

The Cello Music Cataloger as Program Builder

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Abstract:

Established in 2006, the position of Cello Music Cataloger at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro blurs the traditional lines of demarcation between library technical services and public services. On the one hand, it is a position that demands the extensive knowledge and application of traditional cataloging practices; on the other, it facilitates innovative, collaborative approaches to challenges and opportunities arising in the unpredictable, rapidly changing twenty-first century. Examining first the evolution of the position, this paper offers a detailed description of the Cello Music Cataloger's flexible combination of technical and public service duties, followed by a summary of colleague response to this relatively new and unusual position.

Keywords: cataloger's role; cataloging position descriptions; professional development for catalogers; cataloging special collections of music; innovations for library technical services; relationship of library technical and public services; donor development; collaboration; outreach

Article:

In the early twenty-first century, the challenge of defining the cataloger's role in library operations remains problematic for both administrators and catalogers. While there is widespread agreement that significant change is afoot in cataloging and metadata departments, there is also general assent that the nature of this change is complex and unpredictable. As a consequence, most catalogers and technical services managers are well familiar with advice that the time is right for catalogers to retool, both by expanding their existing skills and by learning a range of new ones. It is not always clear, however, exactly how catalogers might best go about the business of retooling, or how they and their administrators might determine which new skills would serve them most appropriately. This problem is complicated by the rapid pace of change in the twenty-first century library and by the persistent difficulty of preparing for a largely unforeseeable future.

In 2006, the University Libraries of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) dealt with one version of this problem by designing the unusual, perhaps unique, position of *Cello Music Cataloger*. This is a strikingly specific title, of course, and one that surprises and often entertains colleagues from other institutions: "I suppose UNCG has an Oboe Music Cataloger, as well," quipped one amused library director. And a music librarian recently asked in jest "if the University Libraries might someday find room for a Lute Music Cataloger." As home to the world's largest collection of cello music, however, it was clear well before 2006 that UNCG needed a specialist cataloger to make this vast, unparalleled resource available to an international audience of students, scholars, performers, and cello enthusiasts of all kinds. It had also long been apparent that the Cello Music Collection merited sustained, energetic development and deserved high visibility on every possible front. For these reasons, few at UNCG were surprised when the University Libraries made known their intention of employing a Cello Music Cataloger as a full-time, tenure-track faculty librarian.

What might have seemed unusual, even to those familiar with the prominence of the Cello Music Collection, were some of the responsibilities listed in this position description. Not limited to music cataloging and related technical services activities, the description specifies responsibility for “creating web-based finding aids for manuscripts and rare books that comprise the holdings of Special Collections and University Archives.” Perhaps more significantly, the position description includes the expectation that the Cello Music Cataloger will “conduct related public service for the cello collections and serve as the chief resource person for these collections.” The inclusion of such varied responsibilities evinces a priority that the position be at once highly specialized and broadly collaborative—in short, that it be a flexible combination of technical and public service duties. (See Appendix 1 for the complete position description.)

What factors prompted the designers of this position to blur the traditional lines of demarcation between technical services and public services? This question may be addressed most effectively by a close examination of how the Cello Music Cataloger's position evolved, with specific attention to how the growth of the Collection itself figured in this evolution.

EVOLUTION OF THE POSITION: 1963-2005

The words *cataloging* and *celebration* are not usually spoken in the same sentence. Over the last half century or so, however, these words have formed a close association during cello-related activities at UNCG. One reason for this is the long history of cooperative endeavor involving UNCG's cataloging librarians and the celebrated Cello Music Collection to which they have long provided access. This is a history grounded in a strong institutional precedent. Indeed, no factor in the growth of the Cello Music Collections at UNCG has been more important than sustained cooperation between the administrations of the University Libraries and the School of Music. Evident from the earliest discussion of a possible focus on cellos, cellists and cello music, this collaboration first bore fruit in 1963, when the Friends of the UNCG Libraries acquired the personal music library of famed cellist Luigi Silva. In making this decision, the Friends had been advised not only by the distinguished scholar and long-time UNCG cello professor Elizabeth Cowling (1910-1997) but also by an astute library administration. As Cowling was a former student and close associate of Silva, she was aware that his remarkably comprehensive library represented the potential foundation on which a major repository of cello music might be built. Significantly, she communicated this awareness to a library administration that fully comprehended it.

