THE THINGS WE KEEP: CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPRAISAL OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN MUSIC LIBRARIES

By Adriana P. Cuervo

Over the past few decades we have seen an increase in collecting archival sources among music libraries, both in the public sphere and within academic institutions.[1] Music is being created and utilized in many different contexts, and to effectively document such rapid change remains a challenge. From parchment and quill to the born-digital, we are chasing after evidence to document the activities and spaces where music happens so that future generations might capture a glimpse of how music making took place in our time.

Many music librarians find themselves in the business of running a music archives operation whether they had planned it or not; the notion of appraising a group of documents for their long-term care can be daunting to undertake, and complex to execute. In the following pages I will discuss archival appraisal as it applies to the evidence of making music. The principles behind these decisions are crucial to setting up a robust archival management program, and can contribute to the healthy growth of the institution and its collections. The goal here is to help formulate the basis for archival practice, and actively expand the understanding of musical heritage preserved in archives throughout the world.

While libraries and archives share similar missions of providing access to and the preservation of our cultural heritage, archives and archivists are committed to maintaining the collections deposited for their care in perpetuity. Archival collections usually comprise one-of-a-kind unpublished material created or assembled by an individual or institution in the course of their day-to-day business. Appraisal and acquisition decisions require consideration of continual care, access, preservation, and management of the collection or record group over time. In the following pages the word "collection" will be used in the *archival* sense, meaning the body of materials of an organization, family, or individual that has been created or accumulated as the result of an organic process reflecting

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1. Lisa Hooper, "Moving to Preserve the Past: Current State of Archival Music Collections and Future Possibilities," *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 14, nos. 1–2 (May 2011): 14.

the functions of said creator. By contrast, "collection" in *library* practice refers to a group of materials that are of similar subject matter.

When thinking about collection development, archivists generally consider augmenting the repository's holdings, not growing individual collections. An archival collection does not grow, nor can it be augmented by new acquisitions unless the new material comes from the same creator, thereby maintaining the collection's provenance. Sometimes prospective acquisitions seem like a perfect fit for the library, but may present a series of issues that would seriously compromise the archive's ability to preserve and provide access in keeping with contractual terms. Archival appraisal implies that the holding library will meticulously evaluate the content of the materials in the collection, recognizing the era or style they represent or document, and the unique position the library is in to efficiently manage the process toward preparing materials for lasting care.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Appraisal, in the archival sense of the word, is defined as "the process of determining whether records and other materials have permanent (archival) value."[2] Moreover, "[t]he basis of appraisal decisions may include a number of factors, including the records' provenance and content, their authenticity and reliability, their order and completeness, their condition and costs to preserve them, and their intrinsic value. Appraisal often takes place within a larger institutional collecting policy and mission statement."·The first step toward establishing an archival collecting program in a music library is to define a mission and scope of the archival operations. Often there are unexpected offers of material that may fall outside the boundaries of said mission. It is important to recognize and address this head-on: opportunity collecting can be a good strategy for expanding the scope of the archives, but good appraisal should precede any decision, no matter how unique or interesting the materials. In essence, archival appraisal requires the archivist or librarian to discern the enduring value of a collection, consider its content, societal segment it represents, and decide how these considerations fit within an archival program. When we want to identify enduring value in a prospective collection, we look for the "continuing usefulness or significance of records, based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information they contain, justifying their ongoing preserva-

2. Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, Archival Fundamentals Series, II (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), s.v. "appraisal"; available online at http://www2.archivists.org/glossary (accessed 27 August 2015).

tion."[3] Assessing the permanent or enduring value of the records is the most important task the archivist must perform in any kind of repository. The decision whether to acquire a collection or a record series, for example, trickles down from that first assessment. The notion of value is framed within the larger institutional mission statement; ideally, it should create boundaries flexible enough to allow for expanding the collecting scope as documentary practices change over time.

The literature on music archives has not addressed archival appraisal in a definitive or authoritative manner. Costa Rican archivist Esteban Cabezas Bolaños summarized the general state of the archival literature in 2005 as having "no theoretical or methodological underpinning within modern archival science."[4] British archivist Judith Brimmer echoed this sentiment, also in 2005: "music manuscripts have been sidelined in professional literature yet they make up a significant part of the national resource landscape for music, and deserve greater coverage and recognition among the information professions and in music education."[5] The present article serves as another contribution, one that can clarify reasoning behind the process of appraisal.

