

## **Core Competencies for Music Librarians and Music Library Professionals**

Prepared by the Music Library Association Core Competencies for Music Librarians and Music Library Professionals Task Force

The Core Competencies for Music Librarians and Music Library Professionals specify a set of broad skills and knowledge necessary for the successful performance of the many duties and responsibilities inherent in a wide variety of possible professional appointments. The list is neither comprehensive nor intended as a realistic description of what a single individual can reasonably accomplish during the span of their career. Instead, it describes the work of a network of individuals engaged in the practice of music librarianship.

While like the previous competencies documents, the list represents a guide for emerging and current music librarians and professionals, music librarian educators and employers, in an effort to provide a direction in future career development, the current document also distinguishes between basic and expert competencies. The competencies are organized into eight areas. The order was not intended as an indicator of their relative importance.

In preparation for this work, the Task Force conducted extensive literature review, analyzed current music librarianship course syllabi, surveyed MLA membership and examined core competencies of comparable organizations and the American Library Association. The Task Force presented research results and preliminary thoughts concerning competencies to the MLA membership at its annual meeting in February 2017. After incorporating membership feedback, the Task Force produced a draft, which was presented to the MLA Board for comment. The resulting draft was posted for public comment. The current document incorporates many of those recommendations.

Finally, it is important to note that the changing environment requires flexibility on the part of the music librarian/music library professional. Music librarianship is a forward looking profession and its practitioners frequently navigate change. The music librarian/music library professional should remain aware of trends in the profession, including increased instances of additional duties in other aspects of the performing arts. They should seek continuing professional development opportunities through conference attendance, awareness of the literature in the field, and active participation in relevant professional organizations, primarily the Music Library Association.

### **Knowledge of Music**

- Music subject expertise through formal study

Basic: Reads music and demonstrates understanding of musical instruments, music history, theory, music terminology and ethnomusicology relevant to the music library setting.

Expert: Reads music in multiple clefs and varied musical notation practices (e.g. non-western, pre-common practice). Demonstrates broad knowledge of music history, theory, and ethnomusicology. Demonstrates familiarity with scholarly publishing in music.

- Music distribution

Basic: Demonstrates knowledge of current practices in musical score publishing and distribution.

Expert: Demonstrates knowledge of issues in historical musical score and audio and video recording publishing and distribution.

### **Knowledge of Copyright Issues**

- Material ownership and licensing

Basic: Demonstrates knowledge of the first-sale doctrine, fair use and digital rights management (DRM) relevant to music materials.

Expert: Advises colleagues on issues related to fair use, DRM and first-sale doctrine related to music collections. Obtains performance licenses.

- Legal research

Basic: Demonstrates understanding of the purpose and benefits of copyright law regarding music materials in all formats.

Expert: Aids patrons in determining the copyright status of music materials. Provides risk assessment or referral service for advanced copyright questions or issues.

### **Knowledge of Collection Development Practices in Music**

- Selection of materials

Basic: Identifies and acquires items for the collection consistent with institutional policies. Keeps informed of new resources available in all formats.

Expert: Develops and implements policies regarding the selection of materials, including gifts. Consults a wide variety of sources to evaluate and select materials for the collection, including publishers' catalogs, specialty music vendors, and publication reviews. Uses knowledge of user needs to inform selection decisions.

- Collection assessment

Basic: Collects usage statistics. Compiles reports.

Expert: Develops criteria and procedures to evaluate the collection. Possesses familiarity with collection strengths and weaknesses and identifies collection priorities. Interprets usage statistics to inform collection decisions, including selection, retention, duplication, replacement, or de-selection.

- Collection maintenance

Basic: Performs and coordinates maintenance activities including shelf reading and shifting. Identifies items in need of repair.

Expert: Evaluates the cost effectiveness of repair, replacement, and/or de-selection for damaged materials. Develops criteria and procedures regarding the de-selection of materials. Develops policies for disaster preparedness and identifies collection salvage priorities.

### **Ability to Manage and Lead**

- Communication skills

Basic: Demonstrates strong verbal, non-verbal, and written communication skills.

Expert: Demonstrates strong public speaking skills. Communicates clearly and efficiently.

- Project management

Basic: Initiates and manages projects related to daily operations. Participates in teams for long-term and/or larger scale projects.

Expert: Initiates and manages projects on a large scale, potentially across departments. Develops work plans that include tasks and deadlines. Delegates work. Anticipates and resolves potential problems.

- Team building

Basic: Demonstrates understanding of team building practices. Promotes teamwork among staff.

Expert: Builds a cohesive team through a shared vision. Motivates and inspires team members.

- Problem solving

Basic: Identifies problems. Collects and considers relevant information when making decisions. Uses sound judgment to make decisions.

Expert: Uses critical thinking for creative solutions. Weighs risks against potential benefits to make decisions. Anticipates potential problems and proactively addresses issues.

