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Format for Music: proposals and standardization of data for international exchange

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Italian Union Catalogue (Musica) holds about 400,000 records on musical documents from XVth to the XIXth century (131,326 manuscripts and 273,069 editions, 31,319 librettos)

This material belongs to more than 500 libraries, among them the most important italian musical libraries are to be found, for instance the Library of the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, the Library of the Conservatorio S. Cecilia in Rome and the Library of the Conservatorio S. Pietro in Majella in Naples; many of these records are related to material kept in ecclesiastical, public and private archives, while a smaller part is related to foreign libraries.

The core of the database was created by the project of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs “Sistema Beni Librari”, which automated and merged the collective printed catalogues of the Ufficio Ricerca Fondi Musicali (URFM), in Milan and of the Istituto di Bibliografia Musicale (IBIMUS) in Rome.

In November 1995 a new project of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico e le Informazioni Bibliografiche (ICCU) has started and in two years it will double the contents of the database and perfect the its functions in order to improve the management and the updating of the musical catalogue.

The aim of the ICCU project is to transform the MUSICA database into a “national virtual library of Music”, thus ICCU would use this tool to organize and improve innovative quality services, meant for specialized users but as well available to any end-user who is interested in the cultural musical heritage kept in the italian libraries. Since 1996 a new database has been created for this purpose: consultation based on the information retrieval criteria, and includes diversificated means of searching OPAC SBN is conform to the following international standars:

- UNIMARC with some national field for the data, for the loading of the catalogue and for the downloading of the databases;
- SR/Z39.50 for the access to the catalogue.

These proposals are the outcome of several working meetings held since 1999 among representatives of the following projects and institutions:

- SBN-musica (ICCU, Ufficio Ricerca Fondi Musicali di Milano, Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Milano)
- ADMV (Archivio Digitalizzato della Musica Veneta) (Biblioteca Marciana di Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino, Discoteca di Stato di Roma)
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The analysis of the Unimarc format of the D/B SBN-musica and of the proposals presented in the project ADMV have pointed out the opportunity of data exchange with other databases at the international level.

The first new field suggested concerns the coding of the musical incipit (new field **136: Music incipit**). The proposal intends to describe the first measures of music and if necessary the first words of text of the musical compositions, according to the rules mostly adopted in cataloguing music manuscripts and often essential to identify a musical composition. Subfields provided define the coded movement, its form, the instrument or voice whose musical incipit is coded and the music itself. The possible encoding systems are the Plaine & easie code and the DARMS code, normally used in the international environment. The first draft of the new tag has been discussed at the PUC Meeting in Vilnius and also by the Italian member of the Unimarc music Subgroup, in several working meetings at the international level, within RISM (London, 4 august 2000 and Paris, 9 february 2001) and the Unimarc working group of IAML (Edinburgh, 7 and 10 august 2000). The compatibility of the format used by Rism and the Cambridge University Library (using Ukmarc) has been evaluated. The most used alphanumeric code for the transcription of the notes, the Plaine & Easie code has been normally adopted to code the music incipit, but the recent analysis of its documentation has revealed lack of published sources and inconsistencies in its uniform use. There is need of further study by the international community, in particular within IAML; in fact in the last meeting in Périgueux, 8-13 july 2001 has been revised the PEC and now the new version is on the Italian site: <http://www.cilea.it/music/lezioni/plaineeasycode.htm>. The new version of the code will be published in the periodical of the IAML "Fontes Artis Musicae"

The other proposal is to modify the field **128, Coded data field: Music performance and scores** that has always been object of criticism because of its lack of precision. A complete revision is proposed, splitting it into two fields: **128, Form / genre of composition** with the cut of the subfields \$b and \$c and the implementation of a subfield \$d for key or mode, and **145: Medium of performance** with the adoption of new codes defining the instruments and voices.

The codes for the field 128 \$a have been compared with those used by the Comité Français Unimarc and the Music Dept. National Library of Lithuania; analogies and anomalies have been found, due not only to the language but also to the fact that the same codes have been used with totally or partially different meanings. Codes for musical genre (such as instrumental music or chamber music) have been proposed, extending the content of the field. The Italian practice uses many more codes than the others, and in conclusion a common mapping work should be desirable. It is working to produce a unique and shared list.

The field 144 has been compared with the scheme used by IRCAM and Cité de la musique to verify its compatibility. The new proposal is extremely complex but seems able to guarantee the compatibility and particularly the need to indicate the medium of performance both at a synthetic level (i.e. indicating vocal and instrumental ensembles) and at an analytical level (i.e. indicating all the single instruments and/or voices).

For the manuscript music has been proposed a new field (**144 Coded data field: Manuscript Music-Physical Attributes**): this field should contain coded data relating to the physical form of music manuscripts. It is recommended that it is always present in records of music manuscripts. The contents of the coded data are:

Subfield \$a fixed-length data elements:

Name of Data Element	Number of Characters	Character Positions
Autograph indicator	1	0
Kind of material	1	1
Composite indicator	1	2
Number of elements	3	3-5
Palimpsest indicator	1	6
State of preservation	1	7

Another implementation in the format concerns the adoption of a new field (**621, Performance data entry**), modelled on the field 620, but specific for place, date and other information regarding the performance. This field is relevant both for live performances or sound/video recordings, and librettos or music manuscripts where its use is frequent if not constant and is of great importance for searching. In case a specific field should be considered unnecessary, these data might be included in the field 620, appropriately modified.

The other proposals are a revision of the existent fields or coded data to increase the range of application to the music manuscripts, in details:

- **Relator code:** *Annotator*. Has been suggested to extend the present definition for the manuscript annotator
- add some codes in the subfield 125 \$a/0 Format of Printed/*Manuscript* Music to match more formats used mainly in manuscript music. The field is used in music scores, printed and manuscript and in music audio or video recordings.
- adapt the field **210, Publication, distribution, etc.** in its definitions to fit manuscripts, i.e. including also place and date of writing and name of copyst or scriptorium.

These are the first proposals to conform the format for music data. The Italian proposals for Music coded data implementation should be discuss at the next PUC meeting and we hope that all the matter can be approve. Certainly it will be necessary to integrate these with the data for the composition (Uniform title) regarding music manuscripts and liturgical manuscripts and publications. The Italian subgroup is coming to analyse also this problem.

References

SBN Musica database: <http://www.opac.sbn.it>; <http://iccu.sbn.it>

ADMV Project (Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, Venice, Biblioteca Universitaria, Turin and Discoteca di Stato, Rome: <http://www.marciana.Venezia.sbn.it/admv.htm>

Plaine &Easie Code (PEC) also in: <http://www.cilea.it/music/lezioni/plaineeasycode.htm>