
This study reports on the professional development activities of music librarians throughout the United States. Telephone interviews were conducted with twenty-five music librarians in order to learn about the types of formal and informal activities they undertake to gain knowledge, develop their skills, and stay current. The findings indicate that many music librarians consider their involvement with the Music Library Association as their primary mode of formal professional development, while institutional activities are far less significant. The most valuable informal professional development activities are reading listservs and journals, communicating with colleagues, and pursuing research. Most have rather positive attitudes towards professional development and, whether pursuing these activities in order to provide better service to their users, to progress in their careers, or to contribute to the field, nearly all of the participants believe that professional development is a vital part of their job and enjoy engaging in it.

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THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC LIBRARIANS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries and the field of librarianship are in a constant state of change. Today, rapidly evolving technologies, the continual appearance of new reference and research tools, and an ever-expanding body of knowledge demand that librarians devote considerable attention to maintaining their currency and gaining new skills. This means that even after attaining a library science degree and being trained for a particular position, a librarian must seek continuing education throughout his or her career in order to remain well-skilled and knowledgeable.

A librarian may gain new skills and knowledge through a wide variety of means. Librarians pursue some professional development activities, including classes, workshops, and conferences, formally through an institution or organization, while other activities, such as reading, participating on listservs, and communicating with colleagues, are pursued informally. An individual’s information needs, as well as the availability of educational opportunities, determine the types of activities a librarian might undertake at any given time. For instance, sometimes librarians are motivated by information needs that are closely related to their immediate job responsibilities, while at other times they are motivated by a more general desire to gain knowledge in a particular area.

While all librarians face the demands of their continually changing field, librarians with a subject specialization must also attempt to stay abreast of developments
within their particular disciplines. The focus of this research study is the professional
development of music librarians, who must be knowledgeable about librarianship as well
as about the rather broad field of music. In addition, music librarians are somewhat
unique in that they typically work with collections that include musical scores, sound
recordings in various formats, and writings about music in the form of monographs and
serials. And because academic music libraries often operate as branch institutions, music
librarians typically need considerable knowledge regarding not only collection
development and reference, but also regarding acquisitions, preservation, and sound
equipment.

This study will examine the professional development activities of music
librarians throughout the United States. The primary goal is to gather and analyze
information regarding the types of activities these librarians undertake in order to gain
knowledge, develop their skills, and stay current. The study will also seek to determine
the relative emphasis the participants place upon professional development, which tools
or methods they feel are most effective, and what types of activities or resources they
would like to have available in the future for professional development. One purpose of
this research is to fill a gap in the literature, for, while numerous authors have stressed the
significance of professional development, little has been written regarding either specific
means of professional development or self-directed means of learning. This situation is
especially true for subject specialists in general and for music librarians in particular, who
have generated very little literature regarding the topic of professional development.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LITERATURE

Much has been written in the library and information science literature during the past two decades concerning professional development and its importance for success within the profession. Definitions of professional development are plentiful, as are the exact terms used for this concept. For instance, Webb (1991) uses the term “professional development” to describe a constant process in which the individual seeks to enhance his or her abilities, skills and knowledge, and/or to develop new ones. Bryant (1995) writes that “personal professional development” is a process of growth in the specialized knowledge and skills that contribute to the conduct of our vocation and that relate primarily to the needs of the individual, rather than those of the employing organization. Finally, Broadbent (1987) states that “continuing professional development” includes advanced degree seeking, management and communications training, and all other efforts, whether formal or informal, by which the individual upgrades his or her knowledge and abilities. “Continuing education” is another term that is frequently used to describe similar activities (e.g., Dannelly, 1994; Weingand, 1994), but because it typically implies formal means of learning, such as classes, seminars, and workshops, the terms “professional development” and “continuous professional development” shall be used here to subsume both formal and informal types of learning.
Because of the rapid and constant changes within the information environment, individuals who have written on the topic of professional development, as well as professional organizations, stress its importance. Reasons for its pursuit are largely specific to the individual and to the situation and may be either personal or professional. Personal motivators, for instance, may include ambition, boredom with routine, desire for recognition, enthusiasm to learn, an effort to increase self-confidence, or fear of obsolescence (Bryant, 1995). Professional reasons may include the desire for career advancement, job satisfaction, concern to improve the performance of one’s unit, and the recognition of the implications of change (Bryant; Dannelly, 1994; Varlejs, 1999).

Because of the nature of librarianship as a profession that is governed by a code of ethics, some also believe that professional development is an ethical responsibility (Weingand, 1994). Many agree with this view, as was exemplified in a 1992 hearing on the ALA Code of Professional Ethics, in which a primary theme was the need to recognize an ethical commitment to continuing education (Dannelly, 1994).

