

BCC2003/MTP/1**Task Force to Advise the Music Thesaurus Project**
Report from the 2003 Austin Conference

Over the past two years the Music Thesaurus Project Advisory Task Force has worked on compiling a list of form and genre terms related to music. As the first step in this process, the Task Force used the book, *Music Subject Headings: Compiled from Library of Congress Subject Headings*, 2nd ed. (Lake Crystal, Minn.: Soldier Creek Press, 1998), as a source for these terms. Each Library of Congress heading was examined to determine if it contained a form or genre term, a musical instrument or ensemble term, or a language term. These individual terms were deconstructed into their constituent parts from the original LCSH pre-coordinated heading. For example, the terms in the heading, "Songs (High voice) with piano," were placed in two separate lists: "songs" in the form/genre list and "high voice" and "piano"--two separate terms--in the musical instruments list.

It is obvious that there is a great deal of duplication of terms in LCSH due to pre-coordination, but we found it a little surprising how few unique form/genre terms are actually present in the subject heading list. In our final lists there are 734 form/genre terms, 550 instrument headings, and more than 400 languages represented in this selection from LCSH consisting of tens of thousands of headings.

There were many issues raised in the course of this exercise that turned out to be quite thorny ones with which the Task Force is still wrestling. One such example is whether terms such as "orchestral music" or "choral music" are form/genre terms or are they more statements about the medium of performance? Are terms such as "Jewish music" or "Taoist music" to be represented in the form/genre facet or would such terms more properly be handled by a facet dealing with ethnicity or religious aspects of music? These are questions the group has not yet thoroughly resolved and could be part of future deliberations.

At the February 2003 meeting, Keith Jenkins from Simmons College presented work that he did independently of the Task Force but was similar in its methodology. Again using LCSH as a source, he created a thesaurus of terms related to musical instruments. The data is coded in XML and is available on a web site. His listing contains 1483 terms. Of these, 629 are authorized forms of the terms and the remainder are cross references.

The lists developed by the Task Force still require further review to resolve some of the questions that arose. Through this process it should be possible to further refine the definitions of form and genre and allow us to include terminology from other sources to enrich the vocabulary that we now have.

Submitted by Jerry McBride
Chair, Task Force to Advise the Music Thesaurus Project

Last updated June 7, 2003