

Lincoln City Libraries
Polley Music Library Annual Report 2021
Submitted by Scott Scholz, Polley Music Librarian

The Polley Music Library completed 39 years of service to the public in September 2021. This document will highlight services provided in 2021, and describe plans for services in 2022. Similar to last year, 2021 continued to present unusual challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Polley Music Library continued to grow and adapt to the times, and plans for the future remain optimistic.

Highlights FY 2020-21 (September 2020-August 2021)

Public Service and Staffing

The Polley Music Library catalogued music collection remained available to the public throughout the 2020-21 year, with direct access to the shelves any time Bennett Martin Public Library (BMPL) was open, through holds delivered to branch libraries, or via interlibrary loan. As in previous years, Polley offered twenty hours of public service per week provided by the Polley Music Librarian, but I assisted the public as needed during any other hours I was in the library. In-person visitors to Polley remained down due to the pandemic—many patrons whom I spoke to by phone or email mentioned their hesitation to return to public spaces while COVID-19 continues to spread in the community—but patrons continued to request materials in large part by telephone, email, social media, and through the Lincoln City Libraries (LCL) website on their own. Similar to other years, many holds were delivered to other branches for more convenient pickup.

Collections

I ordered a little under 300 new books and scores for Polley this year. My focus continued to be new titles, with additional consideration of materials to emphasize musical practices and demographics somewhat underrepresented in Polley's current collection. Our periodical subscriptions and subscription to the Music Online databases remained the same. There were slightly fewer new books on music subjects available this year, again likely due to the pandemic and various supply chain issues. Hopefully those structural issues will return to normalcy soon.

We received more donations than usual this year. A few were added to the collection, though most were passed through for eventual use at the annual book sale. Presumably more people staying at home led to an increase in attics and garages getting the pandemic decluttering treatment.

Outreach

Pandemic circumstances created difficulties for conventional outreach this year, but Polley was able to participate in an in-person outdoors event in June. The Lincoln Arts Festival (LAF) moved to the Railyard area this year, and I shared a booth with instrument maker Jay Kreimer on June 19th and 20th. This proved to be a fantastic idea, as Mr. Kreimer is an ardent supporter of Polley, and his instruments attracted lots of attention. We spoke with hundreds of people on Saturday alone, with almost nonstop traffic all day. Sunday was a little slower, with about 100 additional visitors. Many weren't familiar with Polley, and I think simply letting people know about the service made for a very productive weekend. We were part of the "Creative Zones" at the Festival, and we performed a few times each day. Passers-

by were also able to try out Jay's instruments if they wanted. Overall, this was a much busier LAF than the last one in 2019.

On August 18, I attended a Lincoln Music District workshop held by the Downtown Lincoln Association and HDR. While work on the Music District concept hasn't progressed much in the last 2 years due to the pandemic, organizations are starting to focus on it again. The concept continues to focus on venues and performance spaces near the 14th and O street intersection. Participants were asked to comment on "what makes a music district," and answers included things like daily performances, diverse ranges of musical styles represented, access for people of all kinds of backgrounds and ages, and a district that includes both performances and places for artists to learn and collaborate. The notion of "More Than a Venue" was also raised, including concepts of the District having a recording studio, a podcast/radio station, education, community gathering space, rehearsal space, retail, artist residency, affordable housing, retail, and business incubators. The Polley mission fits in well with many of these goals, and will be able to contribute to even more of them if plans toward a new Central Library proceed.

I continued producing a weekly KZUM Polley Music Library Show in August of 2019, which is a half-hour radio program that airs twice each weekend on 89.3 FM and is archived on Mixcloud:

https://www.mixcloud.com/Polley_Music_Library/. I focused mostly on booktalk show formats this year, featuring books from a diverse range of musical styles and backgrounds, followed by relevant listening examples. There are now over 100 of these programs archived on Mixcloud as of this writing, and the show has become a bit of a resource all its own. I've been able to point patrons toward it for some further reading and listening in a few interest areas.

I continued to use Polley's Facebook page once or twice a week this year, primarily to promote upcoming programs (and now video and radio programming), and new arrivals on our shelves. The City of Lincoln is gradually rolling back social media accounts to retain only one per department, so it's likely that we'll lose the Polley page in the coming months. I find this a little frustrating, but I will be able to pass information along to be featured on the Lincoln City Libraries main social media pages instead.

Throughout the year, I continued to contribute 3 recommended reading book reviews for the LCL Staff Recommendations website each month, and there's a nice body of Polley-related recommendations starting to accumulate. I also produced 1 or 2 e-newsletters most months, highlighting new radio and video programming and new book arrivals.

In January, I was featured in an Omaha Reader article about how Nebraska musicians are navigating the pandemic, where I was asked about historical perspectives on music and pandemics. I did a bit of research for my answers, and I was pleased to see that they published all of the notes I submitted in an addendum following the main body of the article. It was a good opportunity to let more people know about Polley, and about the many kinds of perspectives and research one can find here. The article can be accessed here: <https://thereader.com/music/finding-healing-joy>

I also wrote an article of 2020 creative music releases and reissues for KZUM, which was published as part of their 2020 musical recap here: <https://kzum.org/kzum-backtrack-2020/>

The library created a series of new READ posters featuring staff this year, and we made a special musical version for Polley, featuring me reading music while playing guitar.