The Music Library Association recently published *Keeping Time: An Introduction to Archival Best Practices for Music Librarians*,[6] outlining important principles of archival management for the music librarian-turned archivist, such as arrangement, description, and preservation of archival materials, which happen in a parallel yet different model than in a library. The book provides good examples of workflows, and outlines important considerations for those who are folding an archives operation into an established music-library paradigm. The authors frame the appraisal process by assigning "historical and research value to a collection and determining whether the collection should be acquired."[7] This approach takes the reader through an introductory process of acquisition and appraisal.

Archival literature has also recently addressed issues of collecting personal papers. In archival practice it is important to make the distinction between personal *papers*, as opposed to the *records* of organizations, as they represent different entities. Records are generated as part of an organization's routine processes and transactions, while papers, being

3. Ibid., s.v. "continuing value."

4. Esteban Cabezas Bolaños, "La organización de archivos musicales: Marco conceptual," *Información, Cultura y Sociedad* 13 (July/December 2005): 84. The original quote is in Spanish.

5. Judith Brimmer, "Providing a National Resource: The Management of Music Manuscripts in the UK," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 26, no. 2 (October 2005): 215.

6. Lisa Hooper and Donald C. Force, *Keeping Time: An Introduction to Archival Best Practices for Music Librarians*, Music Library Association Basic Manual Series, 8 (Middleton, WI: Music Library Association and A-R Editions, 2014).

7. Ibid., 7

created by an individual, are "created on a more or less ad hoc basis."[8] Thus the records generated as part of an orchestra's business operations will differ significantly from, say, a composer's personal papers, both in scope and structure.

The role of personal papers has been discussed in a number of articles that have countered the "corporate myopia"[9] of archival literature, which describes how, until the late 1990s, archival literature focused only on the issues pertaining to institutional records, with a few cases analyzing the unique nature of collecting, preserving, and providing access to personal papers, as it has been the case with music archives literature described above. Riva Pollard compiled a critical literature review on the appraisal of personal papers, in which she describes the value of personal papers as the relationship between society and the materials' creators, as well as the functions and motivation behind their record-generating activities.[10] Aligning this documentation process with what society values as important or fashionable helps contextualize an individual's personal papers, but letting this perception dominate the archivist's decision-making process can lead an institution's collections to reflect what is "popular," not always reflecting the papers' enduring value. Archival materials should be a microcosm of the larger subject area, representing all points of view in the historical record.

Archival documentation strategy—a means to identify voids of information represented in the archival record of a group or an individual—has been identified as another suitable approach to appraisal.[11] This is a valid and useful approach to take, and is not far removed from traditional library-centered collection-development practices in which acquisitions are made after a careful assessment of current holdings and advances in the respective fields of study. It constitutes another way to keep up with the abundance of recorded information. In archives where composers' papers are more likely to be collected, the use of documentation strategies as a proactive acquisition and appraisal tool enables the archivist to keep abreast of the developments in the field, as well as

8. Pearce-Moses, *Glossary*, s.v. "record."

9. Adrian Cunningham first introduced this term in his publication "Waiting for the Ghost Train: Strategies for Managing Electronic Personal Records Before it is Too Late," *Archival Issues: Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference* 24, no. 1 (1999): 55–64, which is a revision of an earlier article published in Australia as "The Archival Management of Personal Records in Electronic Form: Some Suggestions," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22 (May 1994): 94–105.

10. Riva A. Pollard, "The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review," *Archivaria: Journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists* 52 (Fall 2001): 136–50.

11. For one of the first published reports on the application and use of documentation strategies, see Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 12–47. More recently, Larry Hackman published a review of his ideas on documentation strategies: "The Origins of Documentation Strategies in Context: Recollections and Reflections," *American Archivist* 72, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 436–59.

major events such as awards and festivals, that can yield future acquisitions. Ellen Garrison illustrates the changing role of the archivist from custodial to active collector: "many [archivists at] special subject repositories like the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University have been practitioners, although not philosophers, of documentation strategy since their inception."[12] She argues that archivists at special-subject repositories, such as music libraries, find their collections' strength within their subject area's depth of coverage, and that documentation strategy was used for decades before its "rediscovery" in the general archives practice.

