

THE MUSIC LIBRARIES TRUST: CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN MUSIC LIBRARIES

Pam Thompson

Beginnings

Forty years on, it is difficult to recall, even for those of us with long memories, how we worked and functioned in music libraries back in 1981: few personal computers, no internet, no e-mail, clunky photocopiers, stencils for duplicating papers with only correcting fluid (admittedly fragrantly addictive) to mask errors, card catalogues, gramophone records – and very little technological help for library users or staff. Despite these handicaps, which were for most the norm, music libraries were in a sense thriving, with dedicated, qualified and experienced music staff in many public and academic libraries. There was, however, a growing realisation that the economic climate then current¹ would lead to further financial restraints and fewer possibilities for training and research, as budgets across the library sector were squeezed year after year.

But, on the brink of a technological revolution, the prospect of enormous progress was before us, and there was a determination to seize the coming opportunities and a conviction that the music library world needed cooperation, research and education to meet the challenges. One major challenge was already apparent: there were no longer any courses in any UK academic institutions for music librarianship. Self-help would have to be the byword.

In the intervening years, technological progress has been so substantial as to render the music library of 1981 almost unrecognisable. But in the same period the decline in the number of music libraries with wide-ranging stock and qualified staff with good musical knowledge has been continual, and services to music library users can often be far less professional than ever imagined in 1981, despite huge leaps forward in electronic and remote access. It is hoped that this overview of the Trust and its work will reveal many of the developments and changes unforeseen then and demonstrate the small but sometimes crucial assistance which the Trust has been able to offer.

¹ Between 1981 and 1982 both inflation and unemployment hovered around 11%.

The commonly-held notion that the ERMULI² Trust, the Music Libraries Trust³'s forerunner, was created by the UK Branch of IAML is something of a misnomer. It was in fact the brainchild of one person of vision, John May⁴, a well-respected dealer in music, who in 1981 was President of the UK IAML Branch. Work towards the formation of the Trust was considerable in 1981, until it was formally established by a declaration of trust of 15 January 1982 and registered with the Charity Commission on 24 March 1982. In effect, it became the charitable arm of IAML in the UK.

The earliest draft outline of the aims of the Trust exists in an undated document⁵ headed "THE ERMULI TRUST – ensuring the future of Britain's music library service", giving a clear indication of the perceived importance of the Trust. Its principal aims were set out as follows:

- 'by awarding grants it will encourage music librarians to engage in research into music librarianship, bibliography and related disciplines. In many cases this research will lead to publication of monographs and articles.'
- 'it will allocate funds to enable music librarians to attend national and international courses and conferences – vital for the exchange of ideas and information.'
- 'it will establish prizes for outstanding academic writing by music librarians.'

The document went on to summarise why a trust was needed in a time of growing economic uncertainty. This was supplemented a few years later in the ERMULI Trust's first full brochure⁶ which outlined why music librarianship needs special, additional training, the work which music librarians undertake and the complexities posed by varying editions, linguistic complications and the need for a sound knowledge of musical repertoire, music literature and recordings.

There is no record and no recollection of a formal launch of the Trust in 1982, but by 1986 a press release from the Trust announced a press reception on 23 April at the Royal Society of Musicians at which the principal speaker was Sir Charles Groves.

It is probably sensible at this stage to describe the change of the Trust's

² ERMULI, an acronym for Education and Research in Music Libraries.

³ Hereafter generally abbreviated to MLT.

⁴ Lewis Foreman, Obituaries of John May, in the Independent <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-john-may-1046533.html>, accessed 18 September 2021, and in *Brio*, vol.36 no.1, 1999. Pam Thompson: 'John May, a tribute', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 47, no.1.

⁵ A number of documents from the time are undated and bear no author, but this dates from c.1983 and was probably compiled by Sue Clegg, then honorary secretary.

⁶ Dating from between 1984–1986 when several versions were produced.

name to the Music Libraries Trust in 1994. It had gradually become clear that a more descriptive title could benefit understanding of the ERMULI Trust's work, so it was changed by a supplemental deed of 23 November 1994 to The Music Libraries Trust. The relaunch of the Trust was marked by a reception in the Novello Room⁷ of the British Library in Sheraton Street, London, attended by many from the library and music professions and sponsored by Chester Music and Novello Music of the Music Sales Group, at which the speakers were Michael Freegard, Chairman of the Trust, Malcolm Lewis, President of the UK IAML Branch, Melvyn Barnes, President of the Library Association⁸, and John Amis, a patron of the Trust. It was sincerely hoped that clarifying the Trust's purpose would make the raising of funds for its work more straightforward.

