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The Soundwaves New Music Series:

A Programming Experiment and What I've Learned So Far

I need to open with a disclaimer. Although I work for the Santa Monica Public Library, this paper concerns my work at the Santa Monica Public Library, and I am being paid to give it by the Santa Monica Public Library, the ideas within it are my own. I am not representing the management of my institution. Imagine I am a college professor giving a paper in my field. Do I represent UCLA's official viewpoint? Public librarians do not have an equivalent to academic freedom. Anything we say can be used against us. This stifles the voices of frontline staff, who have the most relevant experience, diverting them into ineffectual cynical humor, amplifies the voices of administrators and consultants, and makes our professional discourse often little more than public relations.

This paper is essentially an account of the Santa Monica Public Library's becoming the first public library to offer DRAM, the Database of Recorded American Music streaming service, and of the Soundwaves concert series I created to present composers and performers who appear on DRAM. Both of these innovations were also responses to developments in the profession, my institution, and the world outside, intended to demonstrate alternative cultural roles for public libraries.

I grew up in West LA, left for about ten years to go to colleges of various sorts, then returned in 2000 to work for SMPL. I think the majority of my pre-college education came from the Culver City branch of the LA County Library and from the *LA Weekly*, which led me from quasi-suburban Culver City to the arty post-punk scenes in Hollywood, Venice, and Downtown, and from the Waldenbooks and Musicland at the Fox Hills Mall to Papa Bach's, A Change of Hobbit, Dutton's, Midnight Special, Tower Records, Rhino Records, Aron's Records, et al. RIP. This will all be important later. While I was away at school, I became a competent bass player, something I pursued more diligently one I got settled back in LA, studying with some prominent jazz and classical musicians. I now perform

regularly in local orchestras and chamber groups and as well as in experimental and improvised music, including with some of the artists who I used to go see back in the day. You can visit jeffschwartzmusic.wordpress.com This isn't just self-promotion; it's important background.

DRAM, the Database of Recorded American Music, is a streaming audio service run by the non-profit New World Records. As David Grubbs recounts in *Records Ruin the Landscape*, New World was founded in 1975 as the Recorded Anthology of American Music. With a four million dollar grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, they produced 100 LPs representing the history of American music for the Bicentennial, and distributed these sets free to public libraries. They have continued as New World Records, releasing over 350 recordings, mostly of experimental composed music. DRAM launched in 2000 with foundation and academic support (Grubbs 173-176). It began as literally a database, just listings, then added PDFs of the detailed liner notes that accompanied most releases, sample tracks, and eventually full albums as bandwidth became available. In 2006 New World acquired the catalog of CRI (Composers Recordings Inc.), a non-profit label founded in 1954 to document contemporary American music, adding their 800+ titles to New World's to make up the core of DRAM. They have also licensed the catalogs of labels including Mode, XI (Experimental Intermedia, run by drone composer Phill Niblock), Nine Winds, run by Vinny Golia, which has documented the LA avant-garde jazz scene since the 1980s, Anthony Braxton's Tricentric Foundation Archives, new music vocalist Thomas Buckner's Mutable Music, trombonist Jim Staley's Einstein Records, Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening label, and many others. Much of this work grew out of the 1970s New York scenes documented by Will Hermes in his delightful *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire*, which captures a time when diversity, cheap rents, government arts funding, and the legacies of 1960s liberation movements aligned to produce major developments in jazz, salsa, disco, punk, minimalism, hip hop, and performance art. If you watched *Vinyl*, *The Get Down*, or *The Deuce*, you should pick up this book.

This boom in artist-run and independent creative music labels, which anticipated the DIY movement

in punk, was facilitated by the New Music Distribution Service, run by Carla Bley and Michael Mantler. The NMDS grew out of Bley and Mantler's Jazz Composers Orchestra Association, which was the surviving remnant of the Jazz Composers Guild, founded in 1964 by Bill Dixon and Cecil Taylor, which I wrote my American Studies dissertation about. I recommend Amy Beal's book on Bley and Benjamin Piekut's work on the Jazz Composers Guild. The artistic networks DRAM represents connect grass-roots revolutionary movements of the 1960s and patriotic 1970s establishment philanthropy; Black nationalism and the Bicentennial.

But why involve the public library with this? In the Napster days, there was a push for libraries to offer music downloads then, as smartphones replaced computers and iPods and unlimited broadband became ubiquitous, enabling more-or-less legit streaming to supplant less convenient and riskier downloading, for libraries to offer an equivalent to Rhapsody, Spotify, et al.