Because continuous development is necessary for providing quality service to library users, both individuals and institutions must make a commitment to seeking and providing educational opportunities. In addition to ALA, other organizations promote professional development as well. For example, the ACRL Professional Development Committee (2000) has issued a statement on professional development that is both a declaration and a mandate, urging librarians to assess their personal development needs and seek opportunities to learn, and advising colleges and universities to demonstrate commitment through financial support, administrative leave, and flexible work schedules for librarians.
For professional development activities to be most effective, some recommend that librarians consider creating a personal plan that includes both the areas in which one seeks improvement and the means by which one will attempt to gain knowledge. While most authors do not deal with the practical concern of developing a professional development plan, both Bryant (1995) and Webb (1991) address this important matter. For instance, as a starting point, Webb recommends an exercise aimed at identifying potential areas for development. She feels that identifying the roles and tasks one dislikes may reveal areas for personal development, as people often dislike activities in which they lack confidence; also, identifying tasks one enjoys may indicate a new role or area of emphasis the librarian might pursue in his or her present job. Bryant treats the topic of development planning with considerably more detail. She emphasizes that the self-knowledge that is required is perhaps the most challenging aspect of personal development. Her strategy for planning begins with a “self-audit” involving the recognition of personal values, aspirations, interests, attitudes, style, and abilities. Then, the librarian should evaluate how well the service being provided matches the needs and mission of the organization. This evaluation, along with reviewing one’s current job performance and assessing one’s weaknesses and strengths, enables the librarian to identify potential areas for professional development. Her final step is establishing objectives and devising a plan for proceeding. She suggests that the librarian set goals that are concrete, realistic, personally valued, and measurable, and that one should set long-term as well as short-term goals.

There are many different types of professional development one might undertake. Some are perceived as being more effective than others, some are practiced daily and
others less frequently, and some are undertaken for the good of the organization and others for one’s own personal motivations. Throughout the literature, authors categorize the types of professional development in various ways. Dannelly (1994), for example, speaks of “systematic” and “opportunistic,” or “entrepreneurial,” opportunities in the area of collection development education. Though she does not define her terms, systematic opportunities seem to refer to those that are offered on a regular basis, such as institutes, conferences, and other programs, most of which are offered annually. The entrepreneurial opportunities she discusses are activities that may be used as continuing education situations, even if they are not generally perceived as such. Examples of these activities are focus groups, library committees, professional associations, collegial interactions outside the organization (visits to other libraries, for instance), and electronic communications such as e-mail, listservs, and electronic newsletters. Several authors mention electronic communication as an effective means of attaining information in our technology-driven world. Bell (2000), for instance, identifies strategies for developing a “current awareness program” that meets one’s personal information needs and requires minimal effort. These days, e-mail, listservs, and electronic newsletters are highly valuable and widely utilized tools for librarians, though one must be careful to avoid becoming overwhelmed or spending too much time sifting through useless information.

Another author who provides categories of types of professional development activities is Weingand (1994). In an article on continuing education for reference librarians, Weingand classifies continuing professional education into two broad areas: personal career development, which may also be referred to as continuing education, and in-service training, which is often known as staff development. Though she is successful
in describing the importance of professional development in our profession’s “new paradigm,” she does not provide examples of the types of activities one might undertake; likewise, she does not provide explanations of the above terms, except to say that the distinction lies between a focus on the individual’s needs and a focus on the needs of the organization. Newman, DiBartolo, and Hill (1991) also make use of the distinction between individual and institutional needs. They argue that staff development activities often focus on the broader issues of the library and information field, when the needs of an organization may actually be more centered on daily departmental or library issues. For Newman, individual needs might include specific functions of library departments, while institutional needs would be those that affect the total organization as well as its various components. Clearly, though Weingand and Newman both distinguish between individual and institutional needs, they apply the terms differently. For Weingand, individual needs are those necessary for career advancement or job satisfaction, and institutional needs are those necessary for the improvement of library services, while for Newman individual needs are on the departmental level, and institutional needs are on the global, or organizational, level.

Finally, of the literature reviewed here, Bryant (1995) discusses the most types of professional development activities, placing them into four main categories: work-based opportunities, including actual work experience, in-house training, mentoring, writing and research, and committee work; activities in professional associations; informal learning, such as interpersonal networks, visits to other libraries or information services, and reading; and short courses and exhibitions like those often offered through professional organizations and universities. Even from the few authors discussed here, it
should be evident that the types of activities discussed and the frameworks for thinking about professional development can vary substantially from one researcher to the next.

While most of the literature discussed thus far may be described as qualitative discussions of professional development, a number of researchers have undertaken formal, quantitative studies regarding the activities, needs, and opinions of professional librarians. For example, Balsamo (1997) administered a survey to the reference librarians at the main libraries on the sixteen campuses of the University of North Carolina. The questionnaire collected data regarding the current “continuing professional activities” of the librarians, along with their opinions as to the effectiveness of those activities, their preferences for certain types of activities, and the areas in which they would like to acquire more knowledge in the future. The study effectively demonstrates that workshops and seminars of one day or less are the most highly preferred means of continuing education, that half the respondents feel that their institutions are not meeting their continuing education needs, and that 100 percent of the respondents agree with the statement that their “position will demand further technical training within the next five years.” Unfortunately, though one of the survey questions reveals that the “technical” training of most librarians has been acquired on-the-job or has been self-taught, the survey focuses exclusively on formal means of professional development and thus does not indicate the other means through which these librarians gain vocational knowledge.

In a similar study, Broadbent (1987) explored the continuing professional development activities, the organizational support, and the needs and priorities of employees in special libraries and information centers in Australia. Based on the response to a question regarding one’s preferred mode of learning, she asserts that
“although professional reading, self-directed study, and visits to other library and information agencies are important, participation in seminars, conferences, and workshops is usually seen as the major contribution to individual professional development.” However, while high percentages of the participants had attended a workshop, conference, or seminar in the last two years, there was no survey question regarding the perceived effectiveness of such activities either in isolation or in comparison to more informal means of development. Besides preferred modes of learning, the survey also identified specific areas of present and future information needs. Management skills such as planning and problem-solving, sources of information in particular subject areas, and knowledge in various technology areas ranked among the highest perceived needs for both the present and the future. These results indicate a considerable demand for a wide range of professional development activities among special library and information center employees in Melbourne, Australia.