Money

No trust can exist and function without money. It was estimated, logically, in the Trust's early days that a capital sum of £250,000 or £30,000 in donations per annum would give the Trust a firm foundation. Whether this was a sensible aim is questionable. Optimism was high and, in retrospect, certainly tinged with wishful thinking. In fact, the Trust was founded with £2,500, proceeds from a surplus from the international IAML conference held in Cambridge in 1980. Since then, the funds which the Trust has received have come overwhelmingly from surpluses from international IAML conferences held in the UK, those in Oxford in 1989 and Edinburgh in 2000. It says much for the UK (and later UK and Ireland) Branch that they have recognised the value of the Trust's work and, it should be admitted, the tax advantages which the existence of the charity offers the Branch. The contributions, fortuitous but unintended and unexpected, made to the UK Branch by a succession of delegates at those conferences should also be acknowledged. In fairness, we have often tried to persuade those elsewhere around the world that the establishment of similar charities could bring them benefit, but do not know to date of any which has come into being.⁹ It is recognised that local regulations and conventions may render this difficult or impossible.

It would be honest to admit that donations to the Trust from other sources, whether from organisations or individuals, have been on the whole disappointing, despite solid appeals through the course of the 1980s and later. There are some donors who were notable exceptions, some of whom requested anonymity, but the main welcome exception is the regular support of bursaries for attendance at IAML national and international conferences

⁷ Now the home of Yamaha Music in the UK.

⁸ Now the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).

⁹ As an example: Pamela Thompson, *Music Libraries Trust – or money laundering techniques (MLT) for music librarians*, conference paper, IAML conference, New Zealand, 1999.

which have come from many of our commercial and charitable colleagues: Academic Rights Press, Alexander Street Press, Blackwell's Music Library Services, Boosey & Hawkes, BRS, Chivers Book Sales, Cramer Music, GEAC, Green Dragon, 3M, Music Sales Trust, Oxford University Press, Plescon, Schott & Co., Sirsi-Dynix, Stainer & Bell, and the Staypar Trust. There has been only one year when no bursaries were supported, and in most years at least four bursaries have been awarded on average.

Bursaries for attendance at IAML international conferences are further assisted by the Ian Ledsham Bursary Fund, after its establishment by IAML (UK&Ireland) following Ian's untimely death in 2005.¹⁰ It is now administered by MLT, and support has been regular and fairly substantial. Bursaries such as these have helped greatly to fulfil one of the Trust's original commitments, the support of conference and course attendance.

Education

Support for wider music library education proved more difficult to achieve, although some partial assistance was given for participation in a variety of courses and seminars. Over the years, the Branch's own day courses, often presented by music librarians in their own time, filled a huge gap in the lack of any dedicated music library courses which led to qualifications. The Trust also attempted for a few years to fund a lectureship in music librarianship at a university, but no institution came forward, considering it 'a minor specialism'.¹¹ It was not until 1996 that a proposal by Ian Ledsham was met with enthusiasm by the Open Learning Unit of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, who were interested in a music librarianship module in their distance learning courses. With financial assistance from the Britten-Pears Foundation (now Britten Pears Arts), an agreement was concluded, and Ian Ledsham was commissioned to construct and develop the course.¹² Its first students began the course in 1998. Since then, with the production of a stand-alone course and other developments, its take-up and coverage has extended greatly, and it is the Trust's expectation that further funding will soon be awarded to enable revision and updating.¹³

The award of prizes for writing on music librarianship and related fields, another original intention, has certainly been more restricted than first hoped. The only prize established to date is the E.T. Bryant Memorial Prize, established jointly with IAML (UK), for a significant contribution to the literature

¹⁰ Malcolm Jones, 'A tribute to Ian Ledsham, 1954-2005', *Brio*, vol.42 no.2, 2005, and 'Ian Ledsham, 1954-2005', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 53/4, 2006.

¹¹ Letter from Michael Freegard to the Britten-Pears Foundation, 10 September 1996.

