require some expertise in music and languages; this should be recognized at the outset. Complementing the need for special cataloging is the inescapable necessity for indexing in certain key areas: television programs, current theatrical and pop music biography, song collections, and symphony orchestra program notes. Much of this material will not be commercially indexed or, if commercially available, it may be found that the indexing does not achieve the currency necessary to answer the needs of the library's users.

Closely allied to these areas which demand indexing are the vertical files which are essential to an arts collection and which house such materials as: museum and exhibition catalogs; music publishers' and record manufacturers' catalogs; biography, title, and subject files in which the various art fields need not be separated, although it may be useful to separate the materials of strictly local interest; and old popular songs, usually filed by title with a cross-reference index by date.
and sometimes by subject. Indexes and vertical files should, as far as possible, have common and uniform subject headings. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the pressing need for really current fine and performing arts information. Library users will never understand how information about current favorites riding so high on the polls can be so meager. Last night's television program prompts this morning's reference question. A minimal indexing program should be undertaken which includes indexing: the obituaries, film, theater, and television reviews in *Variety* as each week's issue is received; biography and program articles in *TV Guide*; biographies and news reports in *Rolling Stone*. This would be a truly minimal effort to cope. As soon as possible, indexing should be expanded to other similar sources and to materials on current fads in collecting, the latest nostalgia craze, etc.

Few arts programs in a public library will encompass a collection of 16mm and/or 8mm films and videotapes—although administrators can be arbitrary about where they place such responsibility. However, the rich possibilities of these formats should be kept in mind. Among the videotapes already available is a series offering instruction in the playing of simple musical instruments; for optimum results the library should be prepared to supply the demonstration instruments as well. Also available are important art history survey series, originally offered on television and in 16mm film formats, now available in video cassettes. Among 16mm films recently previewed are titles which treat the paintings of Wyeth and Rembrandt, the history of architecture, the art of glassmaking, pottery techniques, Christo's valley curtain, Rodin's sculpture, the Dance Theater of Harlem, and the career of an American actress (Helen Hayes). Even if the library's film collection is not a direct responsibility of the library's arts division, the arts librarian should be alert to the existence of these videotapes and films and should urge their inclusion in the library's general film collection which otherwise may tend to emphasize materials of more obvious social value.

In an arts collection classified by Dewey or any other general system of classification one must be ever aware of the resources which lie outside departmental walls: the costume materials to be found in the 390s; the dressmaking, crafts, and cabinetmaking books in the technology section; theater materials in the literature numbers; "primitive" art in anthropology books; ancient art considered as archaeology; as well as the materials on arts people and subjects found in the nonspecialized magazines and newspapers which increasingly seem to find such information newsworthy and space worthy. Some
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administrators have been flexible enough to move some of these materials to the arts collection. Others have been wealthy enough to duplicate materials for inclusion in general and specialized collections.

To put things in a slightly different perspective, it might be well to suggest some of the categories of materials most heavily demanded in a general public library arts collection:

The Performing Arts
1. All kinds of biographical material;
2. Address information—where to write to an old or new favorite performer, how to get in touch with personal and business agents;
3. All kinds of credit information—who played what part in which play, who wrote what and what it was based on and who made it popular, the revival or remake or musicalization or serialization as well as the original;
4. All kinds of genre information—pop music styles, dances of various periods, monster and Western movies;
5. Trade information—polls, grosses, charts, ratings;
6. Calendar information—what is going to be, what is going to happen where and when, sometimes in a historical perspective;
7. Nostalgia information—the typical performance matter and style of recent decades, the charms of which seem ever-more compelling; and
8. Publisher and publishing information—especially as it relates to sources for musical scores, less readily available recordings, and performance rights.

The Visual Arts
1. All kinds of identification manuals—for silver, porcelain, glass, furniture, artists;
2. All kinds of handicraft books—how-to-do-it, idea and pattern books;
3. Art techniques—how to draw, how to paint in various media, how to sculpt, how to weave, knit and knot;
4. Home plan books and blueprint catalogs;
5. Collecting manuals—price and auction information;
6. Interior decoration;
7. Information about museums and sources of art reproductions; and
8. Information on local and ethnic art.