I hope to hear about your institutions' experiences with various audio services. As best as I have been able to learn from sales presentations, trials, and my colleagues on the SCLC Audiovisual Committee, the options are limited. Freegal only offers material from the Sony family of labels and, while that family has swollen through corporate consolidation, it's still a problem to only offer music from one company. Imagine a library that only collected Random House books. Additionally, Freegal's model, where each patron is allowed to download a handful of tracks each month and keep them forever, doesn't fit the traditional public library mission of building a shared collection which enables patrons to explore widely at no expense or risk. SMPL has not signed up for Freegal, despite several aggressive sales pitches. SMPL did get Hoopla, though not specifically for music. Their music collection, like their other media, is very uneven and, like Freegal, the monthly cap on checkouts, which their pay-per-use model requires, discourages exploration. To be fair, Hoopla has shown its value as a music service over the last couple of years: it would have been a lot more work and expense to have met the demand for *Hamilton* with physical media. The third option I considered, Naxos, did not

seem to meet the community's needs. While there is constant pressure to reduce the classical CD collection, Naxos is not a substitute. It does not offer star performers and major ensembles. Its strength is breadth and depth. If you need to offer access to all 106 Haydn symphonies, they've got you covered, but don't expect A-list orchestras.

Maybe public libraries don't need to be involved with online audio at all. If anyone can stream almost any track every recorded legally on demand from Spotify, Amazon, or Apple for a few dollars a month, and from YouTube for free (though not necessarily with the rights owners' permission), why should libraries spend the people's money to offer an inferior version of these services?

DRAM offered a way to use online audio to expand the library's collection in a lasting and inexpensive way and to improve its connections to the community, with minimal compromises to our professional values. Most of its contents were not in the CD collection and they included material by local artists not sold by Baker and Taylor, such as the Nine Winds catalog. I had always wanted to better represent local artists but knew it would be a waste to do direct orders and original cataloging for items I would soon be pressed to discard due to low use.

The annual DRAM subscription is very affordable, in triple digits for unlimited access. This is important, because it means it will not be a challenge to retain it in the budget. It is significantly less than the sales tax on SMPL's Overdrive purchases, which makes it easy to justify on a cost-per-use basis, but this is not a criterion we should actually apply: the homogenizing effects of quantitative assessment and other business logics will be a recurring theme in this paper, but I will note that Harry Partch, John Cage, and Cecil Taylor cost the library less per online use than Katy Perry or Lin-Manuel Miranda.

DRAM is a non-profit, supported in part by foundation money. According to their current head, they aspire to become entirely grant-supported so access can be free (Grubbs 177). Their mission is to preserve and disseminate their materials, not to extract profit from their collection or users. How many

of your information providers can you say that about? Non-profit, government, and academic sources are public libraries' natural allies, especially if we are serious about preservation, privacy, and fighting "alternative facts." We need to look more critically at our codependent relationships with corporations.

Ideally, an electronic resource will have a clear scope and stable contents, rather than a grab-bag of whatever materials the vendor was able to license that year, so that libraries can rely on it as part of the collection and patrons can go to it for predictable results. One knows exactly what will be in the *New York Times* archive, while Hoopla and Overdrive represent the opposite pole. DRAM has the complete catalogs of some labels, but only selections for others, and this is sometimes determined by staff time or licensing agreements rather than musical style so that, while the majority of DRAM material is avant-garde and I have chosen to promote it that way, there is a significant amount of other music. Remember those 100 Bicentennial LPs? They have also somehow acquired a substantial gospel archive, and many label catalogs are stylistically broad. The over 1000 titles from Albany Records on DRAM are heavy on contemporary American music but also include selections from the classical canon since Bach. However, most general repertoire is easily available on YouTube. It's the avant-garde stuff which really distinguishes DRAM. This was also the clearest way to explain the service to the public: that it was for independent art music labels, so that they wouldn't go there looking for Elvis, Beyonce, John Coltrane, et al.

However, it is also important to get electronic resources into the OPAC to maximize access. A patron searching for John Cage or Bach should find everything on one search, whatever the medium or supplier, just as one ought to be able to find out if the library has the new James Patterson as downloadable audio on a single search. This offers convenience and presents electronic materials as part of the library collection. The library remains the portal as much as possible. When libraries direct patrons to provider-specific apps and websites, they are yielding their identity to the providers' brands.

MARC records for DRAM items are available via OCLC. While there are not records for every

album, the ones that are there are excellent. This is another aspect of DRAM which makes it worthwhile, even for material which is on YouTube or commercial streaming services: the thorough credits, documentation, and metadata. There are track-by-track credits, with instrumentation, and original liner notes are included as downloadable PDFs. The credits appear in the item records and DRAM's search options are clear and detailed. Want to find all the glass harmonica recordings? Every track with Bertram Turetzky on bass? No problem.