Collecting musicians' personal papers, in the broadest sense of the term, encompasses more than the music itself, in either printed or manuscript form. Like architectural records or literary manuscripts, the materials associated with musicians' papers document a complex work process, and generate a great variety of documents in fragile and fugitive media such as magnetic tapes, DATs, and other digital formats, as well as the more "traditional" categories such as correspondence, business records, photographs, and so on. Ephemera—including concert programs, reviews, and newspaper clippings—are also a coveted source of information. Because paper-based scores capture only a portion of the event, the preservation of programs and clippings can help future users understand and place the work in a broader societal context. Music collections contain more than notes on staff paper, and the responsibility for creating or growing an archival program in a music library should conscientiously reflect the diversity of the historical record.

APPRAISAL IN THE CONTEXT OF MUSIC ARCHIVES

Archivists are trained to evaluate prospective acquisitions' enduring value. This must not be confused with the notion of *research* value, as history has clearly demonstrated that we cannot predict new avenues of inquiry. Most importantly, everything that surrounds us has some research value, which doesn't mean that archives should collect, preserve, and provide access to everything under the sun. Thus having a defined collecting scope and mission statement for the special collections and archives operations of the library will help ground the appraisal process, and should steer the decision-making process in the right direction.[13]

12. Ellen Garrison, "The Very Major General: Documentation Strategy and the Center for Popular Music," *Provenance* (Society of Georgia Archivists) 7, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 23.

13. See Fig. 1, sample Collection Evaluation Form, as a useful tool to document the appraisal process. This information should be kept as part of the archival collections' administrative files alongside the signed deed of gift and any correspondence or exchange with the donors. Being able to track the acquisition process is of utmost importance to avoid misunderstandings with heirs or other individuals who may subsequently lay claim to the materials.

I. Donor contact information:

II. Content of Collection (e.g., manuscripts, sound recordings, photos, etc.):

Describe the materials as specifically as possible indicating dates, quantities, and sizes.

III. Size of Collection (Described in specific terms: e.g., 20–25 CDs, 5 cubic feet, 650 MB, etc.):

IV: Enduring value of the materials and uniqueness of specific items:

V. Donor restrictions (i.e., materials may not be duplicated, portions restricted due to privacy concerns, etc.):

VI. Estimated completion time for processing the collection:

VII. Collection reviewed by:

VIII. Recommendation and justification:

__Accept/Justification

__Conditional acceptance (i.e., portions of collections, amend restrictions, etc.)

__Reject/Justification:

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Fig. 1. Collection Evaluation Form

When appraising a potential acquisition, archives rely on three interpretations of value: evidential, informational, and intrinsic values. These are weighed in relation to the repository's existing holdings, its collection development policy and mission statement, and the extent to which the collection documents a particular subject area. The items are evaluated as a whole, meaning that the group of items will have to be considered as a unit and administered as such. It is at this stage that many may be tempted to add the donation to the library's collection. Aside from the enduring value of the materials themselves, there is important contextual information and evidence contained within the grouped unit. Therefore it is important to keep items with the same provenance together.

Evidential value, the first facet, is focused on the events or transactions that the document or artifact represents. Archives may have a performer's touring contracts, which document the exact dates and venues where the artist may have played, in addition to the cost of the performance and evidence of other fair-labor considerations for the period of activity. Payroll records, for example, can confirm someone working on a specific tour or recording session. This is why ephemeral documentation that falls out of a strict realm of manuscripts and personal papers is useful to contextualize how the creator's life and work unfolded over time.

Informational value focuses on the essential data contained within the documents, and this becomes apparent through the document at hand. For example, within the Marshall Stearns Collection at the Institute of Jazz Studies, there are a number of press clippings from Dizzy Gillespie's State Department tour of 1956, in which different newspapers report on the seemingly outrageous salary being paid to him for his overseas performances.[14] It is through these documents that we can ascertain the salary being paid to Gillespie, and the admittedly high rate the State Department was offering the trumpeter at the time.

Finally, intrinsic value plays an important role in determining a collection's desirability for the repository. Intrinsic value focuses on the "one of a kind" consideration about a particular item, where maintaining its original format and physical appearance is a priority for understanding and appreciating the circumstances under which it was created. As defined by the Society of American Archivists glossary, it is "[t]he usefulness or significance of an item derived from its physical or associational qualities, inherent in its original form and generally independent of its content, that are integral to its material nature and would be lost in reproduction."[15] The United States Declaration of Independence is a prime example, as this one document carries an enormous amount of significance for U.S. citizens, and embodies the spirit in which our nation was founded. As such, intrinsic value represents those materials that are so unique, rare, and pivotal to a community. This notion of value is sometimes associated with what art museums collect: artists' masterpieces that embody the zeitgeist of their time and essence of their artistic interpretation. This is where we would include incunabula, original manuscripts and sketches, and diaries, among other artifacts.