Polley continues to advertise our services through Lincoln Symphony Orchestra and Lied Center programs.

Programming

On September 29, I moderated the “Finding the Right Sound in the Studio” discussion panel, the 2nd year Polley has hosted the event in conjunction with Lincoln Calling. However, the 2020 Lincoln Calling festival was held entirely online, and the event was livestreamed through Lincoln Calling’s Facebook and YouTube channels. The panel featured Doug Van Sloun, James Fleege, Jeremy Wurst, and Keith Roger. In addition to being livestreamed, a recording of the discussion can be accessed on Lincoln Calling’s YouTube channel and website.

I was invited by the Friends of the Ross to speak at the end of a film about musician and iconoclast Lycia Lunch on August 27th, part of a monthly series of chats or lectures hosted at the Ross. I used the opportunity to do some outreach about Polley to a new audience, and I contacted Marc Masters, author of the book “No Wave,” to talk about Lunch and the musical scene she came from via Zoom as a focal point for the discussion. The Ross staff were able to run his video/audio through the big screen, and it was a fun way to conduct a long-distance discussion. Around 20 people attended, and there were some good questions from the audience.

Video production became a big component of activities related to programming this year, for Polley and for LCL more generally. I learned how to use DaVinci Resolve video editing software this year to produce a more sophisticated variety of videos during the pandemic. I made 9 YouTube videos for Polley through the course of the year, promoted through social media and the radio program. Since in-person programming was still impossible most of the year due to pandemic precautions, this set of videos was designed to function as a series of remote book talks. I focused them around monthly social celebrations to create opportunities for talking about multiple books at once, and to introduce people to different ways of approaching the Polley collection they might not have considered before. The videos centered around Black History Month, Women’s History Month, the Read Woke reading challenge, Pride Month, Chamber Music Month, and I tried a series of 4 videos during International Guitar Month.

I did additional video and audio work that was designed to go straight to social media, or in collaboration with other library departments. My “made for Facebook” videos included a video demonstrating a Theremin and an instrument called the Rotowhisker designed by former Nebraska Bryan Day for Halloween, a video about ukuleles and sea shanty music for National Ukulele Day in February (sea shanties were a timely topic among Tik Tok users), and a promotional “Bill & Ted’s Adventure”-style video for International Guitar Month in April.

For videos related to other library departments, I made a video demonstrating the features of the new Library LNK app that’s now hosted on the library’s website and YouTube page, and it received a couple of nice comments via social media. I also recorded some background music behind librarian Cait’s singing of a song called “Chumbala Cachumbala” for the library’s part of the online Day of the Dead celebration. An instrumental portion of that material was used for the opening/closing music on the Day of the Dead videos as well.

Spring 2021 storytimes for LCL were presented via video, and I joined the editing team to produce those videos. I ended up editing 7 of the storytime videos, and learned how to do some new video editing

techniques: cutting from multiple camera angles, simple animations, using green screens to change backgrounds, etc. I recorded music for a couple of those videos as well.

Technology

While we didn't debut new technology within Polley this year per se, learning how to adapt to video production and livestreaming is a kind of technological adaption that we've all had to make in the previous year both as content providers and consumers. In terms of future planning, I've done some research this year related to how a recording studio facility could function in a new Central Library. Having started a small list of libraries around the country with recording studios two years ago, I updated my document to include descriptions of 46 such facilities around the country, with details regarding amenities and policies for public use of these kinds of spaces. I added an introductory "notes" section discussing best practices and designs that I've gleaned from this survey of studios.

On August 9, I went to Lawrence, KS to tour their Sound + Vision recording studio facility, which is the closest such resource to consider as a model for our own future plans. I added lots of detail about the Lawrence facility to my document on studios in libraries, and took lots of photos and videos as well. I also appreciated the design of their auditorium space, which is located to allow for occasional evening events while the rest of the building is closed.

Plans for FY 2021-22

Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have profound daily effects on activities worldwide, lasting quite a bit longer than most of us likely anticipated, making concrete plans for the coming year feels more speculative than usual. My primary areas of focus in the short term continue to be increasing Polley programming, more community outreach, and more collaborations, all of which are impacted by pandemic circumstances. However, Polley will continue to move forward in all of these areas however it's safest and smartest to do so. As in-person programming and outreach opportunities become safer and more comfortable for patrons, we'll expand back into that area (most recently we hosted an outdoor event in collaboration with the Lincoln Community Foundation in September 2021, just outside of the scope of this report), and in the meantime, we'll continue to produce various formats of electronic programming and outreach. In particular, I'm hoping for improved conditions for in-person visits to Lincoln Public School facilities, as talking with music classes is a critical form of outreach I'd just started to make some headway with before the pandemic began.

2022 will mark the 40th anniversary of Polley, which would also make for a good event and outreach/PR opportunity.

As plans evolve for a new Central Library, I will stay as involved as possible in the planning process. Preliminary drawings so far place Polley in a more prominent location on the 1st floor of a new potential building, adjacent to a new auditorium and recording studio facilities. In the medium and long-range term, these amenities would dramatically increase the scope and reach of services provided by Polley. Over the next year, I will make myself available throughout the planning process, and continue to research best practices toward the hopeful implementation of these new service areas.