Appendix A: Recorded Sound Issues Related to Music Types

<< [Return to BIBFRAME AV Modeling Study](#)

Music does not take place in isolation. Rather, music is knit into the cultural practices of a given community. Cultural entities can range in size from a very small tribe to an entity as large as Western Art culture. Each cultural entity, and various subsets, has specific rules associated with their cultural exchanges. Additionally, some cultures are literate whereas others rely on the oral and aural transmission of cultural ideas. In order to successfully be involved in cultural exchange, one must know and follow the rules of a given cultural entity, which generally requires some degree of immersion in that culture as one set of rules associated with a particular cultural entity does not necessarily hold true for another. In regard to music, this means that there is great possibility that conventions associated with music creation and concepts will vary among cultural entities. Therefore, care must be taken to not apply conventions associated with musical practices that are known to practices associated with unfamiliar cultures, as they may or may not apply.

The following discussion attempts to describe some high-level issues associated with three broad classes of music represented in commercial sound recordings: Classical music (or Western art music), Western popular music, and traditional music. This is being presented to demonstrate that data elements and sets of rules deemed important for one type of music do not necessarily apply to other types, which is an assumption many have made. Due to these differences, and restrictions on current data structures and cataloging systems, catalogers have had to be creative in how they describe different types of music content. One thing that holds true for all music cataloging is that the ability to create the needed relationships between entities involved in events, which directly impacts search accuracy, has either been lacking or so difficult and time consuming as to be prohibitive, which means patron search accuracy is negatively impacted.

Classical Music

On commercial Classical music recordings, composers and their works tend to be well-identified and are often emphasized. Classical music, or Western art music, is based in a largely literate culture that has been transmitting notated versions of musical compositions through manuscript and print materials for centuries. Barring issues concerning access to a particular source, this transmission practice makes it relatively easy for members of this culture who are able to read the notation associated with such music to get a grasp of what the "work" is. This also means musicians can have common visual reference points regarding what defines a specific work. Performing conventions associated with this broad class of music take all of this into account. The score or part serves as a roadmap of sorts to performers who are expected to replicate the notes and performing directions as found therein. When medium of performance is specified, performers are expected to follow those instructions and any significant variance in that area leads to something that is considered related to, but different from, the initial work. Performance practices known to be associated with the time period in which a work was created are also taken into account to varying degrees. For example, it is known that during specific time periods

certain types of ornamentation practices were allowed, but the same practices were not associated with music created during other time periods. The individualism of the performer in this tradition is largely realized through interpretation and expressive means.

Many music catalogers in modern libraries have had some degree of training in Western art music and are familiar, at least on a general level, with many of the concepts and rules associated with this type of music. The heavy emphasis on composers and their works, combined with the relative ease in which different individuals can view documents that define many works through multiple information points, is reflected in cataloging practices associated with such music. Composers and their works are often given prominence and traced through access points. Performers might be traced in access points as well, however it should be noted that their names are just as often relegated to notes.

Popular Music[1]

On commercial popular music recordings, it is generally the performers and individual performances that are emphasized. The concept of a work in this tradition and how it is defined is often nebulous. While some popular music work titles are distinctive, not all titles are and other common visual reference points that would help define a work in this tradition are few. In liner notes, composer and lyricist names are frequently represented solely by last name or often not mentioned at all. Scores specifying specific instrumentation and performing instructions are rare. In regard to print or manuscript evidence of popular music works, sketches, charts, and printed music geared toward the home market (and generally intended for voice and accompanying instruments such as guitar or piano) are likely possibilities, but it is entirely possible none of these will exist. Sound recordings often serve as the primary mode of transmission and common source of reference for people. However, obtaining access to and sharing copies of sound recordings for reference purposes is somewhat more difficult than consulting textual sources and their surrogates due to complicated copyright issues associated specifically with sound recordings and the fact that creating audio copies frequently requires specific equipment, depending upon format, which is not readily available.

The performing conventions of this tradition are quite different than those for Classical music. Performers of Western popular music are expected to be innovative in their rendition of works, with a change in medium of performance or incorporation of ornamentation being an expected behavior, or rule, of this tradition. In more specific traditions such as jazz, performing conventions have evolved which require that performers develop the skill to improvise quite detailed and complex elaborations around the main structures of works. While these improvisations are quite creative in nature, they stem from the rules/performing conventions of the tradition and directly relate to the specific performer and his/her capabilities during performance. And whereas some performers in this tradition can read music in Western notation, there are many who cannot and learn music by listening. Library catalogers possess varying degrees of knowledge regarding Western popular music. Some have actually performed

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[1] Popular music in the context of this document incorporates a wide variety of popular music genres, including jazz.

in this tradition whereas others primarily experience it through sound recordings.

