

## Plenary Session IV: Music in the OCLC WorldCat Redux

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### **Abstract:**

According to Richard Smiraglia, he and Ralph Papakhian were both "just this side of being angry young men" back in 1981, when they published their study "Music in the OCLC Online Union Catalog: A Review." The two were parallel heads of music cataloging at that time—Smiraglia at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Papakhian at Indiana University—and shared a desire, as Smiraglia put it, "to show the world where OCLC was good but also to show the music cataloging community where it was problematic."

**Keywords:** music | cataloging | OCLC

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

**Plenary Session IV: Music in the OCLC WorldCat Redux****Richard Smiraglia, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee**

According to Richard Smiraglia, he and Ralph Papakhian were both "just this side of being angry young men" back in 1981, when they published their study "Music in the OCLC Online Union Catalog: A Review." The two were parallel heads of music cataloging at that time—Smiraglia at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Papakhian at Indiana University—and shared a desire, as Smiraglia put it, "to show the world where OCLC was good but also to show the music cataloging community where it was problematic." Thirty years later, at the 2011 meeting of MOUG, the late Papakhian's spirit pervaded as Smiraglia revisited their 1981 project and described its 2010 replication by students enrolled in his summer music cataloging class. One of those students, Marianne Kordas, kindly hosted this session and provided a video recording of Smiraglia delivering his presentation. He began with an apology to the MOUG audience for a scheduling conflict that had landed him in Seattle addressing a conference of the iSchools organization rather than in Philadelphia speaking directly with them.

At several points, Smiraglia reflected on Papakhian's legacy, describing conversations with colleagues that led to the idea of replicating his 1981 research project with Papakhian as part of a Festschrift honoring Papakhian. "We wanted to honor Ralph," Smiraglia explained, "by replicating the earlier study in two ways. First, we wanted to go back over the same ground to see how OCLC had changed. Second, we wanted to honor the study by giving it a little bit of a theoretical bent, by replication." Another way of honoring Papakhian, Smiraglia added, was to involve music cataloging students as researchers in the project, enabling them "to learn a little bit about Ralph and his work and also to become part of his legacy of education and training for new catalogers."

In their 1981 study, Papakhian and Smiraglia pursued two research questions, the first regarding the extent of cataloging coverage in OCLC and the second about the quality of cataloging copy found there. They wished to help music librarians determine whether their collections were represented in the online music catalog, and, if so, whether the cataloging found there was of high quality. To begin, they analyzed coverage in the online union catalog by searching the "Books Received" and "Music Received" columns in *Notes*, as well as the "New Listings" from the *Schwann* catalog. Their aim was to learn how soon newly acquired materials were being covered online with cataloging copy. They also searched *A Basic Music Library: Essential Scores and Books* (1978) to learn the extent of coverage a new library might expect to find in OCLC. In all, Papakhian and Smiraglia located over 99 percent of the items searched from "Books Received" and *A Basic Music Library*. The percentage of music and sound recordings located online was

lower, about 68 percent. However, as these items had just been published in the previous nine to twelve months, they considered this a promising result.

To analyze the quality of cataloging copy, Papakhian and Smiraglia collected the cataloging done in their respective divisions at Indiana and Illinois in two randomly selected months, and from this they determined what changes had been made to the records before being produced for their local catalogs. They discovered that an average of six corrections was made to records for monographs, eleven corrections to records for scores, and sixteen corrections to records for sound recordings. They also checked to see where most of the cataloging had originated and were not surprised to see that the majority of the books had come from the Library of Congress, and that most of the cataloging for scores and sound recordings had come from institutions other than the Library of Congress.

Smiraglia began discussion of the 2010 project by saying that he and his graduate students had replicated the 1981 coverage study closely, searching the "Music Received" and the "Books Recently Published" columns from *Notes*. With the *Schwann* catalog no longer available, they substituted "New Music Releases" in *Billboard*, beginning in June 2010 and searching backward to December 2009 and March 2010. For coverage of classical music they consulted *Classical Music Sentinel* for the latest releases. To study the quality of cataloging, they examined a random sample of bibliographic records supplied by the Office of Research at OCLC, and from these gathered data on the date of entry and the date of replacement, as well as the inputting library symbol, the symbols in MARC field 040, the cataloging rules used, and the encoding level.

The researchers discovered first that in 2010 coverage was about the same as it had been in 1981. Nearly 100 percent of the monographs searched for were found in OCLC, as were the recordings searched for in *Billboard*. However, the research team was surprised to learn that the scores in the "Music Received" columns really were not represented much better in OCLC than they had been in 1981, with only 64-73 percent of these items found. Why this would be the case in 2010 is something Smiraglia said he could not explain, adding that this certainly calls for further analysis. ("Guess what next year's students get to work on!" he quipped.)

