

Another Aspect of Music

Victor CENUȘE
“Octavian Goga” County Library,
Cluj-Napoca

Keywords: aspects of music, Mediateca, case study, user

Abstract

In March 2005 have passed fifteen years since the inauguration of the Mediateca audiovisual department of the Octavian Goga County Library. The paper offers the description of this section along with a case study that assigns a deeper and more concrete representation of this “aspect of music”. The Mediateca offers its users documents both on traditional and on electronic support and it is destined for all categories of users. The author offers a statistics according to sex, occupation, age, type of support, content, as well as a sum-up of the proportions of demand/supply. As a conclusion he asserts that the statistics reveal, as a general image, the demands of the public from the latest music for entertainment as the top of the demand, to folk music at the bottom of the list.

E-mail: victor_cenuse@bjc.ro

Why “another” aspect of Music? Because in a city such as Cluj-Napoca, with a rich cultural life, there are inevitably several “aspects” of music: the Philharmonic orchestra, the two Operas (the Romanian and the Hungarian), the Music Academy, the Music School, the School of Arts and Professions, different musical groups (chamber, choral, folkloric, or bands of different types of music), clubs with a certain profile (pop-rock, jazz, disco music, etc.), and even foreign cultural centers. Amongst all these there is another special aspect – special because of the types of musical collections, services, and users –, the *aspect of music* formed at the **Mediateca** audiovisual department of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library. What is it, what does it offer, and finally, to whom is this “another aspect of Music” addressed? While the other “aspects” offer music of a certain type and they are directed to certain categories of users, the Mediateca Room of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library is *something different*, just as much by the encyclopedic nature of its collections of audiovisual documents, as also by the variety of its cultural

activities and the free access of any category of users, as well as the technical equipment for information *retrieval* and *transmission*. In the followings, I will attempt to demonstrate these statements.

Although the basis of audiovisual collections was created in parallel with the creation of the county library (the first entries in the *Disc Inventory Records* date from 1957), and although towards the end of the 1980s there was a certain rhythm of audiovisual acquisitions and fairly good equipment (needed for a *mediated* transmission of information), the projects – completely visionary then – to create an active audiovisual department did not come to life until the year 1990. It was then that the start of an effective “assembly”, both from the pieces which already existed (audiovisual documents + equipment), and from new ones was initiated: a specialized staff (with higher musical education), a location and equipment.

This department has witnessed in time several inaugurations: the first after 1990 and at the same time the most “official” one (in the presence of the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Dumitru Vartic) was on October 18th, 1991, in a new, modern, but quite peripheral place (the Zorilor district). On that occasion, in accordance with international tendencies, the *Audiovisual Department* was renamed as *Mediateca*. However, the results, that is, the performance and activity indicators proportionate with the equipment and the work invested by the management and the department staff, were only visible after moving to a new place, this time in the center (Kogălniceanu street) on April 14th, 1995. It is self-evident that the acquisition of new equipment and documents on traditional and audiovisual support kept their rhythm despite the “waves of the time”, and the Mediateca continued its participation with equipment and audiovisual documents to the cultural activities of any of the departments of the library, as well as to the activities organized together with other cultural and educational institutions: book presentations, exhibitions, symposiums, concerts, etc.

Due to technical reasons connected to the organization of activities in the new center of the County Library, since October 16th, 2000, the Mediateca temporarily functions within the Children Loan Department in the “Traian Brad” branch library from the Mănăştur district.

Since January 2003, beside the daily activities and cultural events specific to any *public relations* department of a public library, the staff of the Mediateca began, following a period of testing, work on the introduction of all the documents into a database (an electronic

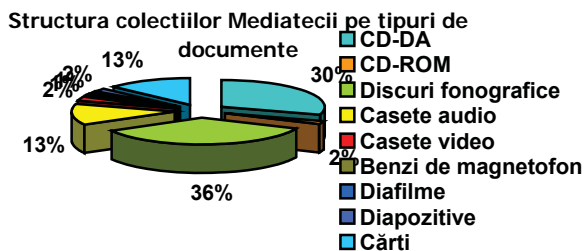
catalogue). This will make information and document retrieval easier, also playing an important part in the improvement of all aspects of a library's general activities, the attractiveness of this musical aspect, and, last but not least, in satisfying the users' needs. The results of this laborious work can already be seen in the whole institution... For who knows not what a rapid information retrieval means, by just hitting a key, without having to "scour" the old, obsolete, traditional catalogue cards...

