

# Information Futures Commission

## Submission:

## The future of resources for Music, Visual and Performing Arts Libraries

Georgina Binns, Music, Visual and Performing Arts Librarian, Southbank campus.

[gbinns@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:gbinns@unimelb.edu.au)

### Executive summary

Music, visual and performing arts are “media hungry” disciplines requiring a range of different information-rich formats (analogue and digital) in supportive library collections. The University of Melbourne Library is currently providing services that are adequate, but there is evidence to indicate there needs to be a faster, more proactive response to rapidly moving information technology. There are not enough library seats nor computer access. Further creativity and expense need to be made, to support state of the art digital resources to the new Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music from 2009. Some examples of leading arts library initiatives are provided in Section 2, highlighting the direction that the library can take to support changes in arts education and the media world. In order to address this the following points need to be considered:

- Ensuring adequate equipment (PC and MAC and other digital equipment)
- Equitable access for all, especially with high volume streaming/storage digital audio and visual requirements, especially with expanding research focus.
- Adequate digital storage space for the large amount of data generated in the audio and visual digital environments.
- Prioritise and fund digitisation of rare and difficult to replace collections.
- Copyright and licensing arrangements for the digitisation of collections and ensuring appropriate academic editions in digital formats are available.
- Provision of a consistent and logical interface for the delivery of resources including audio and visual media, alongside the more mainstream catalogue, reference and journal and e-book delivery.
- Awareness of format redundancy – continue to support equipment, or transfer to appropriate format.
- Consideration of all of these issues, focussing on the students/staff versus teaching/research nexus in the context of the library as an archive or a research library? – should we keep it all and maintain the equipment, or continually upgrade data into whatever archival standard is current. Or should we take the public library approach and only keep what is used.

## 1. Present state:

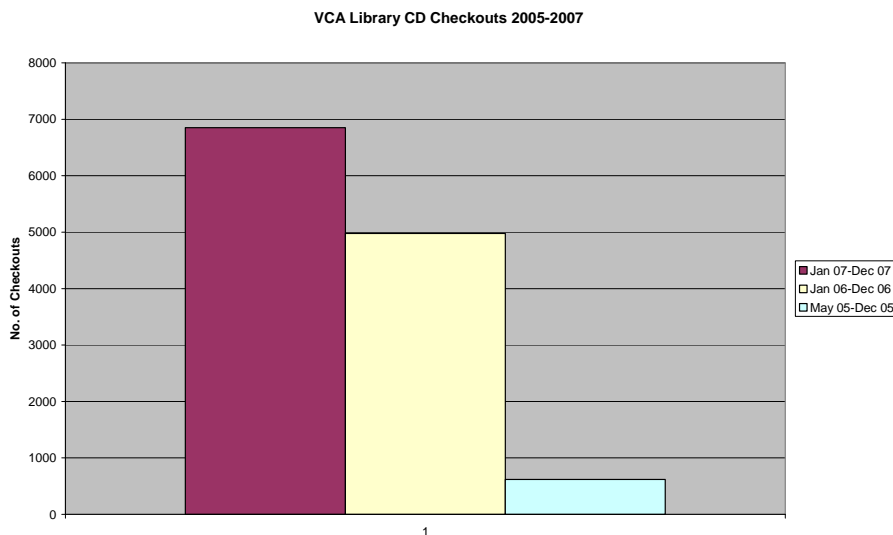
Music, visual and performing arts libraries are currently in a state of mid-repose between the analogue and digital publishing spheres.

**“Media heavy”** - These libraries are “media-heavy” in comparison to the usual books and journals (print or electronic) required in other academic disciplines. In addition, music scores, sound recordings, DVDs and other formats are required to support the teaching and research activities in the visual and performing arts. Specialised staff are required to select and support these collections through adequate cataloguing for accurate access and information reference services.