¹² Ian Ledsham, 'The turning wheel: training for music librarianship over 50 years', *Music Librarianship in the United Kingdom: fifty years of the British Branch of the International Association of Music Libraries*, ed. Richard Turbet. London: Routledge, 2020 (first published Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 74-83.

¹³ John Wagstaff, 'Developments in music librarianship education at the University of Aberystwyth', *Brio* vol.43 no.2, 2006.

of music librarianship by library and information science students, post-graduate researchers, and music information professionals in the first five years of their careers. It is pleasing to note that many past prize winners are now highly respected in their chosen fields in music libraries and beyond.

More broadly, the Trust's funding has been directed most of all to the support of individual research projects and to wider group projects, often conceived by an individual but kickstarted by 'seed corn' funding or by the commissioning of scoping studies, in a bid to attract further interest and financial support. Accounts of these will follow later.

People

From the very start, it was realised that the Trust's connections to the wider music world would be both desirable and vital to its endeavours. We have been fortunate in gaining support from many well-established figures who have all expressed their appreciation of the important role music libraries have played in their work and achievements. Patrons over the years are listed below. Suggestions for additions to this list are always welcome, preferably with the consent of those named and a note as to why they value music libraries.

MLT Patrons

John Amis	Christopher Hogwood	Oliver Neighbour
Julian Anderson*	Ian Horsbrugh	Anthony Payne (deceased April 2021)
Michael Berkeley*	Alec Hyatt King	Steve Race
David Bedford	Graham Johnson*	Albi Rosenthal
Ian Bostridge*	Sir Anthony Kenny	John Tyrrell
Alfred Brendel	Sir Nicholas Kenyon*	Ian Wallace
Sir Peter Maxwell Davies	Nicola Lefanu*	Judith Weir*
Sir Colin Davis	Julian Lloyd Webber*	John Williams*
Sir John Drummond	John McCabe	John Wilson*
Sian Edwards*	Sir Charles Mackerras	
Dame Evelyn Glennie*	Sir John Manduell	
Gavin Henderson*	Donald Mitchell	current patrons*

The Trust has been equally fortunate in bewitching a series of excellent people to chair the Trust and has benefitted hugely from their experience, expertise and vision, all given when their time was already over-committed in their principal endeavours. Our gratitude for the roles they have played in our work is immense:

- Our first chair was a businessman, Richard Wheeler-Bennett of Thomas Borthwick and Sons, who from 1982–1994 steered the Trust through its formative years and continuing fundraising efforts.
- His successor was Michael Freegard, formerly Chief Executive of the Performing Right Society, whose unstinting efforts helped to bring about the successful achievement of the music librarianship course at the University of Aberystwyth, while at the same time working tirelessly to support and gain funding for Roger Taylor’s outreach endeavours in Albania and the Balkans which are detailed later.
- In 1999, the chairmanship passed to Professor John Tyrrell of the Universities of Nottingham and Cardiff, a highly distinguished Janáček scholar, whose role in ensuring the development and future of research projects supported by the Trust has had lasting significance.
- From 2006 – 2017, Professor David Wyn Jones of Cardiff University, an expert on music of the Classical period, likewise extended the MLT’s role in supporting research projects over that long period.
- Upon Professor Wyn Jones’s resignation, we were fortunate that Sally Groves, former creative director at Schott Music and with long experience as a trustee elsewhere, agreed to take on the role of Chair. The fact that her father, Sir Charles Groves, had been a founding patron of the Trust, presented a very pleasing symmetry.

Vital support for all the work undertaken by each chair listed above has been provided by a succession of excellent Honorary Secretaries and Treasurers, as well as Bursaries Administrators and Minutes Secretaries, in which latter role Helen Mason deserves special mention for decades of service.

In 1982, John May stepped into the breach as our first Secretary, but soon persuaded Sue Clegg of Birmingham School of Music to replace him. She was in post through the years when creating and documenting the Trust’s role and purpose were time-consuming and essential. In 1985, when a major fundraising campaign was envisaged and begun, Ann Kirkham, a friend of a trustee, with no experience of music libraries but boundless goodwill and determination, added mountains of documentation to our archive as she identified potential donors and contacts. Richard Chesser of the British Library

Music Library then took on the often demanding role from 1987 to 1994 and remains a long-standing trustee. His work was taken over in 1994 until 1996 by Joan Redding of the BBC Music Library, during which time her efforts, in particular of achieving outreach funding, was heroic. Work and childcare commitments led her to pass on those burdens to Lady Nancy Kenny, active in several roles at the University of Oxford, who took on an immense range of tasks and continued until 1999. She was followed by Rosemary Firman (formerly Williamson) who worked successively at Nottingham University, Manchester libraries and Trinity College of Music¹⁴ and was active in securing the development and funding of some of the major projects which the Trust helped to initiate. Since 2005, Trinity College of Music has continued to supply a series of efficient and excellent Secretaries, as Claire Kidwell filled the post from 2005-2008 before becoming Treasurer of the Branch. Since that time Edith Speller has continued valiantly to ensure its ongoing work.