As for the perspectives, these are connected to moving the Mediateca to the place destined in the new center of the County Library, having all the logistic and human preparations (or, as it would be said today, the *hardware* and the *software*) brought to the European standards needed for reaching that European "normal level" from which we are not very far as it is.

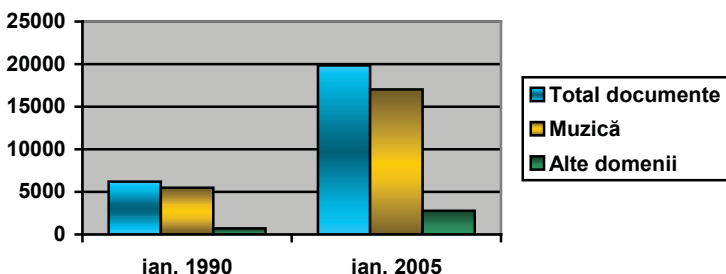
The attractions of this aspect

The documents

On January 1, 1990, the graphic and audiovisual collections of the former *Music* section – then a part of the Special Collections Department – of the Cluj County Library contained around 4,400 phonograph vinyl records, several hundreds of filmstrips and sets of slides, and tens of audio and magnetic tapes. Today, the Mediateca offers a collection of around 7,500 phonograph records, 2,700 audio tapes, 243 magnetic tapes, 650 filmstrips and sets of slides, around 500 video tapes, 6,200 audio CD-s and MP3 discs, 400 CD-ROMs, around 2,800 books on music and arts, and 7 periodical titles of a musical profile, all kept and circulated in conditions approaching the European "normal level". I mean here not only the amount of documents and the encyclopedic nature of the information stored on non-written support (practically belonging to all the UDC classes), but also to the quality of its mediation (decryption, transmission, reception), due to the audio-video and multimedia equipment at the users' disposal.



The domination of music within all the fields (the UDC classes) tells a lot about the attractiveness of this aspect... The class structure of the collections of the Mediateca has kept in time certain proportions neatly favorable for music, which proves once again the clearly defined “inclinations” of this section towards the art of sounds, in the context of these lines... Even if the dominance of music on audio-visual support may seem evident to some (actually, the information coming from other domains is almost exclusively stored on CD-ROMs), the presence of music on paper support may not seem equally evident. It should be mentioned here as well that, of all the printed material, only 8% belongs to other fields – also related, part of the same UDC class (7) –, all the rest of 92 % being divided between different fields of music: musical scores – around 80%, and musicology (works of reference, dictionaries, history of music, biographies, theory of music, musical forms, orchestration, folklore, etc.) – around 20%.



The activities with the public have diversified lately, just as much by events like for instance the *Musical Salon* (which presented recitals and even concerts of young musicians and instrumental and

choral groups from the whole city), as also by the dissemination of music among those who could not come there: the blind, elderly people from the Care and Assistance Center, and children from placement centers. Thus, with the help of the group of volunteers as members of the program “Biblio-volunteers in community service” in the framework of the “Infolibris” Cultural Association – an organization which had as one of its founding members the highly missed librarian of the Library, the late Traian Brad –, they also became “users”. They could benefit thus from the richness of audiovisual documents, and especially of the healing music which the Mediateca has placed at their disposal both in a regular way (as a program of the biblio-volunteers) and on request or on the occasion of special events of these groups.

The last, but not the least attraction of this aspect is the possibility of **free access** for *all the categories of users* who seek information and love music – from nursery school children to retired people, from any socio-professional area – who can fully benefit from the free-of-charge services of the public library.

*

In order to strengthen those said above, I reckoned it would be useful to present a *case study* which, by a deeper and more concrete approach, may form an even clearer idea about the attractiveness of this “aspect”. As an example, I have willingly chosen a period which in time closely followed the middle of the active life of the Mediateca (in March 2005, 15 years have passed since its existence): the year 1999, mentioning that the proportions observed then are mostly the same now as well.