14. Marshall Winslow Stearns Collection, 1935–1966, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University Libraries, the U.S. State Department Near East tour by the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, 1956: box 24, folder 2, clippings; box 12, folder 7, clippings; and box 20, folder 24, clippings. Finding aid by Tad Hershorn available at http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/ead/ijs/stearnsf.html (accessed 27 August 2015).

15. Pearce-Moses, *Glossary*, s.v. "intrinsic value."

Documenting an individual's life as a whole is also important to consider in the appraisal process. Sometimes musicians have additional interests and life experiences that cannot be completely divorced from their performance lives. Jazz pianist and composer Mary Lou Williams, for example, turned to the Catholic Church late in life, and had a spiritual renaissance that fed into her work as a performing musician and composer. It was important for the Institute of Jazz Studies to also capture and document this facet of her life. As human beings we have different interests and inclinations, which only add value and interest to the complexity of our everyday lives. This is why documentary evidence of these "extracurricular activities" must be acquired and preserved alongside the main body of musical work.

WHEN TO SAY "NO"

Thus far this article has examined what elements constitute a solid appraisal strategy, especially for music librarians tasked with expanding library holdings into the archival arena, as many have done over the past few years. Archivists are ultimately offering the human race the possibility of preserving evidence of its growth and development, and thus we are operating under a very long timetable. The decision to keep a group of documents is made with the understanding that we will maintain them in the best physical state for as long as it is humanly possible, and therefore the decision of what to keep and how to do it must be well informed and weighed against what the parent institution is able to support over the long term. What happens when a repository is not equipped to preserve and provide access to a collection, even if it fits all the appraisal criteria established beforehand? In an ideal world we would all have the right amount of space and resources to collect to our hearts' content, but the world we live in is far from ideal. There are occasions when, even though the materials are a perfect fit for the library or archives, the reality of the situation makes it difficult for the acquisition to move forward. For example, if the collection consists of cylinder recordings, it is problematic if the repository has no playback equipment or budget to reformat the sound recordings for the users. It is important to remember why we do what we do, and the larger societal contract we are abiding by. There are five factors that affect the long-term sustainability of a collection that archivists should think about as they come to an acquisition decision: copyright, preservation and conservation issues, presence of nontraditional formats, storage space (in the broadest sense), and, most importantly, the human resources to adequately arrange, describe, and rehouse the acquisition.

Many of us have dealt with rights issues in archival collections, and more libraries and archives are taking calculated risks to broadly disseminate the materials under their care. It is important to clarify who owns the intellectual property rights to the collection, and where they see those rights going in future generations. While it is nice to think about composers passing rights on to their descendants, this information should be updated over time since reproduction and performances of the materials within a collection fall within the archival enterprise. It is possible to transfer intellectual property rights to the library or archives, and this makes for better stewardship of the collection over time. But sometimes the donors do not even own the rights to the materials they want us to take, thus, establishing who is the legal owner of the material can help prevent complications down the road. Having a good standing on the ownership and rights to the collections is of utmost importance to running a robust archival operation, and any time that is invested in good record-keeping and thorough vetting of the issues is worth the effort. The Society of American Archivists offers a copyright workshop on a rolling basis, and there are other continuing-education opportunities offered by state libraries and historical societies. There are also publications that can be of immense help for gaining a better understanding of how the law applies to the management of archival materials.[16]

Next, the physical condition of the materials also plays an important role in the materials' long-term accessibility when considered during the initial appraisal process. Conservation and preservation concerns play an important role in the health of an acquired collection, and assessing the need for such work on a prospective acquisition is also a factor to weigh in the overall appraisal process. If the materials exhibit a substantial mold or pest infestation, is the institution equipped to mitigate and repair the damage? Do the materials exhibit physical damage from flooding or fire? Is the damage such that reformatting is the only viable solution? These are all valid questions to ask, and when the reality of the required conservation and repair work comes to light, those who make the acquisition decision should know how far the institution is willing to go to repair the damages, considering the evidential, informational, and intrinsic value of the collection.

