

Lincoln City Libraries
Polley Music Library Annual Report 2020
Submitted by Scott Scholz, Polley Music Librarian

The Polley Music Library completed 38 years of service to the public in September 2020. This document will highlight services provided in 2020, and describe plans for services in 2021. Despite 2020 being a very unusual year for library services both here and around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Polley enjoyed a successful year and used some new avenues of communication to reach patrons.

Highlights FY 2019-20 (September 2019-August 2020)

Public Service and Staffing

The Polley Music Library catalogued music collection remained available to the public throughout the 2019-20 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 had 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.

Due to the city health directives in response to the pandemic, Lincoln City Libraries (LCL) closed for public browsing between March 20 and June 22. During that time, the library offered curbside pickup services. Patrons could place holds via library staff or through the LCL website, and call for contactless pickup. Polley books continued to circulate during this time, and I fielded requests for materials by telephone, email, and social media contact. In the middle of the curbside pickup period, the library operating hours were changed to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays that would normally have featured open hours through 8 p.m., but this affected the Polley office hours only on Thursday evenings. All library and Polley office hours have returned to normal since re-opening to the public.

After June 22, patrons could come into the library and browse the shelves as normal, though we presently have one-hour limits on visits to branches which includes the Polley area of BMPL. Books also can be placed on hold for pickup at any preferred branch.

Collections

I ordered a little over 300 new books and scores for Polley in FY 2019-20. My focus was mostly on 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.

While we did receive some great donations earlier in the year that were added to the collection, the library system stopped accepting donations in the height of the pandemic, and we have only started accepting them again in the last month, just outside of the fiscal year range detailed in this report. One patron in particular who donated several unusual titles to Polley did so with great enthusiasm for the service, noting he was happy to continue to "visit" the books while giving the wider community access to them.

Outreach

I staffed a booth at last year's Lincoln Calling/Lincoln Arts Festival on September 21-22, where I introduced myself and Polley to many people who didn't realize Lincoln has a music library. I handed out about 140 flyers. I've also made those flyers available in the Polley area year-round, which has resulted in some calls and emails for musical assistance.

In December, I started offering e-newsletters called "Polley Picks," using Booksite Toolkit. I've distributed one or two of these per month to subscribers and on the LCL website, discussing new books, radio programs, upcoming events, and videos I've made.

On March 2, I visited North Star High School to speak with music teacher Kirk Brown's classes about Polley. Kirk has been a regular Polley borrower himself and thought that his students would be interested. A couple of concurrent music classes were able to join us, so I was able to speak with four classes and around 150 students. None of the students were aware of Polley, and they asked great questions and seemed very excited. I spoke with Guitar I, Guitar II, Music Technology, and Advanced Choir classes, and brought along some examples of books I thought they might be interested in. After those presentations, Mr. Brown put me into contact with the music administration staff for LPS, and I'm hoping to do more collaborations like this in the future once pandemic conditions make it possible again. I also reached out to Jacob Fahrlander, orchestra and assistant band director at Southwest High School, and gave him a brief tour of Polley on Saturday, March 14, along with some promotional flyers for distribution at the school.

Polley continues to advertise our services through Lincoln Symphony Orchestra and Lied Center programs, which are more hybrids of print and electronic advertising this year because of the pandemic.

I started 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/. The show's format includes book talks with listening examples, and interviews with local/state musical figures. Due to the pandemic, Polley was subject to a social media embargo between March 20 and June 11, which made relaying Polley news to patrons difficult during that time when the library was operating via curbside service. However, the radio program was not subject to that embargo, which I believe helped to sustain communications with patrons and potential patrons. I focused on gentler, relatively calming forms of music in programs early in the pandemic period, followed by interviews with a range of local and state musical figures talking about their strategies for continuing musical practices within our unique new circumstances.

I'm using Polley's Facebook page more frequently than in past years, primarily to promote upcoming programs (and now video and radio programming), and new arrivals on our shelves.