Currently, cataloging practices for this type of content focus more on describing publications by creating records which represent the aggregation of the tracks, rather than on the individual tracks of a sound recording. Works realized on tracks are marginally described in such records, generally only in a contents note. Since information on popular music composers and lyricists is often incomplete or missing from liner notes, and because the cataloging time costs associated with researching and creating authority records for all such entities associated with each track on a given recording are relatively high, most popular music composers and lyricists are not individually traced in catalog records.

Traditional Music and Non-Western Content in General
The rules and cultural conventions of non-Western cultural entities are largely unknown to most librarians based in Western libraries, particularly in regard to music. Even when a librarian has been trained as an anthropologist or ethnomusicologist, he/she is only going to be familiar with the cultural practices of a very limited number of communities. The expectation is that when the essence of a non-Western cultural event is captured to an audiovisual item, the individual who chose to capture that content knows something about the cultural context and conventions and is able to convey that in some manner. Unfortunately, that is not always the case, which can lead to a sense of unease for the cataloger.

It should be noted that while many "traditional" cultural groups pass along their heritage solely through oral and aural means, there are some that incorporate a degree of literacy and might actually produce content that could be considered and possibly defined as a work. For example, other than oral and aural transmission, many tunes associated with Celtic musical traditions have been captured in Western notation and widely disseminated through publications and manuscripts, so it seems like the identification and description of works might be somewhat similar to the situation for Classical music. However, one needs to be wary of applying assumptions and conventions associated with more familiar musical traditions to the cultural output of less familiar traditions. In the Celtic music example under discussion in this paragraph, one of the permissible and popular performing conventions is to string a series of tunes together into what might be described as a medley of sorts, and incorporate various types of ornamentation. In published recordings, these medleys are often assigned titles, which may or may not have any association with the original tune titles and may or may not have been assigned by someone who knew anything about the culture or music. As a result, content entries in bibliographic records for such objects often list the medley titles, which are not exactly works but could be considered more the title of that particular content unit, and the actual tune names might not be anywhere in the record. A further complication is that a particular tune might have one or several titles associated with it in the Irish tradition, but completely different title(s) in the Scottish tradition. Regardless of the differences from better known music traditions, there are actually many people in Western culture, including librarians, who are familiar with the Celtic music repertoire and might want to provide better access at the tune level, emphasizing the different cultural groups and locations associated with a particular tune title, in addition to highlighting the performance. If possible, a goal with BIBFRAME should be to accommodate

and distinguish between purely descriptive content titles, which may or may not have anything to do with a work, and true instances of traditional music works.

The wide range of possible customs associated with non-Western cultural groups, combined with the frequent lack of sufficient understanding on the part of catalogers and/or available data points, means that catalogers and librarians should take care when considering the application of cultural conventions and understandings to such content. The ability to capture context as presented with the content, and not interpreting much beyond that information unless one is actually very familiar with the culture in question, would be ideal. Cultural entities and the geographical location associated with the performance style or content as a whole are data elements which figure prominently in the representation of such content and therefore should be distinctly accounted for in data structures and search mechanisms. Additional points of note include the fact that controlled vocabularies for many data elements associated with non-Western cultural content, such as genre/form terms, either do not exist or are not extensive in coverage, and information about the languages on recordings might not be readily available to catalogers.[2]

In regard to all three broad classes of music discussed above, current systems do not support linking mechanisms needed to identify distinct performances by meaningfully tying together the entities and data elements which define them, such as performers, works, and the date and location of the performance. With BIBFRAME, better clustering of information at the track-level should be a goal. However, the issues discussed above also need to be taken into account as systems development, cataloging policy, and decisions about potentially new data sources evolve in the future.

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[2] Information on additional data issues related to traditional music may be found in a document prepared for Indiana University's Variations2 project as part of a discussion on potentially incorporating content digitized and preserved through Sound Directions, a joint project between Harvard and Indiana University. The document may be accessed at http://variations2.indiana.edu/metadata/ethnic/EthnicMusic.htm.