



## **Working with music in libraries**

- ◆ *Do you enjoy creating order out of chaos?*
- ◆ *Can you work as part of a team?*
- ◆ *Are you actively interested in music of any kind?*
- ◆ *Do you want to help musicians?*

*If you want to use your musical knowledge, are interested in people and can work under pressure, then a career in music librarianship could be for you.*

### **Why music librarianship?**

Music exists as a civilising influence. Musicians may be professionals creating music either in concerts and other live events, or on broadcasts and recordings, or they may be amateurs performing in public or simply enjoying making music at home. People listen to and appreciate the music, either as part of an audience or privately.

The written score is an important medium for the creation of music, and the sound recording an equally important medium for access to an audience. Music libraries are a vital part of the process of bringing music to people, and helping them to explore and enjoy the varied body of music available around the world. The music librarian is the person who serves the performer and the audience, helping to keep the musical life of the country moving forward.

### **What do music librarians do?**

The basic responsibilities of music librarians are similar to those in other branches of librarianship. They include:

- ◆ collecting material, by purchase, legal deposit or donation
- ◆ organising their collections for potential users, by cataloguing, classification and physical arrangement
- ◆ helping users to locate and access material in their own and other libraries, and on the internet.
- ◆ maintaining and revising the stock, through binding and other forms of preservation, adding new material and removing out-of-date items to make it relevant to the organisation's users
- ◆ making the information available by providing study accommodation, lending services, or by answering enquiries (by letter, phone, e-mail, etc.)
- ◆ promoting the use of the material, by publishing guides and educating users
- ◆ managing and training staff to make the best possible use of resources

In addition, they may engage in other activities which reflect their own interests or those of the organisation for which they work. Many librarians are noted scholars, experts on the subject itself as well as its bibliography. Some may act as impresarios in organising concerts and exhibitions, while others may edit or copy. The types of library mentioned below will give an idea of the range of skills that may be called on in the course of work.

## **Where do music librarians work?**

### ***Public libraries***

Music librarians in public libraries can encounter an enormous range of stock, from scholarly volumes, collected editions and historical runs of journals in the older and larger organisations, to printed and recorded material for all types of music inside and outside the Western tradition. Often they may be responsible generally for non-printed resources, including spoken word recordings (for example, talking books and language courses), videos, DVDs and computer software, as well as music cassettes and compact discs.

Their library reflects the music community in which it is based, and often has to respond to the widest range of needs from a variety of clientele. These can include professional and amateur musicians, teachers, students and school children, and people simply wanting something to listen to or watch at home. The music library will also be a focal point for musical societies in its catchment area (which can stretch for many miles, particularly in rural areas), providing sets of vocal scores and orchestral parts for choirs large and small, madrigal groups, orchestras, chamber ensembles and the like. Public libraries will often be a part of the local authority's arts department, and organisation of concerts and exhibitions may well form part of the librarian's work.

### ***Academic libraries***

Music librarians in academic libraries, whether in traditional universities or music colleges (conservatoires), co-operate closely with lecturers and tutors to develop collections relevant to the institution's courses. As well as getting hold of requested items they will be expected to keep staff and students up-to-date with information about the latest printed, recorded and online material. Nearly all music departments have a variety of choirs, ensembles and orchestras, and it is often the responsibility of the music library to obtain sets of scores and parts for performances. Instruction to students and staff on how to make the best use of the library and of other local libraries is part of an academic librarian's work, regardless of the subject speciality, and this increasingly involves information technology.

Except in specialist music colleges, it is rare nowadays to find an academic librarian dedicated solely to music. Posts will tend to cover a broader subject area, such as humanities or performing arts, or may be responsible for the physical site which includes the music department. Whichever is the case, music librarians tend to build up a close intellectual relationship with the staff and students of the department, and it can be particularly rewarding to see and indeed hear the results of the service provided.

### ***National libraries***

National libraries acquire a comprehensive music stock including books, scores, sound recordings, manuscripts and archive material. In addition to the British Library, five other libraries (National Library of Scotland; National Library of Wales; Bodleian Library, Oxford; Cambridge University Library; Trinity College, Dublin) are designated as legal deposit libraries, entitled to free copies of printed materials published in the UK. Although these libraries collect less comprehensively than the British Library, they function effectively as national libraries. Other materials are acquired through purchase, gift and bequest.

