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Perusing the Stacks: Cataloging Music

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Abstract

This week and last I have been learning about some of the basics of cataloging. While the cataloging of books is often fairly straight forward, such is not case with music. There are some extra, important bits of information that make a big difference in cataloging and finding musical works. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Fortenbaugh Internship, Music Intern

Disciplines

Cataloging and Metadata | Library and Information Science

Comments

The Interns at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library captured their internship experiences since the spring of 2011. Over time the blog has featured Fortenbaugh, Smith, and Holley interns. They shared updates on semester long projects, responded to blogging prompts, and documented their individual intern experience.

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Perusing the Stacks: Cataloging Music

March 1, 2016

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This week and last I have been learning about some of the basics of cataloging. While the cataloging of books is often fairly straight forward, such is not case with music. There are some extra, important bits of information that make a big difference in cataloging and finding musical works.

When it comes to finding a book, most people can stop at the title and author (maybe even just the title!) and find what they are looking for. With music, however, a piece of music can have different transcriptions, arrangers, publishers, or score size, all of which have varying effects on the music. In practicing cataloging I came across a piece called *Air*. In looking further I noticed that not only was a composer listed, but a transcriber as well. It turns out the piece I was assigned to catalog for cello and piano was not the original version and it was actually written for violin and piano a year earlier. In this case in particular, it would be important for a musician to know what instrumentation the piece is for and whether or not other editions are available. Another way in which music cataloging involves that extra step is when it comes to different publishers. If one were to pick up two different copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by two different publishers, chances are the story itself would be the same word for word. With different music publishers, on the other hand, there could be differences in accidentals (whether a note is sharp or flat), articulations, phrasing, dynamics, cadenzas (little show off-y, soloistic sections), and even rhythm and pitch. It is not uncommon for publishers to add their own artistic input to a piece of music or to interpret it a different way. It is not likely you will have a book publisher decide to change the end of *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

While music and all its extra ins and outs makes cataloging a bit more in-depth, as a musician who has been sent by my private teachers to "peruse the stacks" it feels I am doing a service for all those other musicians out there looking to make music.

<http://blogging.musselmanlibrary.org/2016/03/>