Today I will discuss some of the quandaries we now face as selectors of music materials, and examine data that puts these dilemmas in context. In the past we purchased books, CDs (and of course before the advent of CDs, LPs and cassette tapes), scores, reference titles, VHS tapes and DVDs, and journals. It was all pretty straightforward, and the tough decisions centered on what content to purchase; choosing the format was generally not a consideration (or at least a tough call). With the rise of more options on how content is accessed, coupled with the increase in online classes to support, things are now more complicated. Decreasing acquisition budgets make these difficult collection development choices even more challenging.

The outline for this presentation is as follows: I will address my institution and library setting, examine both the methodology and outcomes of two surveys, examine factors that students find important in obtaining information, and conclude by presenting our current collection development strategies, as well as topics for further study.

Why bother surveying students? While surveys are not perfect assessment tools, I believe that they do offer some validity about sentiments and even actions. While I have alluded to many issues involved with developing collections today, the motivation for discovering what types of materials students want and need is the data that librarians can use to make decisions. The options available to today’s libraries can be overwhelming: print, print and electronic, electronic only, and then there is the whole electronic book dilemma. Do I purchase single user, three users, or unlimited? With shrinking acquisition budgets, these are real considerations. Learning what formats performing arts students prefer for various types of content can allow librarians to make informed, data-driven decisions.

Kent State University is a public research university in northeast Ohio, about 15 minutes from Akron and 35 minutes outside of Cleveland. The main campus, located in Kent, has over 28,000 students. The campus has four branch libraries,
which includes the Performing Arts Library. This library was formerly a music library, but opened as a Performing Arts Library in 2010 after a two-year closure. The School of Music offers bachelor and graduate degrees, with concentrations in theory, music education, composition, and performance. The School of Theatre and Dance has BFA programs in theatre and dance, and an MFA in theatre.

Data presented today is drawn from two studies I conducted with Kent State performing arts students: one examined students’ format preferences, and the other explored library needs of graduate students in an online Master of Music program in music education. Kent State’s Institutional Review Board approved both studies. The Format Preference Survey was a paper, two-page survey that was administered in April and May of 2012. One hundred and eighty-two students participated in the investigation, and I utilized SPSS, a statistical software program, for data analysis. My research involving the needs of distance education students involved 82 students, which was over half of the target program’s population. This survey was administered electronically using Qualtrics, and occurring in June 2013.

When asking performing arts students in residence what the library should be buying more of, their ranking looks like this [slide 7]. The top three items on the list are all physical items, as are four of the top six. When analyzing book content’s frequency of use, we see that forty-nine percent of students report using print books two to three times a week to two to three times a month, with another twenty-five percent securing books two to three times a semester. Only about a quarter (twenty-six percent) of students report using books two to three times a year or never.

Only twenty percent of the performing arts students use e-books with regularity, and twenty-two percent use two to three times a semester. Twenty percent use e-books two to three times a year, and thirty-eight percent claim to never use them. Book content is largely print use, with 1 in 5 using e-books 1-2 times a year and thirty-eight percent never using them (that is almost sixty percent using once or twice a year to never).

When asking students what format they prefer for book content, eighty percent selected print and sixteen percent chose e-books. Four percent of the study
participants either circled both options or left the question blank. A recent Pew Internet and American Life study found that “83% of Americans between the ages of 16 and 29 read a book in the past year. Some 75% read a print book, 19% read an e-book, and 11% listened to an audiobook.”

When considering audio consumption, almost half the users (forty-seven percent) use CDs two to three times a week or month, and nineteen percent use them two to three times a semester. A third of the surveyed students use CDs two to three times a semester, or never check them out. Sixty-eight percent, over two-thirds, stream music two to three times a week or month. Only sixteen percent never use the library’s streaming databases. Use of audio is quite strong, with both CDs and streaming databases doing well, but students report accessing streaming databases more frequently.

When asked for their preferred means of accessing audio, sixty-one percent indicated streaming audio, and thirty-six percent favor CDs. Three percent indicated both or neither.

Scores are an important resource for students, and while print scores are used more frequently, there is considerable use of online scores. One note of interest: Kent State does not subscribe to any online score databases, but many students make use of IMSLP and other free online score sites. When asked what format they prefer for scores, over two-thirds (sixty-eight percent) of the students chose print. Twenty-eight percent, or over a quarter, preferred online scores.

Survey participants indicated they accessed journal content online more frequently electronically. When students were asked to chose a preferred method of accessing journals, almost two-thirds (64%) selected electronic. One-third indicated a preference for print.

When investigating student preference for video, the survey did not specifically ask about streaming video databases. This decision was made because the Performing Arts Library does not subscribe to streaming video databases. Students do have access to a number of streaming video titles through OhioLINK, but most of these titles are not very discoverable. While students failed to report extensive use of DVDs, just over half (fifty-two percent) did utilize them at least two
to three times a semester. With online videos permeating our world, I was surprised to see that just over half (fifty-five percent) wanted their video content in a streaming format (I thought this number would have been much higher). Forty-one percent indicated they preferred their video content via DVDs.

Use of reference materials occurred more frequently with electronic resources, although a quarter of users have never used electronic reference sources (and twenty-three percent haven't explored print reference materials). When asked about their preferred format for reference materials, students were almost split: fifty-one percent indicated print, while forty-six percent signaled a predilection for electronic.

