



PERFORMING
ARTS RESOURCES

THEATRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

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An introduction is presented in which the author outlines the challenges of delivering library instruction to student scholar-artists in the performing arts and gives an overview of the articles in this issue.

WHEN teaching library sessions for student scholar-artists in the performing arts I begin with a provocation: our library—and academic libraries in general—are not meant for you. Research libraries are organized top to bottom around the production of citational, text-based scholarship. Many of the students performing arts librarians teach do produce citational scholarship to fulfill the history, theory, and criticism requirements that form the core of the curricula for most performing arts departments and programs. However, these students also regularly produce work that, although no less rigorous, is decidedly not textual in nature, in mediums of dance, design, acting, and so forth. After issuing the above provocation I tell students that I consider them as alchemists of sorts. Rather than using text-based, citational scholarship to produce additional text-based, citational scholarship, they gather scholarly books, articles, images, sound recordings, and archival materials, for example, and toss them all into the bain-marie to fish out light plots, choreographies, and character profiles, transforming their initial research materials into something completely new. These ingredients, I tell them, can be found in abundance at academic libraries, however they must use the library subversively, employing strategic approaches in navigation and information literacy that run counter to the *raison d'être* of most academic libraries. This incongruity between the organization of research libraries and the information seeking habits of scholar-artists is but one of many challenges I have encountered in my efforts to offer discipline-specific library instruction to the students I am lucky to work with.

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I volunteered to edit this issue of *Performing Arts Resources* on instruction because although I work at an institution with a strong commitment to the arts and artistic research I often feel as if I am working through these challenges alone. As many of the authors who contributed to this issue observe, there is a dearth of LIS literature that addresses library instruction for the performing arts. As an early career performing arts librarian, I have noticed this absence keenly. To fill this gap I wanted to explore how my peers at other institutions were approaching library instruction and what they were thinking about when it came to their work in the classroom. Based on the high number of submissions received it appears that I am not alone in this. For many of us, learning and developing strategies for delivering discipline-specific library instruction for our students is one of the highest priorities.

The articles in this issue offer a wide range of methods and approaches to instruction but can be organized into three key themes: moving library instruction beyond the classroom, articulating specific pedagogical approaches to library instruction for performing arts students, and adapting existing information literacy structures for use in the performing arts. Although each of the articles fits squarely within one of these themes, there is considerable overlap between them. Across the articles we see recurring interest in information literacy, in building sustainable connections with students and faculty in the performing arts, and in making the library a more exciting and welcoming space for this particular set of users.

Erin Carney, Scott Stone, and I, in our respective articles, explore the benefits of bringing the library (or at least parts of it) to the places where performing arts student-scholars spend the bulk of their time and where they are most likely to be engaged and attentive, such as in theatre buildings, rehearsal rooms, and performance spaces. Carney presents an approach to library pop-ups specific to performing arts materials and patrons. I describe a method of working with artist-mentors with the aim of bringing scalable library instruction into the rehearsal room. Finally, Scott Stone focuses on a specific type of library material—artists' books—that can be used to shape and inspire artists' work beyond the library classroom and into the dance studio.

Addressing the question of which pedagogical approaches are best suited to working with performing arts students, Elizabeth Coen describes the use of situated learning theories in the theatre history classroom, offering a model that can be used in a wide variety of history, theory, and criticism courses. Bret McCandless, Valerie Marcus Ramshur, and Christopher Cartmill demonstrate how direct and indirect research methods can be used dramaturgically, presenting a model that can be applied in multiple ways within the context of library instruction for scholar-artists in the performing arts.

Anna Grau Schmidt, Andrea Beckendorf, and Tom Bickley introduce readers to the Music Companion to the Association of College and Research Libraries'

Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, showing how the framework can be adapted for use not only to better serve the study of music but in other performing arts disciplines as well. This work speaks directly to the question of how best to approach information literacy for performing arts students, a question that surfaces in many of the articles in this issue.

Lastly, Stephanie Bonjack addresses the preservation of cultural heritage materials during times of war. Given the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere, this article is extraordinarily important and timely. Although it does not address library instruction, this article instructs us, as performing arts librarians, as to how we can support or initiate efforts to preserve the irreplaceable materials often targeted and otherwise put at risk during times of war.

It is my sincere hope that this issue goes a long way toward addressing the gap that has been identified in the existing LIS literature and gives current and future performing arts librarians a sense of the many possible approaches to instruction for performing arts students within the library and beyond. I also hope that this is only the beginning of a conversation in our field that will continue in scholarship, at conferences, at meetups, and other spaces and places where we encounter each other. Our field may be relatively small and niche, but there's no need for any of us to go it alone.