Before SMPL, DRAM had dealt only with academic subscribers where use is primarily course-based. Facilitating discovery through the OPAC is less pressing if you can simply put "stream 'Atlas Elipticalis' from DRAM" on a syllabus. Without that, I had to market DRAM directly to patrons. DRAM provided some attractive promotional materials: postcards, coasters, bookmarks, etc, but they all included the URL dramonline.org. From this, and their text, they seemed to have been designed to promote the service to music librarians at conferences rather than end users. There is a login option on dramonline.org, but it only works for patrons of certain member institutions, not including SMPL. This meant I had to make my own posters and teach staff and public to visit the library website, then find DRAM on the databases page and log in there, rather than going to directly to the resource.

This is a minor inconvenience, which is balanced by the fact that, since patrons are validated by EZ Proxy, they are not individually identifiable: they appear only as coming from the SMPL IP address range. Why is that good? This conference included a pre-conference on data and "big data" has been a buzzword for a few years, but I will take a minute to get ahead of the herd to declare "big data" over and announce the coming of "minimum data." Libraries should collect and share the absolute minimum amount of information necessary to operate. This should guide our choices of software, hardware, and resources and be incorporated into public computer instruction.

What is the risk of someone knowing how much 1970s underground minimal music I listen to? Who will blacklist or blackmail lovers of free jazz? The imminent return of McCarthyism is not the only

reason to protect usage data. There has been a steady escalation of consumer profiling from the SRDS *Lifestyle Market Analyst* to the abuses of social media in the last Presidential election, which have moved from conspiracy theory to the front page of the *New York Times* in the time I've been writing this paper.

Consider a print book checkout. The library knows who took it out, when, and when it was returned. Only the patron knows what happened in-between. For an eBook checkout, the library, Overdrive, and Adobe or Amazon all know that circulation information, and Overdrive and Adobe/Amazon also know every time the patron looked at the book and every click they made while reading it. Libraries accepted this new regime with little debate. Imagine a bookstore contacting us 20 years ago and asking if they could monitor book returns so they could contact patrons to offer to sell them copies of books they were unable to finish. This is exactly what we have allowed Amazon to do via Overdrive.

Beyond individual privacy, big data makes the world less diverse and interesting. One way the Internet killed print was by letting publishers see who was reading what. A newspaper sale is a single data point. Which parts got read and how much was unknown. Now that page view counts are readily available, newspapers know exactly how many people look at which sections and which stories. That's what happened to the *LA Times* book review section. The *LA Weekly's* former jazz critic explained on a podcast that he chose what to cover based on how many re-Tweets stories got. Franklin Foer's new book on the demise of the *New Republic* tells a version of this story. We cannot trust our institutions to put their values first. Adopting data-driven approach means that the data is doing the primary driving with the "values" a secondary corrective. The answer is to collect and share only the absolute minimum amount of transaction-generated information needed to operate and to destroy it as soon as it is no longer relevant. A six-month old circulation backup is not very useful to circulation, but it is definitely valuable to marketers and police. What does the IT department have?

Now, back to music. Along these lines, it's a little frustrating that there is no DRAM app. If you want

to stream Charles Ives on your ride home, you'll need to fire up your phone's web browser and log in as if you were on a computer. A minor inconvenience, but as a non-profit with a staff of five, DRAM isn't doing a lot of software development and, of course, the proxy login wouldn't be available with an app.

Once DRAM was up and running at the library, I was approached by artists wanting to know how to get their work included. Pianist Steve Lockwood, who did a fascinating performance at the Library of previously unrecorded modernist chamber music by his distant relative Normand Lockwood, a 1950s studio arranger who worked on Bobby Darin's hits, was able to easily get his CD of that work added, but my musical collaborator Andrea Centazzo's queries about his label Ictus were ignored, even though he offered substantial documentation of the 1970s and 1980s avant-garde, from Steve Lacy to John Zorn and onwards. I suspect that it is exactly the size of the Ictus catalog which makes DRAM unwilling to take it on, compared to Lockwood's single disc. Because they are a small operation with high standards of presentation, they are significantly backlogged with processing materials they already have.