The Trust's first Treasurer was Malcolm London of Cork Gully, then a division of Coopers & Lybrand, who served until 1996. He was sometimes assisted by his colleague, James Stafford. Both must have ensured that our inexperience did not lead us to the liquidation of businesses which was their specialism. In 1996, Peter Maxwell of Cramer Music, long a champion and supporter of music libraries, agreed to be Treasurer, continuing until 2001, when Chris Jackson, managing director of Bärenreiter UK, filled the post and remains as Treasurer twenty years on, combining this with ensuring the supply of all the Bärenreiter publications essential to our libraries and to musicians across the country. Our enormous gratitude to all of them, none of them music librarians, must be recorded.

It is, of course, those who have served as Trustees over the years who have been central and crucial in the Trust's work. A balance has always been maintained between music librarian trustees and others from the wider music professions, commercial and academic, a principle which has ensured that the Trust benefits greatly from others' knowledge, experience and vision. Since Irish colleagues joined us in the IAML Branch, we have also been fortunate to add Irish colleagues as Trustees. Thanks are due to all who have given us their time and commitment over the years:

¹⁴ The workplaces of many involved in the Trust have often changed in the course of time, as have the names of some institutions.

MLT Trustees

Terri Anderson	Big Red Kite Communications/ EMI/BPI/MCPS-PRS
Linda Barlow	Berkshire County Libraries
Peter Baxter*	Surrey Libraries
Richard Chesser*	British Library
Barbara Eifler*	Making Music
Katharine Ellis	Royal Holloway College
Michael Fend*	King's College London
Lewis Foreman*	Musicologist and author
Michael Freegard	PRS, etc.
Jenny Goodwin*	PRS, etc
Sally Groves*	Formerly Schott Music
Jane Harvell	National Sound Archive
Helen Mason*	Lincolnshire Libraries/Trinity College of Music
Miriam Miller	BBC Music Library
Eve O'Kelly	Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland
Lady Nancy Kenny	Rhodes Trust, Oxford
Sir David Lumsden	Principal, Royal Academy of Music
Joan Redding	BBC Music Library
Philip Shields	Royal Irish Academy of Music and Drama
Roger Taylor	Somerset Libraries
Pamela Thompson*	Royal College of Music Library
John Tyrrell	University of Cardiff
George Vass*	Conductor and festival director
Judy Vernau	Macmillan Press/Bowker Saur
Gerhard A. Weiss	Coopers & Lybrand
Richard Wheeler Bennett	Thomas Borthwick & Co.
Nicholas Williams*	Stainer & Bell
Susi Woodhouse	Museum, Libraries & Archives Council
Ann Wrigley	Dublin Institute of Technology
David Wyn Jones	University of Cardiff
*current trustees 2021	



Fig. 1: MLT Trustees c.2002, left to right: Lewis Foreman, Michael Freegard, Richard Chesser, Pam Thompson, John Tyrrell, Nicholas Williams, Rosemary Firman, Chris Jackson, Helen Mason, Nancy Kenny. Photograph, courtesy of Pam Thompson.

Awards

While we may seem somewhat self-congratulatory about the work which the Trust has undertaken, it is, of course, what that work has achieved and the awards it was able to make which deserve the most attention. The type of awards made has varied from year to year, often dependent on applications received, but they do span a wide range of activities, whether in the field of research by individuals or as contributions to ongoing projects, some of them major, conceived by IAML or initiated by the Trust.

Individuals' research projects

Support for research by individuals or groups is outlined below, not chronologically, as so often the work spanned a number of years or may be ongoing,

and names are generally noted only when publications have resulted. Awards mostly represented only a contribution to the costs involved.

