**Colorado Bandmasters Association Convention**

**How to get the most mileage out of your music library**

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**First, you will need a functionable – and functioning library**

Unless you are teaching in a brand new school, the best place to look for “new” music is your own library.

Music should be vertically stored in labelled (music) envelopes, score and complete parts (in order), and filed. You can use file cabinets or shelves. I find that file cabinets may protect the music a little better, but the envelopes last longer when you store them on shelves. Also, when you add a (legal) duplicate set of parts, it’s usually easier to find additional space on a shelf than in a filing cabinet. In the UNC Band Library, we keep the scores in file cabinets, and the sets of parts on shelves.

Music should be catalogued (Excel or other database program), and filed by number – not alphabetically. Each entry in your database should include file number, composer (last name, then first name), arranger or transcriber (if applicable), title, difficulty rating, notes (overture, march, suite, key of E-major, etc.), most recent performance date & performing group. These last two items are VERY important. You can manipulate all the data from your library at will. Finally, I would print at least a couple of copies of the library (both by file# and by composer – also perhaps by title), and back up the electronic file.

It’s fine to have students help sorting & filing music, but I’m afraid you (or some other adult who is a knowledgeable musician) will need to create the actual catalogue/database. Many questions will arise that only an experienced person can answer.

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**Using your Music Library** [You don’t know what you don’t know]

Almost every library has “hidden” jewels the conductor is not familiar with.

How do you find out what is good? And good for your group?

The “old-fashioned” way, and still perhaps the best, is to pull scores and look at them – hearing the music in your head (as much as possible).

Also, look at unfamiliar pieces by well-known, trusted composers.

Find and listen to a a good recording. Bad recordings are worse than no recording.

Even the best bands benefit from playing some high quality “xeasy” music.

Talk to other (usually more experienced) band directors – perhaps give them a list of a dozen or so tunes you are considering, and ask their advice.

Also, they will likely suggest additional pieces.

Check the music library at your middle (or high) school. There are plenty of middle schools with lots of grades 3 & 4, and most high schools have quite a few grade 2’s. Just make sure you return the music, on time & in good condition.

If there are band directors who trust you (good luck on this one!), maybe you

can borrow some music from them. This policy is widely abused, and usually abandoned, when/if you return the music late, and it’s in lousy condition.

Become good friends with one – or both – of the major reference resources for band directors: Good Music for (fill in the blank) Band, and Teaching Music Through Performance in Band. Despite the considerable up-front expense, in the long run you will save lots of money and perform even better music.

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