National libraries serve the international research community on all aspects of music research. Work includes cataloguing, reference work (both assisting users of the collections in person, and dealing with research enquiries, which can often be complex) and exhibitions. National libraries also contribute towards international initiatives such as RISM, an international guide to source materials.

### ***Broadcasting libraries***

Broadcasting organisations, both radio and television, will generally have a music collection or library. The emphasis is on the supply of music materials to support programmes being broadcast or recorded, and to support programme research. In a broadcasting environment this will often be to tight schedules or at short notice, but the work also encompasses enquiries requiring detailed and complex research. Some companies generate their own music (for example, incidental music, theme tunes and commissioned music), and the library or organisation may include copying or binding departments to facilitate the production of new materials. In addition, broadcasting companies will usually maintain a collection of recordings for research and transmission purposes which may exist as a part of the music library or as a separate unit. Complete television and radio programmes, whether concerning or containing music, generally form part of the company's broadcast archive, and are not as a rule part of the music library.

Libraries in broadcasting organisations may be required to operate within commercial constraints, and as such require a combination of managers, music specialists and librarians.

### ***Music publishers and hire libraries***

Hire libraries are usually part of a music publishing company, and make available orchestral and vocal sets on hire to a wide range of clients, including professional and amateur orchestras and choral societies, educational establishments and broadcasters. Duties may include answering enquiries from the public, taking and dispatching orders, and returning music to stock after use. The condition of orchestral parts also requires regular checking. Language skills are useful when dealing with overseas clients, or working with material from foreign publishers. Hire libraries are commercial organisations and numeracy skills are essential for calculating hire fees. While a broad knowledge of music of all kinds is desirable for hire library work, particular knowledge of and interest in orchestral music, its terminology and its sources is essential.

Many hire libraries deal directly with the new and contemporary publications of their company, both in terms of production, and supply for first performance. When this is the case, there will be considerable liaison with composers, music engravers, proof-readers and commissioners. A high degree of musical literacy is therefore required. Once in post you will also learn aspects of performing and mechanical (recording) rights, and copyright law. Employment in a hire library may often provide the opportunity to attend concerts for which music has been supplied.

### ***Orchestral and opera libraries***

Librarians in orchestras and other performing organisations require a wide knowledge of orchestral or operatic repertoire. The librarian is responsible for obtaining scores and parts from the most appropriate source, distributing them to the performers and successfully retrieving them all after performances. Most orchestras have a collection of orchestral material, and it is the librarian's responsibility to maintain this in good order. Day to day work may involve the preparation of parts for concerts, marking up the parts (bowing or dynamics, for example) in consultation with the conductor and leader. Opera librarians in particular may be required to transpose orchestral parts and insert translations into scores.

Major orchestras have a dedicated librarian, maybe even with an assistant but smaller orchestras, though employing a librarian, will expect him or her to undertake other duties. Orchestral librarians often move on to posts in orchestral management.

### ***Music Information Centres***

Work in these Centres relates to the music, often contemporary, of a particular country. England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland operate separate Centres, and each has a slightly different way of promoting and preserving contemporary music. Although similar skills to those of a music librarian are required, there should be a fair degree of formal musical knowledge, and perhaps more importantly an almost fanatical enthusiasm for promoting the music of the country in question.

Centre staff will be closely involved with the main performing and broadcasting organisations, and Centres may publish their own catalogues and guides and even scores, as well as co-operating with other publishing organisations.

### ***Other libraries and archives***

There are music libraries and archives in cathedrals and other ecclesiastical organisations, some of which may be attached in some way to an academic institution. However, these may well place emphasis on conservation and preservation of manuscripts, and experience in this field could be the key to employment in this type of library.

## How do you become a music librarian?

### ***Subject knowledge and skills***

An interest in and knowledge of music is essential and you should be prepared to extend this interest and knowledge to new areas of music. The following skills will be useful in any library post, in varying proportions depending on the type of library:

- ◆ an ability to read music
- ◆ familiarity with choral and orchestral terminology
- ◆ the need to be well organised, to work under pressure
- ◆ a knowledge of one or more European languages other than English
- ◆ numeracy and IT skills

There is no doubt that you will work more effectively and confidently as a music librarian if you have some musical training, and formal qualifications may well be required by special libraries and colleges. For public library work, the ability to read music is important for staff responsible for information work, and for those responsible for selecting printed music.