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Musical Scores

1. Song collections of all kinds—popular, folk, art songs and nostalgic, community, sacred, ribald songs;
2. Theater music, especially piano-vocal scores of standard repertory operas, “workshop” operas, most modern musical shows—with the associated librettos and scripts if available;
3. Miniature scores, representing the standard repertoire but not overlooking the twentieth century and the avant-garde, always with a view to what is within the community's production capability, what may turn up on a broadcast, what composers (Joplin or Pachelbel or Mahler) are in vogue on recordings;
4. Instructional method books for the popular instruments—guitar, recorder (more recently the flute), zither, autoharp, dulcimer, mbira, even the piano and organ;
5. Standard literature for solo instruments—keyboard, string, and wind instruments—requiring considerable proficiency, hopefully in the best modern editions; and
6. Some chamber music, not necessarily for “standard” combinations.

It is difficult to know where to begin, and where never to begin, in building a collection of scores and parts drawn from the vast literature of classical music. Most public libraries, even the largest, no longer attempt to offer sets of performance materials for choirs, bands, and orchestras. Many such organizations, whether school, church, or community-based, now have their own budgets for the purchase and/or rental of performance materials. They often also want musical literature more “contemporary” (in the various senses of the word) than the library is able to supply even if it may have inherited collections of multiple copies and large sets of parts. The library should probably continue to attempt to serve the soloists and the small ensembles, the advanced students and the accomplished laymen-hobbyists with a rich variety of performance materials, chiefly because access to sources for either the purchase or borrowing of such materials is often so very limited and difficult in many cities in the United States and even more lacking in retail music outlets than in bookstores. The purchase of music is at best a difficult matter. If the library can provide it, it may well have a real impact on local program activity, especially if loan policies are liberal enough to allow adequate time for study, rehearsal and performance.

In the area of recordings the problem is providing enough in quantity and kind. The library public increasingly expects to find in the library
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not only all currently available recordings in a choice of formats but also recordings of an earlier period and even recordings which manufacturers have never viewed as commercially feasible. One can offer only general guidelines. Record reviewing magazines will generally indicate what is new and in vogue in both the popular and classical areas. However, buying must not be limited to what is most enthusiastically reviewed and newest. Consideration also must be given to maintaining a repertory of “standards,” often in a choice of interpretations. The collection will be enhanced and its usefulness greatly expanded by the addition of folk and ethnic material (not widely reviewed but findable in Schwann No. 2 and One-Spot) and of the special recordings which serve recurring needs— instructional records for dances, square and otherwise; instructional records for guitar, banjo, and recorder; accompaniment records; sound effects; examples of dialects; recorded interviews with theater personalities, architects, artists, folk musicians. Finally, the collection of “original cast” recordings should be constantly renewed to assist the same groups that use the music scores and scripts.

How do libraries buy materials for music collections? Standard trade book sources and standard reviewing services meet many of their needs, but they must go beyond these to specialized dealers and specialized bibliographical resources. Although the music field is the most bibliographically fragmented (there is no “music in print”), it also has some of the best dealer services and best specialized journals. A key publication is Music Library Association Notes which offers quarterly reviews and extensive listings of new music books and scores as well as an index to reviews of classical recordings. It now also features a regular section listing new publications (books, song folios, recordings, periodicals) in the field of popular music. This ties in neatly with the Annual Index to Popular Music Record Reviews, the first volume of which surveys 1972 releases. Previews, a Bowker spin-off from Library Journal, devotes most of its reviews to recordings in the nonclassical genres. Notes also carries advertisements placed by virtually all the specialist music dealers in the United States, plus some from abroad, and until recently has listed catalogs received from antiquarian dealers. An international picture of new music publications can be obtained from the lists of new books and scores (including many new editions of “old music”) submitted to Fontes Artis Musicae by the various national branches of the International Association of Music Libraries.

Among the especially valuable and comprehensive dealers’ catalogs issued abroad and devoted to new publications are those of Blackwell’s
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Music Shop in Oxford (New Music from Britain) and the firm of Otto Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden (European Music Catalog). Most American dealers serving libraries and music schools issue and mail regular lists of new publications. Some offer approval plans; one provides computerized quote slips for new titles, domestic and foreign. Tying all of this together in a valuable way are the Library of Congress proof slips for cards in the M, MN and R classifications, available on subscription. They not only offer fairly prompt and comprehensive coverage of what is new internationally in books about music, scores, and recordings, but they are of great assistance to the harried, perhaps inexperienced, music cataloger.