- Strategic planning

Basic: Ensures that daily operations align with long-term goals outlined in the strategic plan.

Expert: Creates and implements a strategic plan related to music subject collections. Evaluates the strategic plan's success.

- Advocacy and marketing

Basic: Promotes library mission and goals to internal constituencies.

Expert: Develops marketing and advocacy strategies. Promotes library mission and goals to internal and external constituencies.

- Supervision

Basic: Provides timely feedback. Uses institutional tools for conducting reviews.

Expert: Provides training for new employees. Aids direct and indirect reports in developing and integrating new skills.

## **Research Support and Instructional Skills**

- Reference interviews

Basic: Determines user needs to provide guidance on available materials, tools, and services in music research.

Expert: Provides comprehensive support to identify and acquire obscure or hard-to-find resources relevant to advanced research queries. Instructs on advanced research options and uses of resources.

- Curricular assessment and design

Basic: Develops in-person or hybrid literacy sessions on general topics in music and assesses the success of learning outcomes. Provide instructional support through embedded librarianship or extended literacy sessions.

Expert: Incorporates learner-centered or non-traditional instructional methods on advanced topics or higher-level research strategies using contemporary instructional design principles across diverse learning environments. Uses instruction assessment to improve learning outcomes. Teaches credit bearing classes as a part of subject area curriculum.

- Evaluation and synthesis of information

Basic: Creates and maintains print and electronic guides using variety of published and unpublished sources.

Expert: Creates new content specific to institutional research needs. Supports projects involving new ways of presenting information such as digital humanities projects.

- Music and performing arts outreach

Basic: Actively participates in music events involving work to relevant institutions and local community.

Expert: Actively participates in national and international research in music or the performing arts. Develops music and performing arts programs for a library.

## **Resource Identification, Organization, and Maintenance Skills**

- Metadata and cataloging

Basic: Performs copy and simple original cataloging and basic metadata entry. Demonstrates knowledge of metadata standards, practices, and tools.

Expert: Performs complex original cataloging and creates complex metadata. Uses reference sources and additional materials to identify musical editions and to verify or create preferred titles for musical works and expressions. Manages metadata workflows in accordance with institutional practices. Participates in management of the integrated library system (ILS), including indexing and display of information.

- Acquisitions and bindery

Basic: Receives and updates items in the ILS. Prepares items for withdrawals and binding. Implements sewing for scores which are not bound. Performs basic repairs on items, such as repair of rips, replacing call number labels, or cleaning media surfaces.

Expert: Performs ILS updates and maintenance for new or withdrawn items, administers advanced repairs to items while applying copyright knowledge (i.e. replacing missing parts or pages or creating preservation copies of media).

### **Access Services Skills**

- Basic: Performs circulation tasks, such as verifying item information and availability, searching patron data, and assisting patrons with questions regarding access to materials.
- Expert: Executes administrative tasks, such as creating or modifying patron data or item records and constructing complex reports.

### **Technology Skills**

- Familiarity with devices and audio/visual equipment used in a music library

Basic: Helps patrons use devices and equipment to access musical content. Provides basic maintenance on devices and equipment.

Expert: Maintains awareness of historical, current and emerging sound and video formats. Ensures continues support for relevant video and audio formats relevant to the setting.

- Understanding of music related software and content creation topics

Basic: Possess basic skills in using software and resources regarding content creation. Maintains existing digital music services. Understands preservation and access issues related to digital music services and collections.

Expert: Maintains knowledge of emerging digital trends in music. Evaluates and establishes new music digital services. Uses technology to develop local, sustainable digital collections of music materials. Assesses and implements preservation needs and tracks obsolescence lifecycle for digital services and collections.

## Knowledge of Archival Standards and Practices

- Archival processing

Basic: Establishes and maintains physical and intellectual control of music archival holdings. Participates in creating finding aids in compliance with the most current edition of Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS).

Expert: Applies specialized music subject discipline knowledge to maintain physical and intellectual control of archival holdings. Creates and supervises the creation of DACS compliant finding aids to describe collections.

- Collection preservation

Basic: Applies professional standards for archival preservation of print and digital materials in music.

Expert: Develops and implements a comprehensive long-term archival collection preservation plan.

- Collection acquisition and management

Basic: Assists in identifying and procuring music archival collections consistent with institutional policies.

Expert: Develops and implements plan for music archival collection management. Manages donor relations.

- Research support

Basic: Provides specialized music primary source reference service to users.

Expert: Manages intellectual property rights for music archival materials and granting of permissions for publication.

- Music archival collection outreach

Basic: Aids in music archival material exhibition and presentations. Promotes collections through social media and aids in information literacy sessions for music archival materials.

Expert: Curates exhibits. Establishes institutional information literacy standards for music archival materials. Conducts information literacy for music archival materials.

- Assessment

Basic: Collects music archival material data such as collection usage and/or instruction.  
Produces reports.

Expert: Uses data in decision making and strategic planning regarding music archival materials.