I also have had quite a few requests from singer-songwriters, rock bands, and other popular music artists about getting their self-produced work into DRAM. The Santa Cruz Public Library is doing a very interesting project hosting local artists' recordings, regardless of style, but that's not what I'm doing. In music, as in books, film, and other media, there is a blurry distinction between independent publishing, self-publishing, and vanity publishing. Legendary presses and labels from City Lights to SST began with artists financing their own work to have complete control of its content, manufacturing, presentation, distribution, etc. As inquires from local artists increased. I embraced limiting the concerts to performers and composers whose work appeared on DRAM as a way to be less personally responsible when saying "no." It is also worth distinguishing between noncommercial work and unsuccessful commercial work. I remain somewhat reluctant to embrace the "art music" phrase DRAM uses in their marketing, because I am not comfortable arguing that Prince is less of an artist

than Morton Feldman. Rather than making aesthetic claims about work created to explore the depths of the human condition or abstract formal problems rather than to feed the culture industry, or some such snobbery, I prefer the semi-tautology that genres are created through communities, that work acquires associations by being created, performed, documented, distributed, and discussed through certain networks, what Howard Becker called "art worlds," rather than its intrinsic qualities. Listening to Blondie, even their first single, it is difficult to hear what makes them punk rock. It was their regular appearances at CBGB and in *Punk* magazine, their participation in the punk rock art world, which made them punk. One becomes an artist through participation in communities as well as by making work. Even Harry Partch, surely the most mavericky of the "American Maverick" composers, whose life was disrupted by alcoholism and stretches of homelessness, was supported and presented by patrons, foundations, record labels, venues, schools, etc. The Romantic myth of the artist struggling alone to capture a personal vision is yours if you want it, but that vision is enacted through communities, which are thus performatively constituted and maintained.

Improviser and critical theorist Jack Wright was the first musician to inquire about performing at the library, when he was asking me questions about my academic work for his book *The Free Musics*. This was before SMPL had subscribed to DRAM, and I had been keeping my musical activities separate from my library career. SMPL has separate departments of Reference and Public Services. Reference, where I work, had not been involved in public programs apart from computer classes, and the previous head of Public Services had shot down every suggestion I had made, such as getting video art from Santa Monica-based EZ-TV onto the new building's video wall, which instead showed an aquarium screen saver DVD for most of its first five years.

When I told Jack Wright I thought experimental music shows at the library would be a tough sell, he pointed to the work of Steve Kemple at the Cincinnati Public Library. Steve ran a very successful experimental music and performance art series at his branch, with some touring artists like Jack, but

mostly programs he directed himself with local participants, creating a new scene at the intersections of theater, visual art, and various music styles, and temporarily transforming the library space with his zany sensibility.

I was also aware of Pedro Moreno's Epistrophy Arts organization in Austin. I met Pedro in library school, and he was already established then as the Austin connection for touring free jazz musicians, arranging shows in bars, record stores, warehouses, churches, elementary schools, etc. His work with Epistrophy Arts has no formal connection to his job at the University Library, but I suspect the later has sometimes funded the former.

More recently, Ben Remsen has been doing some interesting things at the Evanston Public Library, presenting Chicago jazz musicians from the AACM and post-Ken Vandermark scenes with funding from Northwestern University's college radio station.

Each of these librarians developed a different network of performers, organizations, and resources based on their conditions and communities. My own took shape in late 2015.

Once Santa Monica had DRAM online and I started promoting it, the acting head of Reference began suggesting that I organize some concerts. I demurred, remembering my past experiences with the head of Public Services and wishing to keep my creative and professional work separate. I had begun playing in the Santa Monica Symphony in 2012 and, since their concerts were free admission at venues a short walk from the Main Library, they were frequently packed with library regulars. However, since I was out of the library context and dressed exactly like every other man on stage, I was never recognized by a patron at a concert. Music and work crossed only slightly when I hand-delivered symphony flyers to the library and attempted to facilitate an instrument show and tell for the youth division.

Then, local composer Daniel Rothman emailed me and wouldn't stop. Daniel has a CD on DRAM and was very excited about having it be readily streamable. His persistence as a volunteer

troubleshooter was essential to identifying and resolving some early technical issues. As I got to know him, I learned that he had run music series at Beyond Baroque and other spaces on and off for decades and was extremely well-connected in the world of contemporary composed music, including the sometimes-insular CalArts community. Daniel was insistent that we do a series of lecture/demonstrations to promote DRAM, with composers and performers playing and discussing excerpts from their streamable recordings. Once I showed him the library's 130 seat auditorium with two grand pianos and excellent acoustics, he agreed that we should instead produce a concert series. I don't remember which of us came up with the name "Soundwaves" or what the other candidates were, but it has served well, and we have thus far avoided making a wave-shaped logo.