The impact of this sudden influx of cello materials was probably not immediately celebrated by the six cataloging librarians employed by UNCG in 1963. Silva's musical scores alone numbered more than 1,700, and these were accompanied by 13 boxes of archival materials, books, and manuscripts—nearly all of which were to be cataloged at the item level. Naturally enough, this task fell to the librarian whose responsibilities already included cataloging music, an assignment that would have worked very well had this librarian not been promoted soon thereafter to the position of Cataloging Department Head. When it became apparent that this organizational change had created a void that would not soon be filled, the Dean of the School of Music, ever supportive of library operations, agreed to hire a cataloger for Music Library materials, with attention to the Silva library as time allowed. This was a gracious act the catalogers must have celebrated.

As time allowed. This was a familiar refrain among the librarians and staff members who cataloged the Silva collection during the first dozen years or so. The pride they took in this project, however, was evident. Soon after all the cataloging had been done, the University Libraries (then the Walter Clinton Jackson Library) published a volume that served at once to celebrate Silva's legacy and to provide a comprehensive catalog of his library. The contents of this volume attest the important role UNCG's catalogers played in “the increasing interest in the collection,” as Cowling phrases it in her introduction to the catalog.¹ And the publication itself, which required the collaboration of many, bears testimony to the swirl of cooperative activity such an extraordinary collection had generated at UNCG. This, along with the welcome problem of a growing Cello Music Collection—Cowling had donated the first installment of her library in 1976—prompted early

consideration of hiring a cataloger specifically for the Collection. Informal discussion of this matter continued intermittently through the eventful period from 1986 to 1994, which saw three distinguished additions to the Collection, the libraries of Rudolf Matz, Maurice Eisenberg, and Janos Scholz.

By 1994, the Cello Music Collection numbered more than 6,000 items and was urgently in need of a specialist cataloger; however, few expected such an appointment to be anything but temporary. This was due in part to uncertainty regarding the future of the Collection. Would it continue to grow at its recent extraordinary pace? Or, had most of the available collections been placed, either at UNCG or elsewhere? As ever, the future resisted predictability. Dauntingly predictable, however, was the presence of a large backlog that would be going nowhere quickly unless certain organizational changes were made. And it was this backlog more than any other factor that led in 1999 to the hiring of a temporary, three-quarter-time Cello Music and Manuscripts Cataloger, a position that included very few formal responsibilities beyond a single-minded focus on cataloging.

Even with the addition in 2002 of the library of eminent cellist Fritz Magg, the Cello Music and Manuscripts Cataloger successfully addressed the backlog. This cataloger also found time, however, for a range of Collection-related pursuits beyond cataloging, inclusive of scholarly research, conference presentations, and assistance in the organization of musical performances. Despite the ancillary role these activities played, they still figured significantly in the evolution of the Cello Music Cataloger's position, not only because they involved increased collaboration but also because they required the cataloger to consider the balance between technical and public service responsibilities. Among the most interesting of these pursuits were musical performances, co-sponsored by the Music Library and referred to as "celebrations." The purpose of these events was both to honor individual donors and to celebrate the cataloger's milestone of having completed work on yet another library in the Collection.