One researcher who might disagree with the perspective of Broadbent’s study is Varlejs (1999), who undertook a study of the self-directed, work-related learning of more than five hundred ALA members. Varlejs argues that research on professional development in the library field has focused largely on the “continuing education” typified by workshops and short courses, and that the broader question of how professionals deal with day-to-day learning needs is generally not asked. Seventy-seven percent of the study’s respondents reported undertaking self-directed learning projects, and by comparing the number of hours spent on formal and informal learning, Varlejs concludes that ALA members spend substantially more time in self-directed learning than in organized professional development activities. Varlejs’s study is particularly
significant for this research, which hypothesizes that for many professional librarians, such as subject specialists, independent means of professional development are more frequent and more significant for gaining awareness of developments in both librarianship and in one’s field of specialization.

The literature examined above has been very worthwhile for its discussions regarding the importance of professional development and the various reasons for which one might undertake such activities. It has also been highly valuable for its descriptions of the different categories of professional development activities, particularly because these categories varied from author to author. Yet, at present there has been very little research on specific means of professional development or on strategies for self-directed learning. Also, the area of professional development for subject specialists, whose needs differ from those of other librarians, has received very little attention. These are the gaps in the literature that the present study concerning the professional development activities of music librarians will attempt to fill.
METHODOLOGY

Research Population

A review of the literature regarding professional development indicates the critical role such activities play in enabling librarians to provide effective service to their users. Because the field of music librarianship has produced little scholarship concerning professional development, and because of the multiple demands and unique needs of the music librarian specialization, the fundamental goal of this research study is to learn about the professional development activities of music librarians in particular. Thus, the study population consisted of professional music librarians currently employed in colleges and universities throughout the United States. In order to create a study population whose professional responsibilities are fairly similar, only music librarians with reference and/or collection development duties were eligible for inclusion. Participants were chosen by means of systematic random sampling from the 2000 directory of the Music Library Association (MLA). This limits the generalizability of the study to members of this organization, but because it appears that the vast majority of music librarians are indeed members, this will not detract from the significance or validity of the study.

Because the organization includes many individuals who are not academic music librarians (e.g., public librarians, vendors, publishers, students, and musicologists), many
members were not eligible for participation in this study. Those who are primarily music catalogers were also excluded, as their professional development needs would differ from those of music librarians who are involved with reference and collection development.

From the list of more than one thousand members, an initial sample of forty was chosen, with the hope that approximately thirty would agree to participate. Though the relatively small sample size does not permit all viewpoints within the profession to be heard, it is believed that it does facilitate the collection of sufficient qualitative data for making meaningful generalizations and recommendations.

**Instrumentation**

The telephone interview was selected as the method of data collection, with the expectation that this would elicit both a higher response rate and more qualitative data than would a survey. It also provided a more representative sample than would have been possible through face-to-face interviews alone. Further, the semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to ensure that the participants fully understood the questions, to probe interviewees for further information, and to discuss certain matters in detail when necessary and appropriate. A list of possible questions regarding formal and informal professional development activities was developed (see Appendix A) in order to provide a structure for the interviews, though not all participants were asked precisely the same questions. The questions fell into four basic categories: (1) background information, in order to place the participants’ activities within a context, (2) formal professional development activities, (3) informal professional development activities, and (4) general questions dealing with attitudes towards and strategies for professional
development. For the purposes of this study, formal professional development activities are any activities that are organized by an institution or organization, while informal activities are those that are pursued on one’s own, whether the motivation is institutional need or personal desire.

**Procedure**

After drawing the sample, each of the forty selected individuals was sent an e-mail invitation to participate in the study. This letter included general information regarding the study as well as an accompanying document containing further details and contact information (see Appendix B). Nearly all of those who were willing to participate in the study responded within one or two days, which enabled the process to move relatively quickly. After an individual agreed to participate, the researcher then contacted him or her by e-mail to arrange a time for the telephone interview. In addition, because nearly all the participants wished to see the questions in advance (this was offered in the invitation letter), these were e-mailed at this time.

The interviews took place over the course of three weeks throughout February and March 2002. During the interviews the researcher attempted to capture as much of the participants’ responses as possible through note-taking, and these notes were typed, organized, and refined soon after each interview was completed. Each participant was assigned a code that appeared on the interview notes in place of his or her name, and any identifying characteristics such as the institution of employment were removed to guarantee anonymity.
PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Of the forty librarians who were invited to participate in this study, twenty-six were willing to participate; however, one of these had to be omitted because she was a music cataloger, reducing the actual population to twenty-five. Though slightly lower than anticipated, this total was accepted as sufficient due to the balanced nature of the respondents in terms of their rank and type of institution. A few background questions were asked of all the participants to enable the researcher to contextualize the individuals’ responses and to provide a profile of those participating in the study. The responses to these questions indicate that the study participants indeed represent a cross-section of music librarians.