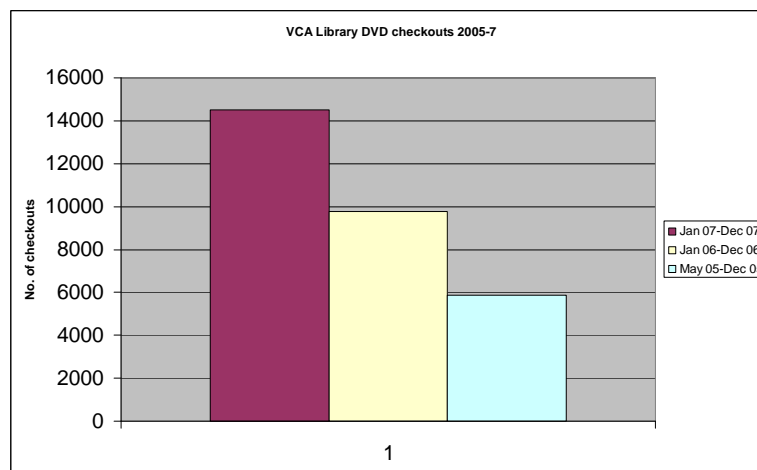
**Flexible delivery** - In the studio-based, practically orientated teaching and research that occurs in the visual and performing arts disciplines, there is still a need for library materials to be taken and viewed/listened/read in this environment.

**Loans** - Collections continue to be in demand by our students and staff as “objects” to be borrowed, taken home, viewed/listened to, (possibly “copied/burned/ripped”) and returned. The following graphs indicate growth in CD, DVD and Music Scores loans at the VCA Library in the past 3 years.

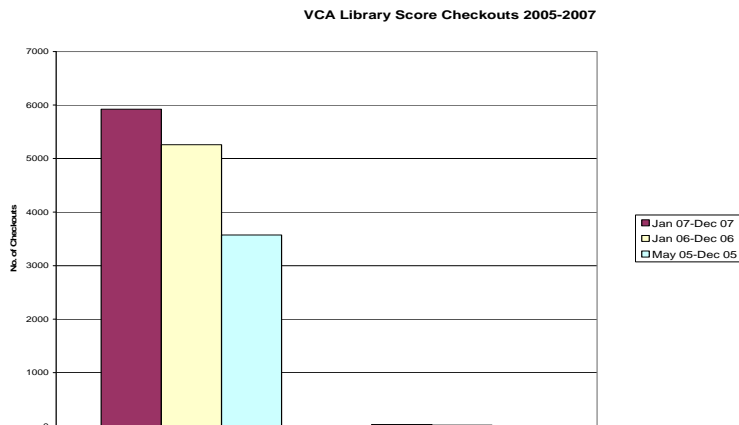
### VCA Library CD Checkouts 2005-7



### VCA Library DVD Checkouts 2005-7



## VCA Library Music Score Checkouts 2005-7



**Analogue vs. Digital** - Digital books and journals are still not the norm in music, visual and performing arts. The high production values required for portraying the artistic image is indicative in the number of art journals not available full text. The image does not transfer well. With teaching less reliant on textbooks, as in other disciplines such as economics, commerce, medicine etc, the requirements are more diverse and less predictable. Many of the titles required come from small publishing runs and are less likely to be available in digital format.

An example - The libraries still maintain a vinyl record collection. Many recordings have still not been released digitally, and the importance of access to historic recordings, offering a range of interpretations is extremely important for the performer, the conductors and the musicologists.

**Equipment** - is maintained in libraries to support our collections eg Video players, Turntables, Laserdisc / DVD and CD players, Cassette and Mini disc players. Many students no longer have turntables or video players in the home environment. The library continues to support collections such as vinyl records, with turntables.

Much of the collections held in older technology formats, are either not available in a digital format, or there have been insufficient funds to replace in digital, even if a digital form is available. There are many important historical performances not available on CD so the collections are maintained as working collections. Alongside these collections, extensive collections in digital format eg.CDs have and are being developed. There has been the need to build collections in the preferred CD format, and to maintain publication coverage – not allowing the collections to fall behind, become redundant, and remain relevant to the teaching and research.

Off-air recordings (audio and video) are made and available for streaming from the University website. Recent updates include accessibility to High Definition and cable television channels.