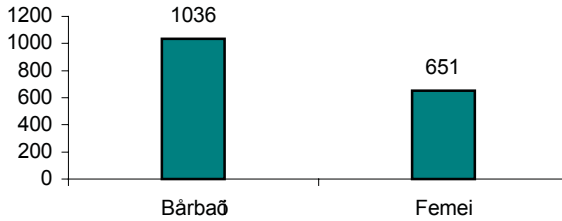
As the Mediateca offers its users documents both on traditional support (which can be touched or seen with bare eyes) and on electronic support (which needs special equipment) destined to all age groups, it would seem at a first sight that it has a public heterogeneous in age and occupation. The reality offered by statistics and the observations of the librarian however proves to be different. This investigation wishes to establish the connections between the structure of the public and its requirements, between the offer of the audiovisual market and the given possibilities of this service in order to find the balance between them and to shape itself according to these tendencies, without abandoning its function of preservation, and to some extent also that of the producer of collective memory, whether artistic, scientific, or of a different nature.

In 1999 the statistics presented the following:

1687 registered users, from which:

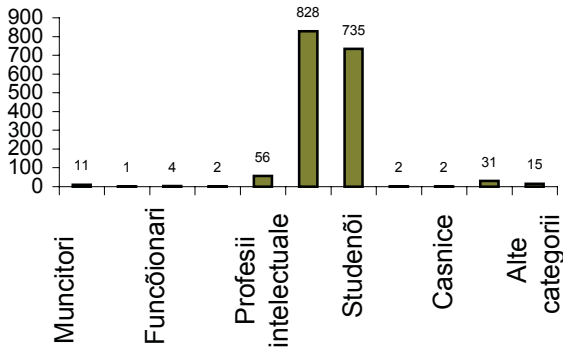
A. According to sex:

- Men
- Women



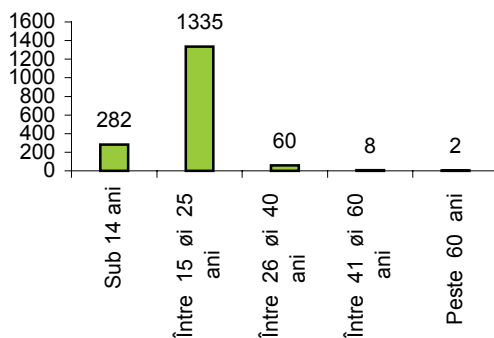
B. According to occupation:

- Workers 11
- Technicians, masters 1
- Clerks 4
- Liberal professions 2
- Intellectual professions 56
- Schoolchildren 828
- Students 735
- Pensioners 2
- Housewives 2
- Unemployed 31
- Other categories (including pre-school children) 15



C. According to age:

- Under 14 282
- Between 14 and 25 1335
- Between 26 and 40 60
- Between 41 and 60 8
- Over 60 2

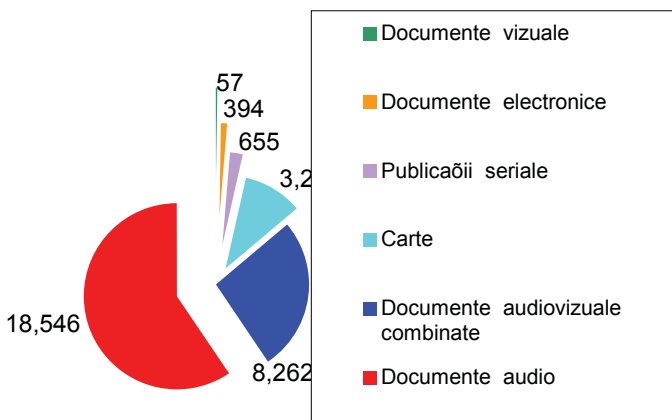


The overwhelming domination of schoolchildren and students can easily be noticed, encompassing an age span between 14 and 25 years. It is thus a young public, finding itself in the phase of formation and acquisition of knowledge for life. These numbers also offer an image about the general structure of the public, which has been constant both in the years preceding and following the year of reference.