In a similar vein it is important to consider the abundance of audiovisual formats, especially the presence of nontraditional formats such as minidiscs and half-inch videotape in performing-arts archival collections.

16. There are two excellent sources to begin with: Menzi L. Behrnd-Klodt, *Navigating Legal Issues in Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008); Patricia Auferheide and Peter Jaszi, *Reclaiming Fair Use: How to Put Balance Back in Copyright* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Acquiring materials whose contents the repository cannot ascertain or play back is not a good starting point for stewardship and future access. It is akin to having a book that can't open. Basic arrangement, description, and preservation work is very difficult to complete if the playback equipment is not accessible to the archivist or librarian managing the collection. This is an instance where those making the acquisition decision should place institutional pride or notoriety aside, and seriously consider the long-term implications and effect on scholarship, and perhaps help the donors find a more suitable repository. We are, after all, working for what's best for the historical record, and thus we should be able to point donors to alternate homes for their materials.

Adequate storage, or the lack of it, is another obstacle for good stewardship that relates to the broader institution where the collections will reside. Long-term storage of archival collections in physical and electronic format is a serious matter, especially in the case of libraries that are dabbling in archival operations and beginning to acquire archival materials. There are temperature, humidity, lighting, and security considerations, and stashing portions of collections in closets and offices is never acceptable, even if it is temporary.[17] It is crucial to have well-thought plans for collections growth, and if the library is serious about the addition of an archives operation to its menu of services, then the library's blueprint should reflect this change in direction. Electronic records also fall within this consideration. There is much more to acquiring electronic records than suitable and trusted storage, and those who embark on the preservation and access of electronic materials have broader issues to consider, including administrative oversight, and a sustainable and robust digital preservation infrastructure, to name just two.

All the above-stated factors also require adequate human resources to manage the archival operation from start to finish. Archivists have been vocal about relegating this work to student interns,[18] as building an archival program, even a small one, requires expertise in collections management in addition to a solid grounding in archival theory and practice. There are a few ways to acquire these skills, especially for music

17. For further advice on storage best practices, see *Handling and Storage of Audio and Video Carriers: Technical Committee Standards, Recommended Practices, and Strategies*, ed. by Dietrich Schüller and Albrecht Häfner (London: International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, 2014); *The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004), available online at http://www.filmpreservation.org/preservation-basics/the-film-preservation-guide-download (accessed 27 August 2015). The "Annotated Webliography" by the George Blood Audio/Video/Film Preservation firm is also a valuable resource for format-specific recommendations, http://www.georgeblood.com/Webliography.html (accessed 27 August 2015).

18. Society of American Archivists, *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*, http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/BestPract-Internships.pdf (accessed 27 August 2015).

librarians working in academic institutions. The first stop should be the college or university archivists' office, for guidance and a second opinion about the matters described in these pages. There are also numerous workshops led by agencies such as state libraries or historical societies, as well as by professional organizations where one can invest in the training of personnel whose responsibilities will now include managing archival materials. It is important that these responsibilities fall to permanent staff (full- or part-time) to ensure continuous oversight of, and follow-through on, the implementation of minimum standards in archival practice.

Finding the road to success is not impossible, and by making appraisal and acquisition decisions based on a solid understanding of the archival paradigm, that road becomes clearer. As a profession we have moved past focusing only on the leaders of history, those individuals who have had starring roles in the development of our musical heritage. Collecting their personal papers documents only a very small segment of the contributions and life experiences of entire generations of musicians. We are also interested in documenting others whose voices have contributed to shaping our musical landscape, and without which we cannot see the big picture. The Institute of Jazz Studies, founded by Marshall Stearns in 1952, was based on his belief that jazz was worthy of the serious study other types of music had received for many years. As archivists, we are in a position to recognize and document the work of many who made important contributions to our musical heritage, and it is through careful and thoughtful appraisal analysis of potential acquisitions that we are assembling a well-rounded view of society for future generations.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses appraisal in relationship to the documentary evidence of music making, and the principles behind acquisition decisions in an archival setting. It also explores the concept of enduring value as it applies to music materials, and formulates clear definitions of the distinct facets of archival appraisal. This is a crucial component to any archival management program that can contribute to the healthy growth of the institution and its collections. The author formulates foundational elements for archival practices that actively expand the scope of the documented musical heritage preserved in archives throughout the world, and outlines strategies for collecting a well-rounded and inclusive view of history.