Ordering in the other arts fields—fine arts, crafts, theater, film, dance—presents fewer problems since normal selection and acquisition facilities are more adequate. Still, there are a few things of which the librarian new to these fields should be aware. Fine art publishing is geared to the private collector, the bookstore, and the book club. In January 1974 a panel of art book publishers appearing before a national meeting of art librarians stated candidly that publishers could not afford to take into consideration the subject and format needs of libraries—especially since the golden goose of federal funding had passed away. As a result the “coffee table” book promises to stay with us for some time to come, along with its attendant problems of over-familiar content, awkward size and shape, and breathtaking price. Many of these volumes, however, do contain text and plates of real library value. Librarians can be grateful that their journey from the giving shelf to the remainder table is often a brief one, and the wise arts librarian will contain that first enthusiasm for a new “beauty” long enough—six months to one year—to pick it up at a bargain from the many “publisher’s overstock” outlets.

What the deluxe publisher’s items will not do for variety of subject and quality of text and plate at a reasonable price will often be done by exhibition catalogs. In recent years some museums have begun to consign their publishing responsibilities to commercial publishers; consequently prices are on the rise. But the catalogs remain for the most part a good buy in terms of quality of content. A comprehensive listing of international catalog publications is provided by the Worldwide Art Catalogue Bulletin, published quarterly by Worldwide Books, Inc., a firm which also serves as a dealer, simplifying the ordering process. Catalogs for dealer and auction galleries which also are often useful and relatively inexpensive collection builders can be
located by watching the calendars and advertisements in the art periodicals.

In the film section of the collection, one needs to remember to regularly check paperback listings in addition to hardbacks. Many fine film titles—especially motion picture scripts—are available only in paperback and should be acquired for the collection.

In all arts fields there has been heavy reprint activity in recent years, with a mixed blessing. Announcements have been published "on spec," the putative publisher waiting for a show of orders to determine whether republication is commercially feasible, meanwhile tying up library funds in orders for as yet nonexistent books. Reprints have been published of books which would have done well to remain out of print. Sometimes as many as three reprint publishers have offered the same title simultaneously, at wildly varying prices. Often prices have been exorbitant. Many reprints of primarily historical interest are directed at academic libraries and, although their titles may appear in standard checklists, they are of limited public library usefulness.

However, fortunately for the public library arts librarian, many valuable titles have been brought back into print by responsible publishers. Dance Perspectives offers a distinguished list of reprinted classics of dance literature. Da Capo and Dover have sought the advice of various special library associations (as well as such scholarly groups as the American Musicological Society) in choosing titles for reprint. ARLIS/NA (Art Libraries Society/North America) recently presented Dover with a citation for a distinguished reprinting program. Reprints are making it possible for public libraries which are just beginning to develop their arts collections to fill in much-needed basic works in both their reference and circulating collections. Use of bibliographies such as Duckles, Chamberlin, and Lucas, together with reviews such as those in Choice which appraise new titles in comparison with earlier ones on the same subject, will help arts librarians to order judiciously from the reprint lists. Reprints are also proving helpful in filling out periodicals and serials holdings in newly developing departments. Periodicals available complete in short runs, e.g., Dance Index and the Museum of Modern Art Bulletin, can be bought relatively inexpensively. The area of film history reprinting, in hardcover or in microforms, is making available early film periodicals which libraries seldom had the foresight to acquire and preserve at the time of their first publication. Today, with the surge of interest in film history and aesthetics, both these and the reprints of early film books are making it possible for
libraries to answer one of their public's most urgently expressed needs. A similar situation and solution exists in the general area of popular music, jazz, blues, and recorded sound.