- Work on the Archive of Ernest Bradbury, celebrated music critic. The archive is now housed in Leeds University Library;
- Research on wind ensemble music;¹⁵
- Film music collections in the UK, scoping study;¹⁶
- Music in the Artaria ledgers 1784-1827;¹⁷
- Work on the archive of Reginald Barrett-Ayres, now in the University of Aberdeen
- William Byrd research;¹⁸
- Traditional music in Wales, a bibliography;¹⁹
- Listing of Women's Revolutions Per Minute archive, Birmingham Central Library;
- Dublin Music Trades database, a constantly developing, free-to-access resource detailing the music trade in Dublin;²⁰
- Dating music scores, a beginner's guide;²¹
- Opera and song books published in England 1703-1726;²²
- Herbert Howells Source Book;²³
- Sources of English lute music 1540-1640;²⁴
- Investigation of the feasibility of the publication of a British union catalogue of collected editions and historical monuments;²⁵
- Richard Rodney Bennett, bio-bibliography;²⁶
- Research on Dvořák's relations with England;²⁷
- Work on the James Madison Carpenter collection of Child ballad tunes for an annotated index;²⁸
- Choral music in English cathedrals;
- Gaelic Arts Access project at the National Library of Scotland, ongoing.

¹⁵ David Lindsey Clark, Jon A. Gillaspie and Marshall Stoneham, *The wind ensemble sourcebook and biographical guide*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997, and *The wind ensemble catalog*, 1998.

¹⁶ Miguel Mera and Ben Winters, 'Film and television music sources in the UK and Ireland', *Brio*, vol.46 no.2, 2009.

¹⁷ Rupert Ridgewell.

¹⁸ Richard Turbet, *William Byrd: a guide to research*. London: Routledge, 2006.

¹⁹ Wyn Thomas, *Traditional Music in Wales-Cerddoriaeth Draddodiadol yng Nghymru: A Bibliography-Llyfryd-diaeth*, various editions.

²⁰ <https://www.dublinmusictrade.ie/> accessed 18 September 2021.

²¹ Catherine Small, 'A beginner's guide to dating printed music', *Brio*, vol.51 no.1, 2014

²² David Hunter, *Opera and sing books published in England 1703-1726: a descriptive bibliography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and The Bibliographic Society of London, 1998.

²³ Paul Andrews, *Herbert Howells: a source book*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

²⁴ Julia Craig-McFeeley, various publications on the subject.

²⁵ A long-standing aspiration of Tony Hodges of the Royal Northern College of Music.

²⁶ Stewart Craggs, *Richard Rodney Bennett, a bio-bibliography*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990

²⁷ David Beveridge, publication imminent.

²⁸ Julia Child, a number of subsequent publications.

The Trust has from its inception maintained a list of projects it would be desirable to fund in the hope that some might appeal to potential researchers. A regularly updated list can be found on MLT's website.²⁹ Overall, there has been a tendency in recent years for fewer applications for personal research assistance to be forthcoming, which is disappointing but may be understandable when many staff are working under pressure in music libraries, many have responsibility for a wide range of subjects and may find that research is not encouraged by employers. At the same time, it may be that some institutions are slightly more willing to fund or support research themselves if by so doing they can demonstrate more active research and publications for research excellence assessments which can deliver extra funding, or they may simply seek good publicity for their organisations. This, however, is a speculative assumption, and the Trust would greatly welcome applications from individual researchers, provided they meet the criteria under which the Trust operates.³⁰

Outreach

In the aftermath of the upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe from 1989-1991, 'outreach' became a buzzword in library circles as it was realised that many might need assistance in modernising, adapting to new opportunities and, in some cases, adding good modern additions to stock. MLT responded to this changed world which required an exploration of needs, urged on initially by suggestions from Roger Taylor of Somerset libraries. Mr Taylor's interests were at first centred firmly on the situation in Albania, a country long isolated more than most from any outside influences and viewed with curiosity by Roger from the shores of neighbouring Corfu. With MLT's support, he embarked on a fact-finding mission and in time developed projects to provide the help that was needed. These immense efforts extended in time across many countries in the Balkan region, as cooperative ventures seemed more likely to gain funding. If, ultimately, bids for large-scale projects were unsuccessful, the contacts made, the materials sent and the exchanges of experience were wholly worthwhile. MLT devoted several years to supporting detailed and challenging applications to other bodies. Over the period of about 1994 to 1997, few IAML publications were without meticulous reports in Roger Taylor's inimitable prose – in Annual Reports³¹, Newsletters, *Brio*³² and in the volume published to mark the Branch's 50th anniversary.³³ The Trust

²⁹ <https://www.musiclibrariestrust.org/projectideas>, accessed 18 September 2021.