I started writing book reviews of Polley materials to be included on the Staff Recommendations page in July. I'll plan on continuing to highlight a few books each month.

Programming: physical and virtual

Prior to the pandemic, I had started an initial round of in-person programming at the library. On September 18, we hosted pianist, composer/improviser and international performer Thollem McDonas,

and 13 attended. On September 19, we hosted a discussion panel called Finding the Right Sound in the Studio, a collaboration with Lincoln Calling, with 25 in attendance. On September 26, we hosted our Polley Concert/Reception to introduce me as the new Polley Music Librarian, featuring ex-NYC singer/songwriter Scott Severin with Joshua Rector, and instrument builder Jay Kreimer, as well as me playing a few short guitar pieces. Forty people attended. On February 29, Omaha musician and sound artist Alex Jacobsen presented on Sound Art with 14 attendees. And on March 5, Dr. Robert Woody from UNL gave an author talk on his new book, "Becoming a Real Musician" with eight attendees. We also recorded a radio program with Dr. Woody that received a lot of positive attention.

After March 5, a number of programs I had scheduled had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, including a performance by the LNK New Music Collective, a performance by pianist Stacey Barelos, an improvisation workshop with composer/improviser Evan Lipson, a performance by a multimedia art-rock duo from Brooklyn called Macula Dog, and a collaborative day of performances in partnership with the Omaha Under the Radar festival to take place at Polley. Hopefully we'll be able to revisit some of those projects next year, assuming that pandemic conditions subside.

Without the ability to do in-person programming, I looked for opportunities to create video content that could be useful for Polley patrons. Between March and August, I produced nine videos of Polley-related content, which are featured in a new Polley playlist on the Lincoln City Libraries YouTube channel. The first seven videos were a series of tutorials on getting the most out of the Music Online database that Polley provides. Following that, I produced a video showing some free online musical resources for people finding themselves doing more musical work from home. Finally, I produced a video discussing the basics of creating music to accompany online videos in response to fielding many questions about this from patrons (and having done a lot of it myself for LCL videos being produced in recent months).

Technology

I started evaluating Polley's portion of the Lincoln City Libraries website in May, beginning with the Polley links page, where I removed expired or outdated links. Next steps will be to evaluate the other portions of the Polley page and add new content. Outside of accessing the library catalog, most patrons I've spoken with seem to prefer getting Polley news from either Facebook or the Polley Picks e-newsletter, so making more substantial website changes will probably happen as part of adding new Nebraska-centric content (see Plans for FY 2020-21).

The Music Online databases provided by Polley were LCL's Research Resource of the Month for August, promoted online and through signage at LCL branches.

Plans for FY 2020-21

Outreach and programming are essential to making Polley the kind of interactive community resource the Lincoln musical community needs, but the pandemic has certainly made those efforts a challenge! In the short term, I'll continue to work on these goals through electronic means, but I intend to start in-person programming and in-person high school outreach again as soon as it's safe to do so.

I hope to partner more with local stakeholders like Lincoln Calling and the Nebraska Music Hall of Fame toward documenting the history of music in Lincoln/Omaha and Nebraska, with the goal of creating a comprehensive online resource and some in-person and online programming. The pandemic has

delayed a few in-person meetups to further these partnerships, but we'll find ways to work together over the next year.

I suspect that we will see some long-term changes in patron expectations due to the pandemic: specifically, people seem enthusiastic about having additional video content and ways to interact with community organizations like libraries online. I think I'm on the right track with this in terms of creating video and radio content related to the library and its activities and programming, and I plan to further develop content to meet these new needs.

If plans move ahead toward designing a downtown Central Library, I hope to be helpful on that front as well. In my previous work at the Library Commission, I moved a large part of our operations to a new space, and built new recording studios and audio editing suites for Talking Books in 2014-15. Preliminary plans included space for recording and editing of audio and video content, and I'm excited to see how this could expand Polley services and library staff programming capabilities in coming years.