Such small-scale celebrations were related only in spirit to the grand, public "Cello Celebrations" that have put UNCG on the international musical map in recent years. These gala events, sponsored by the School of Music in cooperation with the University Libraries, have shown in dramatic fashion the far-reaching influence a major library collection can have. Appropriately, the first of these was the Silva Centennial Celebration, held in March 2004, which featured performances and classes by some of his foremost students. Among the guests of honor at the Silva tribute was Bernard Greenhouse, founding cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio and long-time associate of Pablo Casals. Greenhouse's announcement of his intention to become a donor to the Cello Music Collection led immediately to the planning of a second Celebration in as many years, an enormous undertaking that would feature one of the world's most celebrated living cellists and attract a very large audience. The Greenhouse Celebration of March 2005 demonstrated beyond doubt that the time was right for hiring a full-time Cello Music Cataloger, who would not only apply cataloging systems to a burgeoning collection of musical materials but would also work cooperatively to develop engaging programs in support of its continued growth.

This brief historical sketch demonstrates something of the significant cultural impact the Cello Music Collection has had at UNCG and beyond. More specifically, it suggests that the design of the Cello Music Cataloger's position, with its unusual combination of technical and public service duties, is very much a product of this cultural context. Close examination of these duties will amplify this point.

THE WORK OF THE CELLO MUSIC CATALOGER: TECHNICAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Cello Music Cataloger reports to the Head of the Cataloging Department (see Appendix 2 for a flowchart) and works informally with the Head of Special Collections, largely on collection development and workflow issues, and the Head of the Music Library, largely on the Cello Celebrations and related matters of program building. As a tenure-track faculty librarian, the Cello Music Cataloger participates in a range of activities, inclusive of committee work at the Library and University levels, professional involvement in musical and

professional library organizations, and collaborative teaching with the Head of Cataloging for the Library and Information Studies Department at UNCG. The first priority of this position during its three years of existence (2006-2009), however, has been to provide access to the treasures of the Cello Music Collection. This is followed closely by a second priority of serving as the chief resource person for the Collection.

The Technical Services Dimension: Cataloging

The technical services dimension of this position demands a “quality first” approach to cataloging. A high percentage of items in the Cello Music Collection are unique and therefore require original cataloging. This is time-consuming, of course, but essential to the goal of providing a largely scholarly audience the ability to construct searches that yield all the information they need, unencumbered by information they do not need. Not limited to the format of published music, the Collection includes numerous manuscripts, photocopies, unidentified items, fragmentary items, and a variety of personal “cut-and-paste” copies that very nearly defy description. Even the published items that are not unique often include annotations, sometimes in multiple hands and frequently with manuscript additions. In short, the Cello Music Collection is a repository uncommonly rich in the raw materials of original scholarship. This is why it is so valuable and why its holdings merit such attentive cataloging.

There are additional challenges involved in cataloging the Collection. Many items demand the consultation of reference resources and comparison of scores to create reliable descriptions of intricate “home-made” copies. Additionally, obscure items, which are numerous, must often be researched informally through ongoing conversation with the “cello community” or by discovering the identity of virtually unknown composers. But even the most diligent research is not always rewarded, as some items remain unidentified and can only be made available locally, pending further research. A number of items in the collection require formal musical analysis, sometimes involving the comparison of manuscript and published scores, before their significance can be assessed and indicated in description. This often necessitates cross-referencing by means of multiple notes in MARC field 500, or by use of several little-used fields. The extra time such processes require has its reward in high quality service to patrons.

Clearly, the cataloging activities associated with this position are both painstaking and traditional—a description to which the phrase “old fashioned” might be added, given that the local shelflist for the Collection is an old style card catalog located in Special Collections! These priorities reflect the University Libraries' long-standing commitment to the detailed, item-level cataloging of such an extensive, unique collection, and obviously would not apply in any uniform way to other collections cataloged at UNCG.

The Public Services Dimension: Collaboration

The public services dimension of the Cello Music Cataloger's position requires a comprehensive approach to librarianship, as well as a strong commitment to proactive correspondence and leadership. This entails collaboration with many different colleagues in the University Libraries and the School of Music, and extends outward in a developmental network that involves correspondence with musicians, librarians, professors, donors, and a variety of patrons. The more extensive these connections, the more effective the performance of the public service dimensions of the position. Three examples will make this clear.