To better gauge how library resources fit into today’s student’s studies, I presented seven opinion statements. Survey participants were offered the following scale for each statement: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The first statement was “the library should purchase more online/electronic resources (sheet music databases, electronic journals, web reference resources, audio streams, etc.).” Almost two-thirds of the students (sixty-four percent) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Only two percent disagreed, and no one strongly disagreed. Thirty-six percent of respondents selected “neutral.” This indicates that students are not opposed to more electronic resources.

The second statement was “the library should continue to buy a mix of resources available online (electronic) and in print.” The same number (sixty-four percent) of students that agreed or strongly agreed with the last question about purchasing more electronic resources agreed or strongly agreed with this question. Just over a third of the students (thirty-six percent) were neutral, and none disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates to me that while students do want libraries to purchase more electronic content, they also like the mix of physical and virtual.

The third statement was “I frequently obtain items for my studies through sources other than the library (iTunes, IMSLP, etc.).” Seventy-three percent either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement; only ten percent disagreed or
strongly disagreed. Seventeen percent indicated neutral feelings to this statement. The response to this statement suggests that students go where they need to in order to obtain what they need, making our acquisition decisions even that much more important.

The fourth statement was "the library should buy more print and physical materials and fewer electronic/web-based resources." Only thirty-six percent of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement; twenty-one percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Most respondents were neutral (forty-four percent).

The fifth statement was "I prefer to conduct some of my research in the library, and utilize print resources in the library." Two-thirds (sixty-six percent) of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Only six percent disagreed and one percent strong disagreed. The neutral sentiment was registered by twenty-six percent.

The sixth statement was "I prefer to conduct my research outside of the library, and want electronic access to my research resources." Almost half (forty-eight percent) agreed or strongly agreed, while forty percent of participants were neutral. Only twelve percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The final statement was "I begin my research on the library’s webpage." Fifty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed, while twenty-one percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Twenty-four percent were neutral.

So what does all of this data tell us? A strong sentiment exists for continuing to purchase a mix of electronic and traditional resources, and students are not opposed to more electronic resources. Data from the previous section of this paper indicates that some content is preferred in an electronic format, while the physical item is desired for other types of information. Most students are making use of numerous non-library resources, so judicious collection development decisions are crucial to libraries remaining relevant. The good news is that just over half of the students begin research from the library homepage, the gateway to our resources and services, and that a majority of students still do some research in the library with print materials.
To further understand the needs of these students, I asked survey participants to rank order the following five items regarding their information and research needs: 1) ease of use, 2) searching documents with “search/find” function, 3) ability to get information immediately, 4) quality of image/sound/video, and 5) finding the exact item that I am looking for. I've arranged them in order of means; the lower the number, the more important it is to students.

The results, in rank order, are as follows: ease of access, finding the exact item I am looking for, getting information immediately, searching using the find function, and the quality of images/sound/video. Ease of access was a clear number one for the students, while finding the exact item and getting information immediately were closely placed. Using the find function and quality of image/sound/video ranked a distant fourth and fifth.

At this point I am going to shift focus away from the opinions, needs, and sentiments of the students in residence and talk about those of distance education students. This is particularly important at Kent State, as I support a Master of Music in Music Education (MMME) program that is entirely online. In surveying those students last summer, I gained a much better understanding of their awareness and use of library resources and services.

The following slide [#39] shows five library resources for distance students, awareness of these items, and whether they have been used by those in the MMME program. The three most heavily used are all online, and provide immediate information to the students.

I also queried these students to find out about their use of non-library resources. Google and YouTube are used by most, and Google Scholar was used by less than half. The percent for each is as follows: Google ninety percent, YouTube seventy-nine percent, Wikipedia fifty-nine percent, IMSLP fifty-six percent, the Choral Public Domain Library fifty-four percent, Google Scholar forty percent, and iTunes thirty-four percent.

The MMME students are generally young, with seventy-three percent being thirty-five years old or younger. They are quite comfortable with technology, with
eighty-nine percent somewhat or very comfortable with e-books. Ninety-six percent are somewhat or very comfortable with electronic resources.

Forty-eight percent of the survey participants use libraries other than the Kent State Libraries, presumably local institutions (participants are scattered all over the country). When asked about the types of materials they are borrowing from these libraries, the respondents indicated the following: seventy-five percent are getting books, forty-eight percent journal articles, thirty-six percent score, thirty-four percent reference materials, twenty-seven percent audio, and twenty-three percent video.

In response to the question “what library resources are most important to you?” students coalesced around journal article access. After the seventy-five percent that indicated journals were most valuable, reference and streaming audio databases tied for second and third with eleven percent of the responses. Everything else was less than ten percent.

So after examining all of this data, what are the conclusions? As the primary selector for performing arts students, I feel that purchasing more electronic journals, audio, video, and reference materials is a safe bet. Scores and books are a bit trickier. Students indicate they desire more electronic resources, but still want a mix of electronic and traditional formats. Quick access and ease of use are also important to students, and should be taken into account when building a collection. Finally, understanding your specific institutional and program needs is paramount to building and managing your collection.

I would like to pose three questions for further research: 1) what resources do students need that we are not providing? Can we provide them?, 2) how well is the library informing/teaching students about existing/available resources? Are students fully aware of our existing resources? and 3) how do students, especially from varied disciplines in the Performing Arts, use our materials and how might that inform future purchases?

Thank you for attending, and now I’ll open the floor to questions and comments.