Regarding the cataloging side of the 2010 study, Smiraglia provided cross-tabulated results, which he described as "rather limiting." Of the scores under study, he explained, "44 percent of bibliographic records used AACR2, and another 10 percent had ISBD records. The remaining 46 percent were unknown or in some other format, and 24 percent of the records—a really small number—were full bibliographic records. Another 50 percent were minimal-

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level member input records, and 94 percent were not Library of Congress records. Of the sound recordings, 48.7 percent of the records used AACR2, 12.3 percent had ISBD, 19 percent were full-level, 48 percent were M-level and 8 percent were not Library of Congress records."

Smiraglia observed that the most interesting finding of the 2010 study is time series data, which shows how the records were entered into WorldCat over time. He illustrated this with a graph featuring one line for the record entry of scores and a second for recordings from 1973 to 2010. This demonstrated a fairly steady rate of increasing record input, except for some spikes in 1985, 1991, 2003, and 2009, which Smiraglia cannot yet explain, though he guesses that the 2009 spike has to do with OCLC's merger with RLIN. To engage audience speculation on these "curious spikes" Smiraglia offered chronological markers for events such as the publication of the ISBD format in 1976 and of AACR2 in 1978.

To conclude, Smiraglia described the shift at OCLC from creating a union catalog to the current WorldCat product as a major epistemological shift: "It's not just that there is more stuff there," he said. "It's that this is a different kind of creature. In 1980 we were building a shared catalog and were very concerned with cataloging practice and cataloging quality. This is very different from what WorldCat is giving us in 2011." Smiraglia added that research remains critically important, not just for music librarianship but also for the use of WorldCat in general, because independent external corroboration is a crucial matter. He also stressed the importance of such research for theory building, especially for external validity. "The fact is," he said, "that we simply know very, very little, empirically, about the contents of

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libraries and library utilities, and the more empirical data we have the better."

Spirited audience discussion ensued. Damian Iseminger (New England Conservatory) wished to learn more about the criteria for full-level vs. minimal level cataloging in the 2010 replication study, perhaps by way of a spreadsheet. Regarding the spikes in cataloging activity, Mark Scharff (Washington University in St. Louis) suggested that the 1991 surge might have to do with a productive period at Indiana University, where he worked 1990-1992 on an Associated Music Libraries Group (AMLG) Title II-C Retrospective Conversion Grant. Jay Weitz (OCLC) added that introduction of the compact disc format in 1982 in Japan and 1983 in the United States generated a flurry of cataloging activity perhaps reflected in the 1985 spike. Joe Bartl (Library of Congress) noted that in the late 1990s and early 2000s the Library of Congress was engaged in a major effort to handle sound recordings, with many catalogers involved. Bartl also addressed the difficulty of replication between 1981, when shared cataloging and high quality records were emphasized, and 2011, when roles and values have clearly changed. Finally, on the matter of replication, Stephen Luttmann (University of Northern Colorado) observed that in 1981 the *Schwann* catalog was genuinely useful but that no comparable resource exists in 2011, when the distribution of recorded music has changed in so many ways that the concepts of "what's in print now" or even "what's available now" have been compromised and altered radically.

*Report by William "Mac" Nelson, University of North Carolina-Greensboro*

## MOUG Hot Topics

**Jay Weitz, Senior Consulting Database Specialist (OCLC)**  
**Vince Wortman, Product Support Specialist I (OCLC)**

Questions and comments at this year's MOUG Hot Topics session were again graciously fielded by OCLC's Jay Weitz, Senior Consulting Database Specialist, and Vince Wortman, Product Support Specialist. While questions focused on the WorldCat Local/WorldCat.org and Connexion products, attendees raised a variety of topics including quality control, duplicate records, input and editing practices, and public record display.

Vince began the session with some good news about WorldCat Local: performer and production notes (fields 508, 511, and 518) will be displayed in the next install. Regarding the status of other changes affecting music, given that music was identified as a specialized area for development at last year's meeting, Vince assured attendees that MOUG's input is valued at OCLC, that the most recent

MOUG report on WorldCat Local was noticed at OCLC, and that he will be coordinating a response.

There was a lengthy discussion on the issue of external or third-party content in WorldCat Local, sparked by the "double-edged sword" of AllMusic metadata attached to bibliographic records for sound recordings (in some cases, AllMusic information is richer than the contents notes it replaces, while in other cases the data is missing or meaningless). Third-party or enhanced content is an OCLC priority. OCLC has identified the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) as an additional potential source of enhanced content. Vince asked the audience if IMDb would be a valuable source of information. One response was that while it would be useful, motion picture soundtracks are only a small part of searches by music users. A more general response was