Example 1

In February 2007 the Cello Music Cataloger played an important role in the Laszlo Varga Celebration, the third such event held at UNCG. Varga, a legendary artist who served as principal cellist under Leonard Bernstein in the New York Symphony, had recently made the decision to donate his music library to the Collection. Because

the Cello Music Cataloger had long been in correspondence with the guest of honor, the Celebration Director requested that the Cataloger serve as Varga's escort for the full week of his residency at UNCG. The two have remained in close contact, and the Varga legacy now figures centrally in the Cello Music Cataloger's scholarly research, which won the Music Library Association's Walter Gerboth Award for 2010.

Example 2

Also in 2007, the Cello Music Cataloger's correspondence developed into negotiations that resulted in the procurement of two more distinguished libraries for the Collection—those of Lev Aronson and Lubomir Georgiev. It is important to note that these “negotiations” were extensively collaborative, involving in different ways and to different extents the Director of the University Libraries and the Dean of the School of Music, as well as the Heads of Cataloging, Special Collections, and the Music Library.

Example 3

In 2009, the Cello Music Cataloger organized and raised funds for an extensive oral history project on the legacy of Collection donor Bernard Greenhouse. The professional-level film made on location at Greenhouse's Cape Cod home will greatly enhance the Web-presence of the Collection. Even more importantly, this large-scale video project will be linked to the catalog, making use of the rich data contained in bibliographic records, while demonstrating to librarians and patrons the immense value of the work that catalogers do.

THE CELLO MUSIC CATALOGER IN LIBRARY CONTEXT: COLLEAGUE RESPONSE

There is an observable degree of overlap between aspects of the technical and public services dimensions of the Cello Music Cataloger's position. As UNCG's Special Collections and Chief Monographic Cataloger has noted, this overlap is evident in a film project that makes use of bibliographic data for the purpose of access, such as that described in example three above. This Special Collections cataloger has played a pioneering role in developing a comparable project at UNCG, the *American Trade Bindings Digital Library*,² and suggests digital design as a possible area in which the Cello Music Cataloger might look to develop new skills.

Certainly the colleague most keenly aware of the overlapping responsibilities inherent in the position of Cello Music Cataloger is the Head of Cataloging, who is very impressed with the extensive outreach involved but is concerned about the amount of time this takes from the central task of cataloging. This important issue of time-management presents the greatest single challenge of the position. In this regard, the phrase “chief resource person” may well be the most dangerous phrase in the Cello Music Cataloger's job description, as there is often no predicting where such an open-ended charge might lead.

One possible approach to the organizational problems discussed above may be found in the model represented by the position of Electronic Resources and Metadata Cataloging Librarian (see Appendix 2). Although this position has only been in existence for about three years, it has developed quickly for a number of reasons, and is supported by an Electronic Resources Cataloging Assistant. The Electronic Resources Cataloger serves as team leader for the Institutional Repository Workflow Team, which is associated with the NC DOCKS Contents Processing Team. The membership includes representatives from the Acquisitions and Cataloging Departments, as well as the manager of Preservation Services. As NC DOCKS is a digital institutional repository for the scholarly output of five North Carolina universities, the workflow is heavy, needless to say, and the pressure considerable. While the Cello Music Collection is not quite so near the “cutting edge” as the Institutional Repository, such an approach to workflow management nevertheless provides a promising model. With this in mind, the Head of Cataloging and the Cello Music Cataloger have begun scheduling meetings at regular

intervals with members of Special Collections whose responsibilities include the cello music materials. *Workflow* is usually the first item on the agenda.

In general, University Library colleagues are impressed with the resourceful, energetic approach the Cello Music Cataloger has taken over the last three years. And both the Head of Technical Services and the Music Librarian appreciate a cataloger who is obviously enthusiastic about outreach and happy to have “one foot in public services.” Finally, the Library Director has commented favorably on the Cello Music Cataloger’s “strong focus on marketing and donor development,” which gathers up the energy of successful events such as the Cello Celebrations and, more recently, a conference hosted by UNCG entitled “Inspiration, Innovation, Celebration: an Entrepreneurial Conference for Librarians.” Jointly sponsored by Wake Forest University and UNCG in June 2009, this conference included a presentation by the Director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky. Inspired by this, the Cello Music Cataloger immediately got to work on the Bernard Greenhouse oral history and film project.