**Use of library collections/ media in teaching spaces** - Lecture theatres and teaching spaces are still in need of technology upgrades in many parts of the university, especially at the VCA. Streaming from off-air university web sites or even the provision of a DVD player to play DVDs is a challenge at times. Digital libraries of art images, video, music are available, but not being utilised to the extent that they should be due to inadequate teaching technologies.

## **2. Current initiatives which are impacting on world practice in the delivery of information for the visual and performing arts.**

### **Digital video -**

**UbuWeb** < Ubu.com > is a digital video archive and a “completely independent resource dedicated to all strains of the avant-garde, ethnopoetics, and outsider arts”. All materials on UbuWeb are being made available for non-commercial and educational use only. It is currently being used by the VCA academics and students as a major resource, supplementing the mainstream DVD/video collections in the library. The content of this style of archive will rarely be available in the commercial area, so it is important to acknowledge access and support of this style of resource.

**Online subscription services** – *Opera on Video, Drama on Video* services are currently available and under trial. There are also many commercial sites available for streaming, aimed at the domestic market, and primary/secondary education markets. These services are in their early stages of delivery and content provision and can be heavily American focussed and providing more mainstream titles, which are not necessarily required in the music, visual and performing arts creative milieu. Independent, art house, documentary, and specialist music and dance videos are currently not available through these types of services. Although they could be the way of the future, with the domestic requirements often proving leaders in future library/education suppliers of databases.

### **Digital Music -**

**Variations3** is a digital music library software system, under development at the Indiana University Library, and is being used in select conservatoires in the US. It provides online access to streaming audio and scanned score images with a flexible access control framework to ensure respect for intellectual property. In addition to access tools, Variations also includes analysis and annotation tools useful in music teaching and learning. With Variations, institutions can digitize materials from their own collections and provide those materials to their students and faculty in support of teaching, learning, and research. <<http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/projects/variations3/>> This type of tool should be considered to facilitate undergraduate online teaching and a collaborative approach taken to develop an Australian model.

Closer to home, **Music Australia** < <http://www.musicaustralia.org> > is developed by the National Library of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive and other Australian cultural institutions. It provides information on Australian music, musicians, organisations and services through music scores, sound recordings, websites and a range of other music-related material, both heritage and contemporary. These are held by Australia's cultural institutions or specialist music services.

Melbourne University, with its significant music cultural collections, offers great potential for digitisation of these objects, and making them available for research and performance through this “one-stop shop” for Australian music

**Digital music stand** - The future of the music score is being expanded with the introduction of the digital music stand. See < <http://www.musicreader.net/> >. Tablet-style screens with built in memory allow music to be viewed on a stand. Some trials have been done in the United States, but further development and modification are required for use in high end training and professional orchestras and ensembles.

**Print – on demand via electronic download** is growing as a delivery mechanism. IT is essential in the delivery of digital music editions and in an academic environment it is also essential that reputable editions are available. The current copyright limitations are encouraging poor editions to be made available digitally, and not suitable for use at this level.

### 3. The future:

The main issues that will be of concern in ensuring the library continues to support the requirements of the visual and performing arts information needs are as follows:

- Ensuring adequate equipment upgrades and identifying appropriate equipment for supporting changing format requirements, and quality image and sound.
- To provide equitable access for all, especially with the storage “hungry” audio and visual requirements in the visual and performing arts. Students need to access on campus, not necessarily able to rely on home delivery.
- Copyright and licensing arrangements
  - o for the digitisation of collections
  - o providing appropriate academic editions in digital format
- Adequate digital storage space for the large amount of data generated in the audio and visual digital environments.
  - o in the provision of library services
  - o for research storage of data
- Provision of a consistent and logical interface for the delivery of resources including audio and visual media, alongside the more mainstream catalogue, reference and journal and e-book delivery.
- Awareness of format redundancy – continue to support equipment, or transfer to appropriate format.
- Consideration of all of these issues, focussing on the students/staff versus teaching/research nexus in the context of the library as an archive or a research library? – should we keep it all and maintain the equipment, or continually upgrade data into whatever archival standard is current. Or should we take the public library approach and only keep what is used.