Committee & Interest Group News

ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE SEEKING MEMBERS

The usual, annual call for members for the Archives and Special Collections Committee was delayed due to a mid-year change in leadership. The committee chair now invites all who work with music archival and special collections materials to apply for membership. There are five openings on the committee; all interested applicants are invited to attend and participate in the committee meeting in Norfolk next year regardless of membership status.

Information about the committee and its recent activities

Please send a brief statement of interest (under 200 words) and a CV to Maristella Feustle, Chair, Archives and Special Collections Committee, MLA.

Public Libraries Column

MUSIC COLLECTIONS AND PROGRAMMING AT THE TAMPA-HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Adam E. Berkowitz

As society grows ever more comfortable with rapidly advancing technologies, libraries have had to remain flexible and adapt to the ever changing needs of their patrons and communities. The ubiquitous nature of the Internet and World Wide Web has drastically reduced the need for ready reference services, encouraged a shift from physical material collections to digital collections, and given information seekers a non-library alternative. Libraries have had to determine what kinds of products and services can be offered that will attract more patrons, remain relevant regardless of the growth of Internet use, and set up the library as a destination for more than just books and magazines. Necessity is the mother of invention, and such creative ways of thinking have inspired libraries to incorporate 3D items into their circulating collections, create designated spaces for learning and creation (i.e. makerspaces), and work with community partners to program new library events which drive circulation through effectively merchandised collections.

The Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library has spent many years focusing on remaining relevant to the communities which it serves, bringing new technologies, products, and services to its patrons, and providing
high quality customer service. In recent years, the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library has found innovative ways to drive its music collections and partner with music organizations in the Tampa Bay area. By collaborating with organizations like the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society and The Florida Orchestra, the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library has expanded its circulating collection thereby offering new products to patrons, and it has brought a new variety of programming to its communities which has attracted more patrons into its libraries.

On May 30, 2015, the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society announced that it would be donating fifty ukulele kits to the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library and the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative, a neighboring public library system. These kits are comprised of a ukulele, a carrying case, a tuner, a method book, and an instructional DVD. The Tampa Bay Ukulele Society’s mission in giving back to the community is to expose the public to the fun that can be had playing the ukulele and its wide variety of literature. Ukulele kits are available for check-out to any library card holder, can be borrowed for up to three weeks, and are housed at several branches across the county. In addition to their donation, members of the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society have dedicated themselves to consistently offering group lessons on a monthly basis at the branches where the ukulele kits are available. This allows patrons to visit one of the library locations to borrow a ukulele kit, and then, stay for a free lesson. The Tampa Bay Ukulele Society also leads jam sessions in several of the libraries where patrons can bring the ukuleles they’ve borrowed or bring their own from home to play songs in an ensemble setting.

The popularity of these ukulele kits was rather unexpected. Since making the ukulele kits available, they have been borrowed a total of 721 times with the vast majority of those patrons classified as adult residents. In addition, patrons can put the ukulele kits on hold which has created an extremely lengthy waiting list. The waiting list was so long, that it wasn’t until March of this year that a ukulele kit was returned to one of the branches without needing to put it on hold for another patron. The popularity of the ukulele kits also reflects the popularity of the lessons and jam sessions facilitated by the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society which has seen record attendance numbers. In 2019 alone, the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society has scheduled 59 events, and each event, so far, has attracted more and more people to the library’s branches.

The Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library has also just recently cultivated a partnership with The Florida Orchestra, a MOLA orchestra based in St. Petersburg. The Florida Orchestra facilitates instrument petting zoos where children and adults are exposed to the variety of instruments found in a typical orchestra. Three of these events were scheduled at library branches this year with each event consisting of three one-hour long sessions. A limit of 20 attendees was put in place for each session so that everyone could better enjoy their time learning about the different instruments, ask questions about the instruments and The Florida Orchestra, and, of course, get a chance to play each instrument. Each session was divided into two 30-minute segments – 30 minutes for the presentation and Q&A session, and 30 minutes for the attendees to play each instrument. Attendance was maxed out for each session bringing the total number of attendees to 180 adults and children. The majority of attendees at these events were children accompanied by their parents and children accompanied by summer camp counselors.

In order to drive the library’s circulation of “classical” music, displays were created that featured CD’s and DVD’s of orchestras, concert bands, and chamber ensembles as well as soloists. These served as focal points for patrons who were coming to and leaving from the instrument petting zoos. As such, many patrons stopped to browse the displays to see what kind of music the branches had to offer in their collections. In addition, the
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displays and the classical music sections of the branches were used to help answer questions patrons had during the instrument petting zoos. Many questions that were asked during the instrument petting zoos consisted of: Who’s a good musician to listen to? Do you have any music featuring this instrument? This instrument reminds me of this one song, can you help me find a recording of it? Library staff members were able to guide patrons who attended the events to the collections housed in the branches as well as the library’s online catalog. In addition, patrons were educated about the use of the library’s digital resources. Many patrons were surprised to learn that the library offers music streaming services. On one occasion, a patron knew exactly what she was looking for, but none of the branches possessed an album with the requested piece of music, nor was the piece available through any of the music streaming services. The patron was, then, directed to WorldCat where she was able to find a CD with the piece of music she was looking for, and she was shown how to request it through the library’s ILL service page.

Due to the success of this new partnership with The Florida Orchestra, the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library explored the idea of including concerts performed by The Florida Orchestra in its Discovery Pass services. The Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library’s Discovery Pass provides a one-time, free admission to a tour or attraction in the Tampa Bay area. The Discovery Pass expires after a week, but it can be placed on hold much like any other item at the library. The Discovery Pass was already comprised of the following kinds of attractions: theatres and performing arts centers, zoos and aquariums, conservation parks, and a variety of museums. All things considered, The Florida Orchestra naturally fits into the library’s current offerings. The Discovery Pass will cover The Florida Orchestra’s 2019-2020 concert season, and includes the Tampa Bay Times Masterworks series, the Raymond James Pops series, and the Coffee Concerts series which covers a wide variety of music selections ranging from Bach’s St. John Passion and Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 to contemporary superhero movie scores. Because The Florida Orchestra’s concerts were only just added to the Discovery Pass on September 18th, it is too soon to consider circulation statistics; however, the Discovery Pass is an extremely popular service among patrons, and it is expected that this new addition will only increase the Discovery Pass’ popularity.

The Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library is always looking for new opportunities to bring new products and services to its patrons. Like at any library, this often means being creative, forging partnerships with community organizations, and devising what would have at one time been considered unconventional solutions. The Florida Orchestra and the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society have been excellent partners for the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library, and these partnerships have benefited the library, its patrons, and these organizations. By collaborating with The Florida Orchestra and the Tampa Bay Ukulele Society, the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library is able to promote culture and leisure in its communities by supporting local creativity and through its offering of popular materials. As such, these partnerships bring great success in furthering the library’s mission and strategic plan.

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