³⁰ <https://www.musiclibrariestrust.org/research>, accessed 18 September 2021.

³¹ Annual Reports appear in full on the website <https://iaml-uk-irl.org/iaml-uk-irl-annual-reports>, accessed 18 September 2021.

³² Roger Taylor, 'Flight for the eagle? A music librarian's research visit to Albania, *Brio* vol.31 no.2, 1994, and 'Balkan journey: an outreach exploration to Bulgaria and Macedonia', *Brio* vol.34 no.1, 1997.

also helped in financing a visit to Croatia by Margaret Brandram of Derbyshire Libraries.³⁴ One additional outreach venture further afield and supported by MLT was the award of some expenses to Bridget Palmer of the Royal Academy of Music who undertook work in a school library in Uganda in 2008.

Projects

It is possible that the awards made by MLT to large and small projects over the years have proved indispensable in triggering their genesis or ensuring their gestation. Small initial grants have led to more substantial or matching funding from elsewhere. Contributions in kind may sometimes be accepted in lieu of actual money. Studies investigating or assessing needs in particular subject areas provide evidence of the need for more detailed research. Occasionally, just a small grant may aid the completion of work already substantially undertaken.

IAML's work in encouraging and working towards planning and the creation of strategies for music library services at national level received much initial support from the Trust. Both the *Library and Information Plan for Music*³⁵ and its successor *Access to Music*³⁶ were given early assistance, while *Ensemble*, the project to create a national music library resource under the auspices of the Research Libraries Support Programme, received three years of contributory funding.

Small but crucial grants were made to assist other national and international projects: *Encore*³⁷, *Cecilia*³⁸, *RILM*³⁹ in Ireland and *ISMN*⁴⁰. Some grants were made to organisations to allow them to complete implementation of, or access to, their databases, these included the Scottish Music Information Centre and the British Music Information Centre.

The Trust's first bold foray into the commissioning and financing of a scoping study came in 2002. High on our list of desirable projects was an investigation into collections of concert programmes in institutions and organisations around the country. A primary source of musicological and historical research, concert programmes had never been systematically documented at national or local level, and even discovering their possible locations was

³³ *Music librarianship in the UK : fifty years of the British Branch of the International Association of Music Libraries*, ed. Richard Turbet, Ashgate, 2003 (Routledge, 2020).

³⁴ Annual Report 1996.

³⁵ Susi Woodhouse (prep.), *Library and Information Plan for Music*, IAML(UK), 1993.

³⁶ Pamela Thompson and Malcolm Lewis, *Access to Music, music libraries and archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland: current themes and a realistic vision for the future*, IAML (UK & Ireland), 2003.

³⁷ *Encore* (now *Encore21*): <https://iaml-uk-irl.org/encore-21>, accessed 18 September 2021.

³⁸ *Cecilia*: <https://iaml-uk-irl.org/cecilia>, accessed 18 September 2021.

³⁹ *RILM* (Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale): <https://www.rilm.org/>, accessed 18 September 2021.

⁴⁰ (ISMN)International Standard Music Number: <https://www.ismn-international.org/>, accessed 18 September 2021.

difficult in the extreme. Rupert Ridgewell of the British Library registered his interest in the project, and with strong support from MLT's Chair, John Tyrrell, the Trust agreed that Rupert should undertake a scoping study. The result was the publication of the study in 2003,⁴¹ with its recommendations leading to the establishment of a further project, administered jointly by Cardiff University and the Royal College of Music, with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The resulting searchable database, launched in 2007, offers descriptions of many collections in the UK and Ireland, and continues to be further developed and extended. A report on the project from 2010 gives full details.⁴²

In 2013, MLT provided some additional funding for a project to develop the Cecilia and Concert Programmes databases, in order to achieve: an improved user interface, more sophisticated search functionality, mobile device compatibility, greater scalability of the sites and visibility of their contents, the feasibility of making the data exportable to other services such as Culture Grid and Europeana and interoperable with linked data. That mouthful of desiderata has been stolen from a document of the time, for which unashamed thanks and congratulations on the results.