The study population was remarkably balanced in terms of gender. By chance, the initial sample consisted of twenty men and twenty women. Of the twenty-six who agreed to be in the study, there were thirteen males and thirteen females, indicating that neither men nor women were more likely to respond to the invitation to participate. However, because one respondent was omitted from the study, the actual population consisted of thirteen men and twelve women. This balance seems to represent accurately the gender makeup of MLA and is supported by Lesniaski’s profile of the organization membership in 1997, in which his respondents were 54 percent female and 44 percent male (2 percent did not respond to this question) (Lesniaski, 2000).
The participants represent a broad spectrum with regard to the amount of work experience they have had. When asked how many years they have been a professional music librarian, the responses ranged from one to thirty-one years, but the distribution was relatively even. Nine (36%) have been a music librarian for less than ten years, ten (40%) have been a librarian for ten to twenty years, and six (24%) have been a librarian for more than twenty years.

While the experience levels of the study participants vary considerably, the educational levels they have attained are quite consistent. Twenty-two (88%) of the twenty-five participants hold a Master’s degree in music (M.A., M.M., or M.F.A.), and twenty-four (96%) hold a Master’s in library science, while four (16%) hold a doctoral degree in either music or library science. Overall, twenty-two (88%) hold Master’s degrees in both music and library science. This too is consistent with Lesniaški’s findings and reflects the emphasis the field places on graduate study in music (Lesniaški, 2000).

Finally, the background information from the participants also indicates, to some degree, the different types of institutions in which they work. Of the initial sample of forty, thirty (75%) work in institutions that grant graduate degrees in music, while ten (25%) work in undergraduate institutions. For those who participated in the study, the ratio is very similar: eighteen (72%) work in universities that grant graduate music degrees, while seven (28%) work in institutions that grant only undergraduate degrees in music. Of those institutions offering graduate studies in music, five offer degrees at the Master’s level only, and thirteen offer doctoral degrees as well. The institutions also vary in whether or not they offer tenure to librarians: nine (36%) of the librarians in this study
work in institutions that have a tenure system for librarians, while sixteen (64%) work in institutions that do not. The potential implications of this will be explored later in this study.
FORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

When librarians consider professional development, they tend to think first of “formal” activities such as conferences, workshops, and classes. In this study the conversations regarding formal development activities centered around three areas: organizational activities, institutional activities, and the librarians’ satisfaction level and desires for future opportunities.

Organizational Activities

All of the librarians interviewed in this study spoke of the significance of the Music Library Association (MLA) for their professional development, and several indicated that the organization is their primary source of professional development. These librarians regard conference attendance as vital, and all attend both national and local chapter meetings regularly. Participants mentioned many benefits of MLA activities, but over half said that the opportunity for interaction with colleagues is one of the highlights. Since most academic libraries have only one music librarian, these individuals do not have the opportunity to interact at work each day with colleagues who share their concerns and interests. Attending conferences, then, enables them to speak with other music librarians about issues within the field and to learn about what others are doing in their institutions. Further, as each individual has his own professional
interests and research pursuits, the association provides an effective outlet for sharing one’s personal experience and expertise with others in order to benefit those who are less knowledgeable about a given topic. As will be discussed later, the contacts one establishes at conferences can be helpful throughout the year, for these librarians do not wait for annual meetings to discuss their concerns with colleagues.

In addition to interacting with colleagues, another primary benefit of being active within the Music Library Association is the knowledge and awareness one gains through attending annual meetings and talking to other music librarians. Several study participants stated that MLA helps them to keep up with the field, gain exposure to new things, and learn about what is being done in other libraries.

The third advantage of participating in the organization is having the opportunity to serve on committees. Several indicated that committee work is useful to them because it requires them to learn a great deal about the topic of the committee(s) on which they serve. Also, working on committees often leads to further opportunities within the organization, such as collaborative research, service on other committees, chairmanship, and election to office.

Several additional benefits of MLA involvement were mentioned by one or more librarians; for instance, activity within MLA enables one to contribute to the profession, allows one to diversify his knowledge and interests, and forces one to think beyond his own institution. Also, some mentioned that attending the conferences is stimulating, reinforcing, and energizing, and that the association keeps the profession alive and vital. Though one librarian commented that he feels that the sessions and selection of papers presented at the annual meetings are too heavily driven by committees, and a few
mentioned that the conference sessions are not always useful, overall, the study participants expressed high satisfaction with the organization.

Along with being a member of MLA, seven participants in this study belong to MOUG (Music OCLC Users Group), four belong to ALA (American Library Association), three belong to IAML (International Association of Music Libraries), and two belong to ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries); in addition, six said that they attend national and/or chapter AMS (American Musicological Society) meetings occasionally, though not all six are members of that organization. With the exception of MOUG, which has great practical value to its members, none of the participants regularly attend meetings of these other organizations or participate actively within them. Rather, it is evident that the Music Library Association, because it is so active and so relevant to the specialized needs of music librarians, fulfills a key role in the professional development of its members.

Institutional Activities

The availability of and participation in professional development activities within one’s institution of employment are the areas of this study in which the librarians exhibited the greatest variation. Some participants described a wide range of opportunities available through their institution, while others said there is little provided to them by their college or university. In addition, some stated that they take advantage of these activities on a regular basis, while a few said that they lack either the time or interest for the activities that are available to them.
Nearly half of the participants reported taking part in meetings or workshops organized by the human resources department of their library. The topics covered in these sessions vary, but subjects such as leadership skills, negotiation skills, hiring and retention, project management, and staff evaluation were mentioned. Because opinions regarding these management-oriented activities varied widely according to the quality and perceived usefulness of the particular session, it is difficult to generalize about their overall value.