Other skills may be developed when in post, including enhancement of information technology skills. As these skills are transferable, appointees to professional posts should find that they adapt easily to learning about the particular IT applications in use in the workplace, where training will normally be given to new staff.

### ***Salary and vacancy information for music librarians***

General salary guides for all library staff employed in different sectors are available from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) – see contact details at the end of this leaflet.

Job advertisements are available to members in CILIP's *Library and Information Gazette* (available electronically on its web site at [www.lisjobnet.com](http://www.lisjobnet.com)), and also in music journals. Most professional posts in public, academic and national libraries require staff academically qualified in library and information studies (requirements vary in other libraries) and guidance on finding courses is given below. Detailed advice on where to look for a pre-course experience post (often required for intending postgraduate students) can be found on the CILIP website at [www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk). An annual directory of pre-postgraduate course fixed term posts (which mostly start the following autumn), *Graduate Training Opportunities*, is available and can be accessed from the *Qualifications and Chartership* section of the CILIP website.

### ***Professional qualifications for the job***

Entry to the library and information profession is at graduate level. CILIP, which is the chartered professional body for library and information workers in the United Kingdom, accredits a number of degree and postgraduate courses at various higher education institutions.

A list of these courses is published on CILIP's website ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)) in the *Qualifications and Chartership* section of the site, listed under the link *Courses in library and information studies currently accredited by CILIP*. Many graduate level overseas qualifications, including those from the European Union, are also accredited. Most UK employers will only consider candidates with qualifications accredited by CILIP for appointment to junior professional posts in library and information work. Applicants for more senior posts are often expected also to be chartered (see below).

There is no education available in the UK specifically for music librarianship, but aspiring music librarians taking another accredited degree or postgraduate course in library and information studies may find opportunities during the course for the exploitation of music subject knowledge in, for example, the choice of subject for a project or a Master's dissertation. Most people working in library and information services are primarily professional librarians and information managers and secondarily subject specialists. Even in music librarianship employers are likely to seek and attract staff who possess a range of professional, IT and managerial skills.

## ***The CILIP Register of Chartered Members***

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals is the professional body for librarians and information workers. It maintains a professional *Register of Chartered Members* in two categories, Chartered Members (MCLIP) and Fellows (FCLIP).

Graduate members of CILIP can achieve Chartered status by admission to the Register as a Chartered Member. Applicants must first gain an accredited qualification and then undertake at least one year of approved supervised professional in-post training before applying for Chartership. The award is made by assessment of the applicant's professional development and acknowledges a high degree of skill and ability.

Admission to the professional Register denotes having achieved professional competence and maturity and will open up a number of opportunities in more senior jobs beyond the first professional post. Being chartered means you will have gained full professional qualifications and status. After five years on the professional Register, a Chartered Member may submit work of various kinds for election to Fellowship, CILIP's highest professional award.

## ***Training for non-professional posts***

Not all posts in libraries require professional qualifications, and there are training opportunities for those not pursuing professional status. For example, City & Guilds offer National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for Library and Information assistants. These courses are not music-specific, but as vocational qualifications they can be tailored to suit the job responsibilities of the candidate. There are more examples of training available on the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' website.

## **Further Information**

CILIP's annual *Graduate Training Opportunities* directory is available on the Institute's website under *Qualifications and Chartership* at [www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk).

Information about is also available from the CILIP website in the following areas: -

*CILIP's Framework of Qualifications*  
*Qualifications for Library Assistants*  
*Courses in library and information studies currently accredited by CILIP*  
*Financial assistance for study*  
*Credit transfer for CILIP awards (towards an Open University qualification)*

For general information on career opportunities in library and information work, or for further information on any of the above topics, look at CILIP's website ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)) or contact:

Membership, Careers and Qualifications  
CILIP: the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals  
7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE  
Tel: 020 7255 0500  
Email: [careers@cilip.org.uk](mailto:careers@cilip.org.uk) or [quals@cilip.org.uk](mailto:quals@cilip.org.uk)

For more information about NVQs ([www.city-and-guilds.co.uk](http://www.city-and-guilds.co.uk)) contact:

City & Guilds  
1 Giltspur Street  
LONDON  
EC1A 9DD  
Tel: 020 7294 2800  
Email: [enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk)

For specialist information about music librarianship see IAML(UK & Irl)'s website([www.iaml-uk-irl.org](http://www.iaml-uk-irl.org)) or contact:

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