A further scoping study commissioned by the Trust focussed on collections of musicians' letters in the UK and Ireland. The resulting study from 2011 details holding institutions and finding aids with an appendix of an indicative inventory⁴³ which will assist preliminary explorations of the locations of letters.

Looking forward

The Trust most recently determined that the profession was in need of some solid, informed and current information on the state of music libraries today, to underline the value of music libraries in the UK and Ireland. It was recognised that any opportunity to work for the improvement of services could not be seized without current data to support claims. MLT commissioned Dr Michael Bonshor, course director and honorary research fellow at the University of Sheffield, to undertake a wide-ranging survey encompassing users' impressions of their music library services, what they appreciated and what they felt was lacking or in need of improvement. A parallel survey requested impressions of services and needs from staff working with music in libraries. With an enthusiastic and detailed response from users and staff, the data was

⁴¹ Rupert Ridgewell, *Concert programmes in the UK and Ireland, a preliminary report*, MLT, 2003.

⁴² Rupert Ridgewell. 'The concert programme project: history, progress and future directions', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 57/1. 2010.

⁴³ Katharine Hogg, Rachel Milestone, Alexis Paterson, Rupert Ridgewell, Susi Woodhouse, *Collections of musicians' letters in the UK and Ireland: a scoping study*.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55c89b3fe4b0fbf10d6b8cba/t/55cc8d84e4b0989acda955e9/1439468932581/mlt_letters_report.pdf, accessed 18 September 2021.

then analysed, greatly assisted by a grant from the Postlethwaite Music Foundation. Michael Bonshor's analysis and report on the survey have been published online⁴⁴ on the MLT website and in the Spring/Summer 2021 issue of *Brio*. We hope that it will provide evidence, ideas and encouragement for music library staff and for their users, either when there are threats to services or, indeed and with hope, opportunities for development. With this body of evidence, we may perhaps avoid any possibility of embracing the wishful thinking with which we first launched the Trust, while, as MLT has shown, providing some good support to any opportunities for development which come our way.

On a final, personal note, many of the views expressed here are mine and may not represent those of all Trustees. I must also thank all those who have contributed to MLT's work over the years and those whose writings I have (mostly inadvertently) quoted or copied in this account. There may be a suspicion that after forty years of working with the Trust, and with so many devoted and industrious colleagues some bias and sentiment have crept into this overview of its history. I hope that these may be overlooked, given the many substantial achievements of the Trust in those years. There is so much more which trustees would have liked to achieve and so much more research we would like to assist in the future.

Our sunbird logo has always given hope that we might be larks ascending, taking the Trust to new heights with adequate funds for all the projects and developments which would benefit music libraries, their users and their staff.

As a trustee, I must end with a plea: we are not sorcerers, there is much in our work which is beyond our control and in the recent past there have been no magicians in leading roles who might stop the watering-down of music education and library services; we need apprentices who do not believe in magic but can learn the occasional spell to bring about gradual improvements and developments and stem the tide of decline in small but meaningful ways:

- Please consider whether MLT could help in research or projects you have in mind;
- Please ensure that everyone around you knows of MLT's work and how it can help;
- Please encourage donations and legacies to MLT.

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55c89b3fe4b0fbf10d6b8cba/t/5fcf47467cc0b10a0acde0ae/1607419719681/MLT+Music+Library+user+and+staff+survey+-+Executive+Summary+-+Dr+Michael+Bonshor.pdf>, accessed 18 September 2021.



Fig. 2: MLT logo.

Abstract

This is a brief history of the Music Libraries Trust (MLT), which was first established in 1981 to support scholarship and learning for both libraries and librarians. Over the years the MLT has worked to ensure that funding and education are available for various initiatives that increase professional development. The article summarises some of the key achievements of MLT personnel with reference to projects and significant outreach work to which they have contributed. Not an organisation to rest on its laurels, the MLT continues to seek ways in which to offer assistance to libraries and those who use them in its fortieth anniversary year.

Pam Thompson was Chief Librarian of the Royal College of Music for 34 years until her retirement in 2011. She is a past treasurer and past president of both IAML(UK) and IAML internationally, holds honorary membership of both organisations and was a founder trustee of the ERMULI Trust in 1981. She remains a trustee of MLT in 2021.