One-third of the study participants said they take advantage of various technology classes through their institutions. These sessions generally provide demonstrations of periodical databases or introductory-level training in software such as Excel or Dreamweaver. Most expressed high satisfaction with these classes and said that they are an easier way to gain familiarity with new resources or programs than trying to learn them on one’s own. A few participants commented, however, that while these opportunities provide basic knowledge, they never move to a more advanced level.

Participants mentioned many other types of institutional professional development activities, not all of which can be described here. In general, though, the participants seemed to value most those activities in which librarians from within the institution or from the surrounding area meet to discuss relevant issues. For instance, two participants mentioned that the music librarians from their geographical area meet together occasionally, and a few others said that they have regional workshops in which area librarians (not music librarians exclusively) meet to learn about a particular topic or to discuss issues relevant to the field. Still others spoke of activities that take place within their libraries. One individual, for instance, participates in a reference work group in
which reference librarians throughout the library system meet for discussions and workshops, and two others mentioned regular sessions in which the librarians within the institution give presentations to their colleagues.

As stated already, the quantity of professional development activities offered through the institution varies widely from place to place, as does the degree of participation in these activities of those included in this study. Interestingly, there seems to be little correlation between the size of the institution and the quantity or variety of available opportunities, for some of the librarians working in colleges and smaller universities have strong support from their institutions, while some of those at large universities reported that the institutional support is not strong and/or there are few educational opportunities available. In addition, for these librarians, there was only a weak correlation between the participant’s level of experience and his or her level of interest in educational activities within the institution. While the few who indicated that they are not interested in institutional educational opportunities are librarians who have fifteen or more years of experience, many other of the experienced librarians in this study expressed interest in such activities.

Despite the fact that these librarians have varying levels of institutional support and varying levels of interest in institutional activities, all but a few participants expressed satisfaction with the opportunities that are available to them. For some librarians this satisfaction means that they feel their institution is providing an adequate number of opportunities, while for others it means that, regardless of how much the institution provides, it is sufficient because they are generally uninterested in participating in these activities. Thus, while most of the librarians interviewed participate
in and often benefit from their institutional activities, a few would like their institution to provide more support and opportunities, and a few others feel that there is little value in these types of activities. Finally, when asked whether their institution could be providing more in terms of professional development, the most frequent response was that they could always use greater financial support. Though all receive some funding from the institution for travel to professional conferences, several librarians commented that the amount they receive does not go very far, and that they would attend more conferences if given the opportunity.

Desires for Further Resources and Opportunities

While few of the participants in this study expressed dissatisfaction with the amount or type of professional development opportunities available to them, three-quarters of the librarians provided suggestions of topics they would like to see addressed further in workshop or conference settings. One of the most frequently cited topics was copyright, and though those who mentioned it acknowledged that MLA does address this issue regularly, they feel it could still bear more attention. The complex issue of copyright is one that music librarians deal with frequently, but some assert that there are still many misconceptions regarding the topic and that it needs to be made more basic. In addition, the emphasis lately has been placed on the new legal issues that have arisen due to technologies such as streaming audio, and though these are important to discuss, the “old” copyright questions are still relevant and deserve attention. The study participants did not indicate how they would like copyright to be addressed in the future, but one librarian did remark that an updated website is needed, as the MLA copyright website has
not been revised in a few years. Another topic that several librarianes expressed interest in is the digitization of audio resources, and multiple individuals indicated that they would like a hands-on approach to the subject. Because this is an emerging technology that many libraries are now starting to implement, music librarians are eager for more and more knowledge regarding the legal and technological aspects of digitization.

Aside from copyright and digitization, there were few topics in which more than one participant expressed interest. For instance, these librarians would like to see a wide range of computer-related topics addressed, including emerging audiovisual technologies, database design, systems knowledge, web page creation, new electronic resources, the Internet, and music notation software such as Sibelius. A few participants stated that they would like more information that is geared toward small institutions, particularly dealing with the topics of stretching the library budget and weeding and collection development in smaller libraries. Two librarians expressed interest in learning more about effective user instruction, and one said he would like to see the topic of assessment addressed, because he feels that his library needs to do more in this area. One participant suggested the development of a resource that enables music librarians to keep up with contemporary music, since, at present, there are simply too many places one must look in order to keep up with this vast yet relatively obscure musical realm. Finally, preservation, metadata, EAD, and issues for new professionals are other subjects that were mentioned. Because each librarian is interested in educational activities that address his own professional interests and particular needs within his own library, a wide variety of topics were suggested for future coverage. One can be relatively certain, however, that even those
topics that were mentioned by only one participant would be of interest to a broader audience of music librarians.

When asked whether they would be interested in any type of coursework related to the field of music librarianship, opinions were divided. More than half of the study participants indicated that they would not be interested in taking courses, some stating either that they feel they have had enough coursework or feel they can gain the knowledge they need through independent means. Online courses, in particular, were rejected by many as unappealing, both because such work is too easy to de-prioritize and because they believe that interactive learning is much more effective.