CONCLUSION

Obviously enough, the position of Cello Music Cataloger is still in its formative years—and the early twenty-first century, as noted earlier, is hardly a period conducive to easy formation. One clear advantage of the position, however, is a subtlety of design that blends the narrowly specialized and the broadly creative. This has already proven beneficial to the Collection, as it has enabled the Cello Music Cataloger to take full advantage of unforeseen opportunities and to enjoy the experience. Another way of thinking about this would be to say that the position has been successful thus far because it is well-suited to unpredictable, rapidly changing times. As such, it makes use of traditional skills as needed, but also facilitates retooling as unexpected needs arise. In mapping directions for the future, however, perhaps the clear reason for optimism—one might even say for celebration—is the rich historical movement that generated the Cello Music Collection in the first place, and eventually made necessary the existence of a Cello Music Cataloger. As this movement continues, it bears testimony to the cultural impact of monumental library collections.

APPENDIX 1

Title: Cello Music Cataloger

Dept: Library

Position Number: 3152

This Position Was Last Updated: 8/1/2006

Responsibilities:

The University Libraries seek an experienced and knowledgeable individual for the position of Cello Music Cataloger. Reporting to the Head of the Cataloging Department this individual is responsible for cataloging the cello music and manuscripts which represent the cumulated collections of eight renowned cellists and teachers housed in the Jackson Library. This position also works very closely with the Head of Special Collections and Rare Books and the Music Librarian. This is a twelve-month, tenure-track position. Demonstrated professional achievement, professional service, and scholarly/creative activity are required for reappointment and tenure.

The primary responsibility of the music cataloger will be the accurate identification and cataloging of scores, manuscripts and other material such as letters, photographs, and programs that comprise the cello collections.

This individual is responsible for encoding bibliographic data and holdings data, and for processing the cataloged cello materials.

This individual is involved in creating finding aids for this material and any necessary metadata description.

This individual is expected to conduct related public service for the cello collections and serve as the chief resource person for these collections.

This individual will have opportunities to participate in the discussions and decision-making processes that enhance cello music cataloging procedures.

Additional responsibilities include aiding in the cataloging and/or creating web based finding aids for manuscripts and rare books that comprise the holdings of Special Collections and University Archives.

Work Environment

UNCG is a doctoral, research-intensive institution with an enrollment of over 15,000, 22 doctoral degree programs, 59 master's degree programs, and a broad range of academic programs for undergraduate education. The University Libraries support the learning and research missions of the University through its print and electronic resources,

reference and instructional services, and other outreach programs, with collections of 1.2 million volumes, over 4,300 current journal subscriptions, more than 30,000 electronic journals, and over 300 databases. The University's 190-acre campus is one mile from the center of Greensboro, a city of more than 230,000 and is in the Piedmont Triad (with a population of over 1 million), an area of great natural beauty, diverse industry, cultural arts, and mild temperature.

Qualifications:

Required Qualifications

An ALA-accredited MLS, with an additional degree in music, and experience with music cataloging and SIRSI Workflows is required. Strong organizational skills and oral and written communication skills are expected. Must be a self-starter and able to work independently as well as a part of a team in a collegial environment. Must be able to assume responsibility and accomplish goals. Must demonstrate the ability to work effectively with a highly diverse group of faculty, staff, students, and coworkers in a courteous and professional manner. Evidence of potential to maintain an ongoing program of professional involvement and development at a level that would merit reappointment and tenure is expected and supported.

Preferred Qualifications:

Experience in original and copy cataloging using OCLC, knowledge of cataloging standards (AACR2, LCSH, MARC21 and metadata practices). Familiarity with description of rare books and manuscript materials, as well as, developing finding aids is preferred.

