

# The Ever-Growing Bibliographic Landscape: Further Developing BU Libraries Fine Arts Collection with Javanese Gamelan

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Ari Hoffman

## History/Overview of Javanese Gamelan

- **Origins/Development** : Javanese Gamelan has its roots in ancient Indonesia. Gamelan can be traced back to the 8th century. The music system revolves around a collection of gongs, metallophones, and drums, often accompanied by vocals (Michaelsen, 2010).
- **Court and Religious Significance** : Gamelan was primarily developed within the courts of Javanese kings. These kings attempted to use music as a means to show superiority. The music was often considered sacred and regal, as it was often played at royal ceremonies, religious rituals, and state events.
- **Gamelan and Islam**: The arrival of Islam in Java in the 15th century influenced the integration of Islamic elements into the music. The core of Gamelan remained intact, however, Islamic themes and ceremonial practices gradually began to blend with the performances. There was even a resistance to secularism once Islam became prominent (Sullivan, 2014).

## Why decolonize/diversify library collections?

- In academic libraries, fine arts collections, and music departments across the country, collection gaps are extremely common.
  - Western Art Music is the primary focus of research and teaching.
  - This traditionally makes ethnomusicological studies secondary.
  - The Classical Music Canon should not be ignored, but it is time implement more World music materials into our collections.
- The philosophy behind libraries is to provide accessible information for all.
  - If we keep only educating on certain cultures, our knowledge of societal themes, issues, and philosophies will become heavily skewed.
- Five Laws of Library Science by S. R. Ranganathan, 1931
  1. Books Are For Use
  2. Every Reader His/Her Book
  3. Every Book Its Reader
  4. Save The Time Of The Reader
  5. The Library Is A Growing Organism

## Identifying gaps in our collection

In order to understand our collection gap, it's important to simulate a search for Gamelan music through the catalog. Typing 'Gamelan' in the search bar, it would retrieve 2,358 results. To be clear, the material that this database has includes our physical collection, most of the online collection, and works at other institutions that we have access to. Out of the 2,358 results, this is the configuration of material:

- Limit to 'held by library' (onsite): 81
- Limit to 'available online' (accessible to BU users): 2,024
- Limit by format to Books - Held by library 51 ; Online 51
- Limit by format to Audio - Held by library 25 ; Online 18
- Limit by format to Score - Held by library 0 ; Online 22
- Limit by format to Video - Held by library 1 ; Online 16

There is clearly room for improvement and growth. These numbers show that there is an obvious lack of physical material, as well as limited online material. After doing a brief search on our databases, one is able to identify this collection gap. Having a more accessible selection of physical print and sound materials should be a priority.

## Recommendations for collection development

For our current collection, I would recommend Indonesian Gamelan using a variety of formats. Three digital media databases/subscriptions that I would recommend include:

- "Music Online: Contemporary World Music"
- "Music Online: Smithsonian Global Sound for Libraries"
- Both of these are a product of Alexander Street, a prominent resource for academic libraries.
- World Music subscription from Naxos Music Library
- Naxos is another large resource for music departments and fine arts libraries

As recommended by ethnomusicology faculty in the BU Music Department, these online databases would be easily accessible for a wide range of students.

An important factor in justifying the acquisition of additional library materials is considering the habits of library users. When researching for materials on our databases, a user might often see that a material is available via "Interlibrary Loan". This means that it is available at other institutions, and must be shipped to Binghamton. An individual might feel discouraged by this, think it is a hassle, and end up not borrowing materials because of this.

Other institutions with strong ethnomusicological collections/programs/resources can be consulted for further recommendations. These institutions include Harvard University, UCLA, Indiana University, Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, and the University of Washington.

## Research Objectives

The classical music canon, often emphasizing Western Art Music, remains the primary focus of academic music curricula. As a result, academic library collections may omit materials presenting diverse global musical traditions and cultures. In light of the emphasis on inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in 21st century academic libraries, it is crucial to decolonize fine arts collections to allow exposure to underrepresented composers and marginalized musical communities.

1. Gain a foundational understanding of the purpose and operation of an academic library, especially as relates to music collections.
2. Explore and understand the concepts and scholarship surrounding DEI in the context of music collection development.
3. Identify an underdeveloped area of the BU Libraries music collection and make recommendations for selections to ameliorate the collection gap.

## Ethnomusicology as a whole

- In academia, a clear divide between heavily researched and funded Western music and World music/ethnomusicology.
- Ethnomusicology is a relatively new discipline: for the past forty years or so, it has primarily been an ideographic discipline.
- Themes of "White Man's Burden" in virtually all teaching of world cultures, ethnicities, races, etc.
- More increased trend to tell the untold stories of underrepresented communities with a more diverse group of educators.
- Ethnomusicology is a multidisciplinary study of music in the cultural context. With the study of ethnomusicology, there is an attempt to investigate social, cognitive, biological, comparative, and other aspects involved in music apart from sound.

Additional Research  
and Resources



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