It is clear from these interviews that most music librarians consider their involvement with MLA as their primary formal mode of professional development, and that the opportunity to interact with colleagues and to gain relevant new knowledge is what they value most about the organization. While nearly all of the participants also take advantage of professional development activities within their institutions, the satisfaction level for these activities is somewhat lower than for organizational activities because they are more likely to be unrelated to one’s work, poorly done, or too basic. It is also evident that most of these librarians feel that sufficient opportunities for professional development are available either through their institution or through an organization such as the Music Library Association, and that most of their information needs can be fulfilled either through independent pursuit or by taking advantage of educational opportunities as they arise.
INFORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Reading

All but a few of the participants in this study mentioned reading as one of their primary informal means of professional development. While this study indicates that the reading habits of music librarians vary widely, a considerable majority agree that the MLA listserv (MLA-L) is a key tool for them. This listserv, established by Ralph Papakhian in 1989, has just over eleven hundred members at present and is a relatively active list, serving as a forum for communication regarding reference questions, cataloging, MLA activities, relevant news items, and other issues of concern to music librarians. Study participants noted that it is a valuable means for developing contacts with others in the field and for communicating with colleagues on a regular basis. With the convenience of MLA-L, librarians can discuss such concerns as circulation policies, shelving, and cataloging procedures in an ongoing dialogue rather than waiting until a conference occurs or relying exclusively on phone calls to one’s friends at other institutions. This communication is helpful to librarians when making policy decisions within their libraries and in keeping up with current events and new issues in the field.

In addition to MLA-L, several librarians said that they also belong to DAL-L, a listserv for those interested in the digitization of audio resources. Like MLA-L, DAL-L is a valuable source for the most current information as well as immediate help when it is
needed. A number of participants stated that listservs constitute a significant portion of their reading activity, and a few even asserted that listservs have taken the place of journals, because time pressures prevent them from keeping up with both. Since librarians tend to be extremely busy and thus must be efficient in their use of time, it is little surprise that many prefer devoting more time to reading the current and practical information available on the listservs than to reading journals.

Of the twenty-five participants in the study, sixteen mentioned reading journals as one of their informal professional development activities. *Notes*, the journal of the Music Library Association, and *Gramophone* are two of the most widely read journals among these librarians, though many also stated that they browse scholarly music journals such as the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* and *American Music* as they arrive, as this enables them to stay attuned to trends in scholarship. Both of these practices suggest that the bulk of the journal use by this population is closely connected to collection development. In terms of staying aware of library-wide issues, five participants indicated that they devote some attention to library science journals, but six others stated that they do very little reading in this area, even though, in some cases, library science journals are routed to them.

While listservs and journals constitute the majority of the participants’ reading, a few individuals indicated that they also spend time looking at websites on a regular basis. As one librarian pointed out, however, the trick is keeping up and finding the right sites—ones that are authoritative, not too commercial, and worth one’s time. Finally, books, advertisements from vendors, and newspapers are other materials mentioned by some as being important for staying informed about the field.
Perhaps what is most striking about the participants’ remarks regarding their reading practices is the proportion of attention that is devoted to targeted reading. The majority of the participants appear to devote most of their reading time to browsing incoming materials and keeping up with news and issues through selected listservs, websites, and print publications. Only a few mentioned that they engage in topical reading that is based on a particular information need. For instance, one participant said that because she is currently becoming involved with library development, she is reading books on that topic, while another mentioned that she reads books in non-music areas for which she has selection responsibilities. A third said that she maps out a reading program when she is about to embark on a new project. It is not clear whether others pursue this type of reading as well, but simply did not mention it, or if most do not pursue it due either to a lack of time or the absence of need.

Research

Another significant informal professional development activity for some librarians is research, although, as this study suggests, the research behavior of librarians varies considerably from person to person. Of the librarians participating in this study, sixteen (64%) indicated that they are involved with research, while nine (36%) are not. For the purposes of this study, “research” implies investigating and writing upon a particular topic—presumably with the goal of publication—and not simply the exploration of an area of interest or information need. Among those who do conduct research, the divide is about even between those who focus on musicology and those who focus on music librarianship, while a few stated that they do research in both areas.
Of the librarians involved in this study, six indicated that they have tenure, three are currently working towards tenure, and sixteen work in institutions that do not offer librarians tenure. The table below shows the number of participants who do and do not have tenure, and whether they conduct research. What is most striking is that the numbers of non-tenured librarians who do and do not conduct research are so close; because librarians tend to have many responsibilities, one might expect that those who are not required to do research will not be motivated to pursue it. This study, however, indicates that even without the external motivation of tenure, 50 percent of librarians have chosen to be involved in research anyway. One can speculate as to why this figure is so high; perhaps it is because, as subject specialists, music librarians feel particularly committed to their discipline and are thus compelled to contribute to it. It is also encouraging that two-thirds of those librarians who already have tenure continue to pursue research. Without doubt, the fact that three of those four individuals are able to take sabbaticals is a contributing factor, as this not only provides them with additional time for research, but also places an expectation on them to produce publishable work.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES OF LIBRARIANS WITH AND WITHOUT TENURE

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Interviews with the participants have made it clear that, in addition to varying levels of research activity, there are also diverging views towards research among music librarians. For instance, some of those working in non-tenured institutions stated that they do not pursue research because it is not required of them. One of the tenured librarians who no longer does research explained that she formerly did research in order to get tenure, but now prefers to spend that time with other activities. Almost all of the librarians who are not involved with research are active in MLA, and many mentioned that they occasionally write reviews for Notes and other publications, indicating that they are highly motivated, but have chosen not to engage in research.

Of those working in non-tenured institutions who do pursue research, most indicated that they wish they had more time for it, but that their institution does not allow release time. One librarian compensates for this by choosing projects that are “applicable to daily life,” in order to justify devoting work hours to research, while two others indicated that they conduct research on their own time. Also, while some stated that they always have a research project in progress, other described their research as sporadic or intermittent.