The Denver and Albuquerque public libraries have no cost figures available which would seem to be valid elsewhere. Their funding and programs are quite different. In Denver the arts collection is being developed as part of an overall collection, using formulae derived from national publishing trends. All funds come from the general library materials budget. In Albuquerque, funding is drawn from a variety of sources, including New Mexico Arts Commission grants, bond fund money, and some federal funds. Albuquerque actively seeks gifts, especially in the development of its recordings collection and popular sheet music collection. Albuquerque identifies itself as one of the country's "shoestring" libraries; its Department of Fine and Performing Arts, for which special provision is being made in a new main library building, is a "shoestring" department. The fact that in its short life of six-and-one-half years it has been able to develop into a strong, well-balanced department is a tribute to ingenuity, hard work by its staff, the generosity of volunteer helpers and of private and public donors, and to the availability of some bond funds dedicated to collection building for the new main library building. It may serve as encouragement for similarly under-funded libraries with ambitions to provide a more complete arts service. One of the most interesting developments in Albuquerque has been the establishment of the lending collection of framed pictures, both reproductions and originals (lithographs, etchings, engravings), as a memorial to its former chief librarian, Donald Riechmann, who had a personal interest in making such resources available. In realizing this project the library has enjoyed fine cooperation from the Tamarind Institute of Lithography at the University of New Mexico and from local galleries.

Gifts can be extremely important to an arts department. Two collections which can benefit especially are the picture file and the popular sheet music collection. In both cases the gift material should be supplemented by some purchases to fill in gaps in subject matter and chronology. Denver buys about 300 new popular sheet music titles a year (individual titles, not song folios) and buys ready-made pictorial sets for incorporation in its picture files, especially to strengthen biographical and ethnic coverage. Albuquerque updates it popular sheet music collection with reference copies of anthologies of "hits" of various years and decades, plus the hits of important groups and
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individual singers. It buys commercial picture sets such as the Gale Research International Portrait Gallery and various subject sets issued by the Government Printing Office. Another important source of gifts is the private record collector who commits his collection of discs to tape (the newest releases as well as more antiquarian items) and sometimes can be persuaded to present to the library his virtually mint condition discs. Albuquerque's substantial collection of operatic albums was contributed by such a donor. Other possible sources of recordings in prime condition are local record reviewers, local radio stations which have records available which do not or no longer accord with their programming formats.

The arts collection obviously involves the acquisition, processing, and use of many specialized types of materials with which the general librarian may be unfamiliar. The general librarian assuming responsibility for the development of an arts collections will do well to join and to attend the meetings of the two exceptional professional associations concerned with these fields: the Music Library Association and ARLIS/NA. Both groups include a number of high-powered specialists in their membership, but the ambiance of both associations is so companionable that a neophyte need not feel shy in their midst. Both in meetings and in publications the approach is a pragmatic one concerned with the problems which affect and afflict all music and art libraries, large or small, and there are no better places for beginners to start to learn their trade. The Continuing Education Committee of the Music Library Association has taken as its special mission the spreading of the music library gospel in a very practical way to small and medium-sized libraries, often working through state and regional library associations. It has published basic lists of reference books, scores and recordings, and it has available a traveling sound-slide show which explains many of the basics of acquiring, processing, and circulating music materials, with careful attention to correct but clear terminology.

What are some of the general factors which influence the way an arts collection is built in a public library? The mass media have a great effect on creating trends; witness the great impact on demands for banjo and ragtime materials which derives from two particularly popular films. Recordings, films and television programs enjoy virtually simultaneous release and publicizing throughout the United States; an alert librarian can recognize trends and anticipate demand to a certain extent, especially by reading the trade press. There is, nevertheless, a
certain amount of cultural lag and a certain factor of regional taste which may also have to be taken into account in fitting the dernier cri to the local scene.

Ever-increasing population mobility also has an effect on the public library's collection. More and more one finds in cities the new arrival who evaluates the library, and specifically its arts services, in terms of libraries he or she has known elsewhere. In many cities removed from the major commercial centers, the purchase of more specialized books and recordings, and especially art reproductions and musical scores, is virtually impossible. Increasingly the library is expected either to provide this material or to supply information as to how it can be obtained.

Lifestyles have also changed. Library users no longer seem to be afraid of the arts. The art department's public is no longer limited to the middle-class lady "interested in culture" but cuts straight across a wide spectrum of age, sex, and economic class. There is a new enthusiasm and openness. Young people relate to music of various styles in a committed, personal way. Recordings, films and television have become sources of direct experience, often by-passing the book. The highly simplified lifestyles of many young people seem to make a framed picture at "home" an important supplement. For some reason people are clinging increasingly to the past, and here the arts seem to be best able to both evoke and document an era. Some of this involvement descends to the level of camp and trivia, but much of it represents a rediscovery of the cultural past through old films, old pictures, old bottles, old tunes. The library which has anticipated this is the fortunate one.

References