Sheet Music Consortium: Metadata Tools and Participation

Sponsor: Bibliographic Control Committee

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Sheet Music Consortium: History and Services
(Stephen Davison, University of California at Los Angeles)

The Sheet Music Consortium (http://digital.library.ucla.edu/sheetmusic/) was developed as a community-based shared metadata resource for sheet music employing Open Archives Initiative (OAI) technology for metadata harvesting. Initial collaboration by UCLA, Indiana University, Duke and Johns Hopkins led to the launch of version 1 of the SMC site in 2003, which provided search and browsing options for half a dozen sheet music collections. To further develop the community and services, the consortium sponsored planning meetings, supported by an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Planning Grant for 2007-2008, where discussions focused on matters such as appropriate metadata for music collections, guidelines for cataloging sheet music, the definition of sheet music, and handling legacy data. An IMLS Leadership Grant for 2009-2011 aims to transform the service to a 2.0 model, enabling richer and user-contributed metadata, and to widen the circle of potential contributors.

Stephen previewed the new development website (http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/sheetmusic/), which should go live in March 2011. In addition to data normalization, planned developments include: defining the content scope; developing resource pages; providing advanced searching, usage stats, downloadable XML, and citation export; and enabling RSS feeds and other communication strategies. Usability assessment and functional testing of the website are also slated for the coming year.

Tools for Data Providers (Jenn Riley, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Jenn, Co-Principal Investigator on the IMLS grant in her previous tenure at Indiana University, described the data provider tools that IU has been developing to make it easier to contribute data to the SMC. The first is a set of format-neutral metadata guidelines, intended to provide a non-prescriptive, functionality-based set of guidelines to help users assess the impact of their decisions.

The second tool, the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) static repository gateway, grew out of a need for a more user-friendly method of contributing metadata. Until recently, records could only be harvested through a system with an integrated OAI-PMH data provider module, such as ContentDM, or through an institution's existing standalone metadata creation system, which requires an OAI-PMH data provider and in-house technical expertise.

To lower this technical barrier, the OAI-PMH static repository gateway was developed, allowing a user to upload an Excel spreadsheet, map its fields into the required formats for SMC, using an online data mapping tool based on Emory University's Metadata Migrator, and output an XML file. After the user puts this on a web server and registers it, the gateway takes care of all the technical work of harvesting the metadata. Jenn mentioned the In Harmony Sheet Music metadata creation tool as an open-source alternative for producing the XML file.

Now in development is a Report Card tool, which will assess how closely data conforms to SMC metadata guidelines. Among other things, it would check for core elements such as title, name, date, and subject and verify the use of controlled vocabulary, if applicable.

Analyzing and Documenting the Stitt-Harper Sheet Music Collection: Butler University's Experience (Sheri Stormes and Scott Pfitzinger, Butler University)

Performing and Fine Arts Librarian Sheri Storms presented a history of the collection, which consists of popular ballads donated by Asel Spellman Stitt, a local musician active in the early 20th century, and popular sheet music collected by

broadcasting pioneer Ann Wagner Harper. Sheri described earlier attempts to describe the collection, one of which used a homegrown data system that failed midway through the project. By 2009, they'd decided to enter data into Excel spreadsheets, and while this was underway, Sheri responded to Jenn's call for volunteers to help evaluate the new SMC tools. Soon thereafter, the Stitt-Harper collection was chosen as the beta test for the new OAI-PMH gateway.

Scott Pfitzinger, Information Commons and Technology Librarian, provided the support technologist's view of the project. Butler's IT department had salvaged the original data from the failed homegrown system, but a lot of manual cleanup was required. To facilitate data entry on the remainder of the collection, Scott customized the form function in Excel. He shared some examples from the collection, pointing out idiosyncrasies in the sheet music format that present challenges for bibliographic description. In early February 2011, using the metadata mapping tool and the OAI-PMH static repository gateway, 2,222 records for the Stitt-Harper collection were incorporated into the Sheet Music Consortium and the beta test was declared a success.

For more information on becoming an SMC contributor, or to send feedback, contact Stephen Davison at sdavison@library.ucla.edu. Michelle Dalmau (mailto:mcdalmau@indiana.edu) is the new SMC co-director at Indiana University and will oversee the continuing development of data provider tools.