The requirements of the 23,990 users (or 92.6 users per workday) who have visited the service totaled a number of 31,145 documents, out of which:

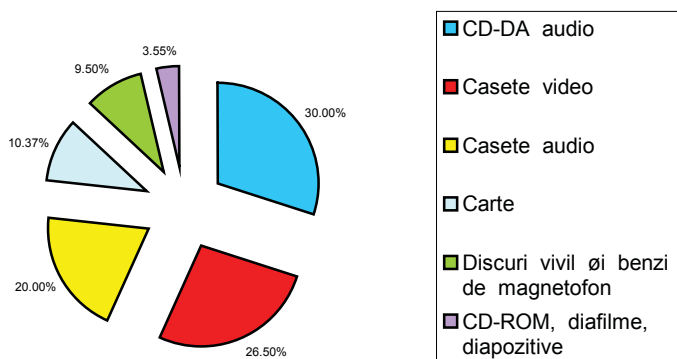
A. According to the type of support:

- Audio documents
(audio CDs, audio tapes, records, tapes) 18,546
- Combined audiovisual documents
(video tapes) 8,262
- Books (printed music, art) 3,231
- Serial publications (music) 655
- Electronic documents (CD-ROM) 394
- Visual documents (filmstrips and slides) 57



According to our daily observations, but also on the basis of statistics about the *types of support* between the years 1997 and 1999, the approximate percentage of the documents was:

- Audio CD 30.00%
- Video tapes 26.50%
- Audio tapes 20.00%
- Books 10.37%
- Records and magnetic tapes 9.50%
- CD-ROM, filmstrips and slides 3.55%



B. According to content:

The analysis reveals the specificity of the service, which is focused on the 7th UDC class (art, music, entertainment), only distantly followed by the 8th and other classes, a reason for which I do not provide more numbers.

This clearly shows the users' orientation towards modern and good quality supports, but also the general tendency to give up, or rather avoid reading in favor of audio-visual media. All our observations about individual users or groups confirm these tendencies.

Thus, individual users were studied for their various preferences for certain types of information and support. I have tried to group them on the basis of socio-professional categories, focusing more over schoolchildren and students as the largest groups of all the users.

– **Workers, technicians, masters** – a group with an occasional frequency, a consumer of disco music in compilations, Romanian folk music, preferring audio tapes as a support.

– **Housewives, the unemployed** – fair frequency, no special preferences, but listen to any kind of music, watch any kind of video, read cinematographic and art dictionaries.

– **Pensioners** – low frequency, generally prefer to listen to fairy tales and wish to copy tapes with dramatized literature for children (or more exactly a school bibliography). They very rarely come to watch videos, saying they have other things to do, or when they come, they only accompany their grandchildren.

– **Liberal and intellectual professions, functionaries** – it is a low frequency group, which prefers entertainment music on CD, in original recording, by famous musicians and bands, classical jazz, classical music – especially opera, in compilation with famous musicians, of the “Pavarotti & Friends” type –, sometimes foreign language courses on tapes or a few CD-ROMs out of curiosity or snobbery. They prefer videos only if they can copy some movies for watching at home, motivating it on account of lack of time.

– **Pre-school and primary school children** – they are very receptive to CD and CD-ROM technology (e.g., games and encyclopedias with animals), for audio they prefer fairy tales on tapes or records, for video, cartoons, comedies, pop or rock bands, etc. They have a fair frequency, higher during the summer.

– **Secondary school and industrial school children** – they create their quite varied programs influenced by others in their environment or by mass-media programs, they try everything, and if they do not like a

musician, a record, or a song, they ask for something else. In the audio field they listen to compilations (usually techno, dance, rap, etc.) mostly on CDs, as well as TV shows on audio tapes such as “Divertis”, “Nea Mărin”, “Vacanța Mare”, Gioni Dimitriu, or even Toma Caragiu or Alexandru Arșinel. They listen to Romanian music of the latest groups. On videos, they prefer the same genres: “Mr. Bean”, “Vacanța Mare”, comedies. They like computer games known from other places, which are generally not included into our offer. It is a high frequency group who needs the constant guidance of the staff in choosing the programs and searching the catalogue.

– **Children from church schools** – they listen to the latest entertainment music, Romanian and foreign, sometimes instrumental and vocal-symphonic classical music (Vivaldi, Haydn), as well as the music of other confessions than what they are preparing for. On videos, they prefer comedies. They read periodicals on new music, and sometimes a musical dictionary or art albums. Their frequency is quite high, they do not use CD-ROMs.

– **Children from music, choreography, and art schools** – they listen to a work or part of a work that they study at school, then they ask for a CD or tape with disco music or movie soundtracks. Even if they are familiar with the latest music for entertainment, they do not ask for it. Some of them watch ballets and operas on video tapes. They usually do not spend much time at the Mediateca, as they are very busy with their studies, and commuting from one place of the school to the other. This group has a moderate frequency and has no problems choosing its programs.