Thus, whether tenure is a factor or not, many music librarians choose to pursue research and then work out for themselves how they will manage this activity along with their other responsibilities. However, because it is easy to devote all of one’s time to job-related duties, and because music librarians are also able to serve their profession through MLA, it is no surprise that, given the choice, many others prefer not to be involved with research.
Other informal activities

Participants mentioned several other types of activities when speaking about their informal professional development. For instance, half of the participants said that communicating with colleagues is an important activity for them. Some indicated that they speak with other librarians at their institution, while most said they regularly contact colleagues in other locations. Because many colleges and universities have only one music librarian on the staff, these librarians sometimes must call or e-mail music librarians at other institutions in order to discuss issues and get advice from someone who has had similar experiences in another library. One veteran music librarian in this study asserted that for him, talking to colleagues is the best method of professional development when he is confronting something new, because he able to consult one-on-one with someone whom he knows is knowledgeable about the topic at hand.

Another activity which several participants mentioned as contributing to their professional development is teaching. Two-thirds of the librarians interviewed stated that they teach bibliographic instruction sessions, and nearly one-third teach music history or music bibliography courses. Interestingly, many of those who do teach did not name this as a professional development activity, while others clearly consider it an opportunity for growth. For instance, one participant said that he considers teaching to be beneficial for him because it enables him to view the library from the faculty perspective. Another asserted that giving presentations on areas or resources that are unfamiliar to him is particularly useful, because it forces him to know the material well. Though some may not think of their teaching activities as “professional development,” it is nevertheless
likely that they are sharpening their skills and gaining new knowledge when preparing to teach.

Studying foreign languages, talking with faculty members, and writing book reviews are other activities that were each mentioned by more than one librarian. Only one person mentioned the significance of mentorship in her professional development; unfortunately, because very few institutions employ more than one music librarian, it is unusual for such relationships to be established. Finally, one librarian spoke about keeping up with music by attending performances and listening to recordings. Though other participants in this study surely do this as well, it is surprising that more did not mention it as an informal professional development activity. It would be interesting to know whether this is because they listen to music for enjoyment and thus do not consider it professional development, or because they do not spend enough time with it to justify it as professional development.
GENERAL APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The final set of questions posed to the participants in this study involved the individuals’ attitudes and approaches towards professional development. The goal of these questions was to gauge the significance these librarians place on professional development and to learn about their motivations and strategies for pursuing it.

The Role and Motivations for Professional Development

When asked about the role of professional development in their career, most of the librarians spoke of it as being a “vital” or “essential” part of their work. Some commented that it is key to being a librarian, or that it is simply “part and parcel” of the profession. Only a few of those interviewed regard professional development less enthusiastically—one referred to it as “fairly important,” and another as “less important” now that he has tenure. One librarian who is currently working towards tenure said that professional development is “necessary,” since he will not get tenure without it, but that it is currently detracting from his time and ability to run the library. This was a latent theme throughout the interviews, as several participants noted that one of the primary drawbacks of formal activities in particular is that they take the librarian away from his daily responsibilities.
Participants named many different motivations for pursuing professional development, and all mentioned multiple reasons for its significance in their own lives. Some responded that professional development is simply necessary for being able to do their job, and several spoke of its importance for gaining new knowledge and keeping up with changes in the profession. Another common motive for professional development is that it enables the librarian to hone his skills and to fill deficiencies, both of which lead to better service for library users.

Along with the desire to provide effective service and to be a better librarian, many also stated that they pursue professional development for the sake of personal growth and intellectual curiosity. A few such responses were, “I enjoy it,” “it’s stimulating,” “it keeps me interested in my job,” and “I like the challenge of it.” Similarly, several librarians mentioned that professional development enables them to stay fresh and energized and to renew themselves.

Because professional development activities are often associated with tenure, a few participants cited tenure as a primary motivation for pursuing such activities. Similar responses were that professional development helps one to work towards long-range goals, raises one’s profile, and enables one to advance professionally.

Other motivations were mentioned by a few librarians. For instance, some made the point that their activities enable them to give back to the music library profession, which is gratifying because MLA provides so much to its members. Also, some librarians mentioned that their MLA activities, in particular, give them a broader perspective in their work and prevent them from becoming too narrowly focused on their own institution. In a similar vein, a handful of participants mentioned that their
professional development activities enable them to interact with other librarians, which is especially valuable for those who are the sole music librarian in their institution. These findings indicate that music librarians pursue professional development activities for a variety of practical, professional, and personal reasons, and that they consider such activities essential to their job performance.

Goals and Strategies

When asked about their strategies for pursuing professional development, about half of the librarians interviewed indicated that they develop goals periodically. Several of these said that they establish annual goals, a few said that their primary goals relate to their research, and others stated that they often work with a specific goal in mind. The other half said that they do not typically develop goals for themselves, and among those, three professed that they used to set goals earlier in their careers, but have now stopped. The key strategy for most, including those who do set goals, is to take advantage of useful opportunities when they arise and to do things according to need. For instance, many emphasized that their activities tend to be very practical and are based on either an existing need in their library or a personal information need that is related to their work.