Deadline:

Preference will be given to applications received by April 30, 2006. Position will remain open until filled.

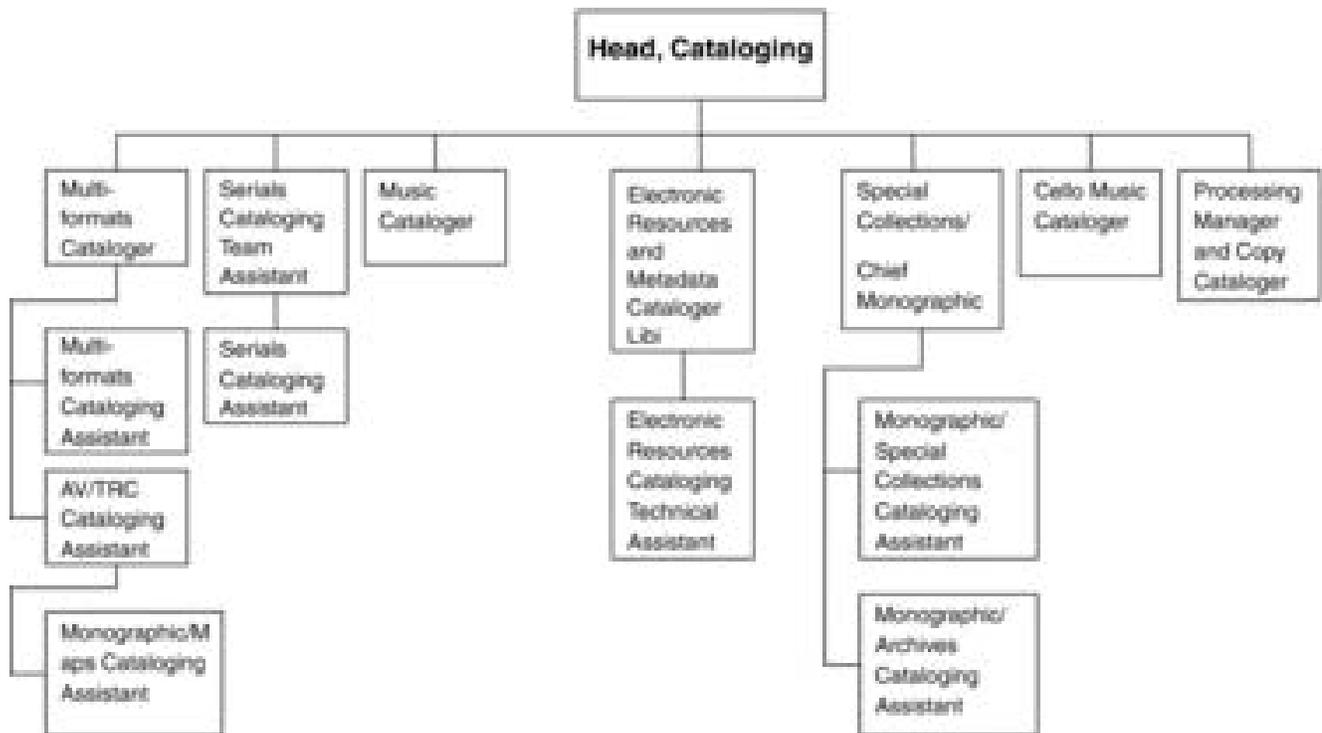
Salary:

The salary for this position is competitive and depends upon qualifications and experience. Standard benefits include state or optional (including TIAA/CREF) retirement plans, state health plan, and 24 vacation days per year.

Effective Date:

Starting date is negotiable.

APPENDIX 2



Notes

1. Walter Clinton Jackson Library, *Cello Music Collections in the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro* (Greensboro, N.C.: Walter Clinton Jackson Library, 1978), ix.

2. The University Libraries, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, *American Trade Bindings Digital Library*, n.d. <http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/atb.php> (accessed December 20, 2009).