– **Music Academy students** – when they do not come as a group, they usually listen to something else than what they study, from very large fields of entertaining music, preferring CDs and records to audio tapes. They are also interested in CD-ROMs. Their frequency is not very high. They ask for musical scores or combined courses on the history of music (books and records), especially those which are lacking from the library of the Music Academy or are hard to access.

– **Students from other faculties** – (the Babeș-Bolyai University, Economics, the Technical University, private universities) – they have a very large field of preferences, comprising both entertainment and classical music, vocal or instrumental, opera, foreign language courses, Romanian or foreign folk music. Usually during listening to music they also read art books. They often ask for courses of classical guitar, or musical encyclopedias on paper or digital support. It is a high frequency group, quite heterogeneous. A special reference should be made in regard

of the students of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, who listen to more classical music and choose their entertainment music better, preferring famous bands in original recordings. As for videos, they are more interested in historical or geographical documentaries, or interviews with personalities, without neglecting however other fields.

As far as **organized groups** are concerned, they generally have certain clear goals, the programs being organized either according to the school program, or around topics established by the staff of the service in agreement with the leader of the group, usually a teacher. The thematic offer both in audio and in video is very diverse: from tales to opera, from documentaries to cartoons.

For **groups with deficiencies** we offer short-term loan of documentaries on videos for **the deaf**, audio tapes or records with literature or music for **the blind**. This latter group contains a very large number of users of the Mediateca, with a preference for literature, poetry, or theater, on records or tapes. They listen to less music, they are disciplined and receptive to the librarian's advice in organizing their program. They come as groups, usually in the weekends, and the staff offers them priority in audition.

All these reveal, as a general image, the demands of the public from the latest music for entertainment as the top of the demand to folk music, at the bottom of the list. Compared to this demand, the supply is somewhat unbalanced. Although the top of the demand corresponds to the top of the supply, the rest of the fields do not have the same correspondence. Here is the *demand* (in accordance with the acquisition policy of a public library) and the *actual supply* for the four great fields – audio, video, multimedia, and books – in a list which is now at an intuitive stage.

Audio – demand

1. entertainment music of all types (pop, rock, rap. etc.)
2. literature (drama, tales, comedy, poetry)
3. classical music
4. foreign language or musical instrument courses
5. folk music

Audio – market supply

1. entertainment
2. folk music
3. classical music
4. foreign languages
5. literature (very poorly represented)

Video – demand

1. cartoons
2. children's movies
3. comedy
4. documentaries
5. classical, ballet, theater
6. folk music

Multimedia – demand

1. encyclopedias (especially in French, because English is well represented)
2. different fields in a scientific treatment (animals, geography, photography, CDs, history, religion)

Video – market supply

1. thrillers, horror movies
2. cartoons
3. comedy
4. children's movies
5. documentaries
6. ballet or opera

Multimedia – market supply

1. games
2. software on CDs or floppy discs
3. popular encyclopedias poorly treated, in a small number or only for orders (usually in English)

As for books, one can only say that printed musical scores have almost completely disappeared from the market supply, internal editorial production is scarce, inclusively in the field of musicology. There is only an extremely small number of musical dictionaries on the market, usually in English, French, Hungarian, or German, to be found in second-hand bookshops.

For the sake of curiosity, I have compiled a list of the most sought after **classical music**, which has resulted from the user preferences:

Instrumental music

1. Carl Orff: Carmina Burana
2. Chopin: Nocturnes, waltzes, mazurkas
3. Vivaldi: The Four Seasons
4. Mozart, Beethoven: symphonies
5. Overtures and famous *miniature* instrumental music

Vocal music

1. Pavarotti
2. Verdi: Aida
3. Various famous singers on CD collections
4. Arias from operas

*

In accordance with the preferences of the users and the market supply, the service's acquisition policy, matching its role of *equally favoring all the users* and being a *guardian* of cultural values, although keeping track of the newest publications, has attempted not to leave out anything from the production of audiovisual documents within the limit of the allocated funds, focusing mainly on the latest types of support and technology. The library as an institution is convinced of the impact of audiovisual documents on modern civilization, and, by everything it does, it is involved in the every-day life of the community.