Nearly all of the participants acknowledged that finding time for all of one’s activities and responsibilities is challenging. While a few stated that, in general, they feel they have enough time for their professional development activities, nearly half said that they can make time for what is necessary, but can never find time for all they would like to do. A few, unsurprisingly, feel more pressed—for instance, one librarian said that he pursues his activities “frantically” and scrambles to meet his obligations, while another
said that “there is never enough time for anything.” While varying personalities and workloads lead to different perspectives regarding time, the responses of these participants indicate that librarianship is, at best, a juggling act.

These findings suggest that music librarians have rather positive and healthy attitudes towards professional development. Not only do they view new knowledge and awareness of developments in the field as vitally important for providing effective service to their users, but they also enjoy pursuing such activities.
CONCLUSIONS

This study of the professional development activities of a cross-section of music librarians provides a clear portrait of the habits and preferences of this population of specialist librarians. The findings indicate that most of the librarians interviewed feel that their most significant means of professional development is their involvement with the Music Library Association. Within this organization, music librarians are able to communicate with their colleagues about relevant issues, learn what others are doing in their libraries, and keep up with developments in the field. It is also evident that, for some, professional development opportunities provided through one’s institution are valuable, although the availability of relevant and truly worthwhile activities varies widely.

Though some think primarily of formal activities when considering professional development, nearly all of those interviewed also devote considerable attention to informal activities and integrate them into their daily schedules. These findings suggest that most of the participants regularly read listservs and browse journals and websites, and that the MLA listserv, in particular, is a very well-liked and useful resource for this population. These librarians also value research highly, and this study indicates that two-thirds of those interviewed pursue some type of research, whether they work in an institution that offers tenure or not.
Finally, it has been encouraging throughout this study to see the positive and enthusiastic attitude towards professional development that these music librarians hold. Whether pursuing such activities in order to provide better service to their users, to progress in their careers, or to contribute to the field, nearly all of the participants believe that professional development is a vital part of their job and enjoy engaging in it.
APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background
1. How many years have you been employed as a music librarian?
2. Are you on a tenure system?
3. What degrees have you attained?
4. What are your primary responsibilities in your current position?
5. What music degrees does your library support?

Formal professional development activities
1. What types of formal professional development activities do you engage in, either within or outside of your institution?
   a. What have you gained from such opportunities?
   b. What are the benefits and drawbacks of such activities?
   c. Which do you find most valuable?
2. In your experience, does your institution provide employees with sufficient support and development opportunities?
3. What professional associations do you belong to?
   a. Do they provide development opportunities not covered above?
4. Please estimate how many formal professional development activities you participate in per year.
5. What other topics would you like to see approached in professional development activities in the future?
6. Would you be interested in further advanced “coursework” (including online opportunities) related to your field?
Informal professional development activities

1. What types of informal professional development activities do you engage in?
   a. Which activity do you spend the most time with?
   b. Are your activities music-specific?

2. What do you find most effective for learning about:
   a. new resources?
   b. technological issues?
   c. library issues?

3. Please estimate how many hours per month you spend with informal development activities.

4. Can you think of any types of resources you would like to see developed that would aid you in your personal professional development?

5. Are you involved with research?
   a. Would you like to be doing more research?

6. Do you teach?

General

1. In relation to your current position, how would you describe the role of professional development?

2. What is your primary motivation for pursuing professional development?

3. Do you ever establish goals or a plan for your personal professional development?

4. Do you find sufficient time in your work week for development activities?
APPENDIX B

INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting as the basis of my Master’s paper for the M.S.L.S. degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My research concerns the professional development activities of music librarians throughout the United States, and as a music librarian yourself, your insights would be a valuable contribution to my study. I have selected a random sample of librarians from the membership list of the Music Library Association with the hope of gathering information from 30 music librarians at various levels and in a variety of academic settings. If you are willing to participate, I would like to interview you by telephone regarding your professional development activities. For further details about this study, please read the attached document.

If you would be interested in participating in my study, please reply to this message, and I will contact you to schedule a time for the interview. I plan to conduct my interviews throughout February and March, and I expect the interviews to take approximately 30 minutes. Naturally, your name and any identifying characteristics will be held in the strictest confidence.

I would sincerely appreciate your participation and thank you for your time,

Kristen McConnell

INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY

As a participant in this research study, you will be asked about your professional development activities. The primary goal of this research is to gather information regarding the types of activities music librarians undertake in order to gain knowledge, to develop their skills, and to stay current. The study will also seek to determine the relative emphasis the participants place upon professional development, which activities they feel are most effective, and what types of activities or resources they would like to have available for the purpose of personal development.
Please schedule 30 minutes for our telephone interview. While details from our interview may be included in my final research paper, your name and any identifying characteristics will be held in the strictest confidence. Each participant will be assigned a code which will appear in place of one’s name on my interview notes, and any documents and computer files bearing the names of participants will be destroyed once my interviews have been completed.

If you are willing to participate, I will request your consent on the telephone before we begin our interview. Your participation is entirely voluntary, you may refuse to answer any interview questions, and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time. The Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board (AA-IRB) of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please feel free to contact me by e-mail at mcconnel@email.unc.edu or by phone at (919) 960-7095, or my advisor Professor Helen Tibbo, at tibbo@email.unc.edu or (919) 962-8063. You may also contact the chair of the AA-IRB, Barbara Davis Goldman, Ph.D., at CB# 4100, 201 Bynum Hall, UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100, or (919) 962-7761 if you have any questions about your rights as a participant.

Sincerely,

Kristen McConnell
REFERENCES