SMPL has had some irregular named series, such as the "In Case You Missed It" screenings of recent hit films, but discourages making open-ended regular commitments of time and space (i.e. every third Thursday is bridge night!) because those bridge players can get possessive. Based on my experience as a fan of other performance series, I thought it was important to train the audience to come on a particular night and to name the series to give it an identity apart from other Library music programs, so users could more easily seek it out or avoid it. A regular night also makes life easier for the person who makes the reference desk schedule: she knows I almost always need to be on a night shift the third Wednesday of the month and off the desk from 6PM on.

I also broke with Library precedent by developing a consistent graphic identity for the series posters. This had been discouraged by the Graphics Committee, on the theory that if the posters looked similar, patrons wouldn't look closely enough at them to notice each month's artist. This does not appear to be a problem; I think the opposite effect has occurred: that users spot the distinctive Soundwaves design and look more closely at that month's offering.

We got funding from the Friends of the Library for six months, until the end of the fiscal year, and I quickly booked and announced the entire season. It is more impressive to present a full lineup than to

announce the shows one at a time: each artists' prestige reflects on the others. Former *LA Weekly* jazz critic Greg Burk wrote on one of his weekly concert recommendation blog entries that he hadn't heard of the artist I was presenting but, if it was on Soundwaves, it was worth checking out. I was so happy that I forgot to remind Greg that Google exists.

I'm going to review a few of the shows and describe what I've learned from each. The first concert, in January 2016, presented solo piano music from the Cold Blue Music label, run by Venice Beach composer Jim Fox. Since this was the first show, it was my first time doing almost everything involved in producing a concert, but I had experienced much of that as a performer. One important new thing was publicity. I had never done a press release before, but my colleagues in Public Services had a good press list, which I enhanced with some music-specific outlets, and I had many of their releases to use for models. As a fan and performer, I had often wondered why so many of the events I attended were ignored by the press. Once I started sending out press releases for Soundwaves and saw them instantly printed verbatim by most of the publications who received them, I realized other presenters and performers were simply not sending out their own. It is easy, and you will get results. The media will not be annoyed that you are spamming them. Everyone else is. But won't the cool music writers find the cool stuff on their own? No. I've been reading Simon Napier-Bell's *Black Vinyl, White Powder*, which is almost as lurid as its title, and he's clear that every moment of British rock history, from Cliff Richard to Oasis, was driven by publicists. I have little doubt that the US is the same. I will make a brief exception for that moment in the mid-1980s when Jonathon Gold was writing about music for the *LA Weekly* and Matt Groening had the same job at the rival *LA Reader*. They wrote about whatever they wanted, which often wasn't music at all, and look what happened to them.

Paul Muller, wrote up this show in *New Classic LA* concluding that Soundwaves was "bringing new music back to the Westside." Who is Paul Muller? What is *New Classic LA*? It doesn't matter. That line is magic. Whether or not Paul has readers who will trust his judgment and start coming to Soundwaves

shows, sending a screenshot of this review to library administration and the Friends of the Library Board (who had funded the series), removed most of their apprehension about this project. Do not underestimate this secondary use of press.

The next month, I booked the duo of William Roper and Joseph Mitchell for Black History Month. They made that a theme of the show, entitling the program "The Month of Our People" and including a biting text on tokenism. I was not troubled by this. I have worked with and seen Roper in many settings and he is a master at balancing humor and confrontation when addressing race. Consider the cover of his *Juneteenth* CD. I attempted from the beginning to be inclusive. While some experimental music and jazz scenes are heavily white and male, it has taken no special effort to include women composers, performers, and leaders on a majority of the programs. Major LGBT composers also were presented as a matter of course: John Cage, Lou Harrison, Harry Partch, and Pauline Oliveros. Rising star cellist Seth Parker Woods, who played Soundwaves this September, is the only non-heterosexual performer I am aware of presenting, but we are dealing with music which is mostly instrumental and/or not composed by the performer, so the identification of performer and work is very different from pop singers who are seen as putting their identities on stage.

There is no satisfactory way to deal with race. Feel free to copy and paste that phrase into any paper. In 2016 I had the Roper/Mitchell duo and flautist Nicole Mitchell (no relation). In 2017 Seth Parker Woods has been the only performer of color, unless violinist Jackie Suzuki counts and, although Jackie is great, Asian-American orchestral string players are not an underrepresented group. Pursuing music in general and creative music in particular is a strategy of downward mobility; the existence of noncommercial music depends on artists being supported elsewhere, whether through teaching, performing commercial music, working as librarians, etc, and those avenues have been impacted by long histories of inequality which are gradually being addressed. It's complicated. I hope I'm doing the best I can.

In March 2016 I presented Ulrich Krieger. Krieger's music is very extreme, often focusing on the loudest and softest sounds available, and his most recent project was a four hour collection of music for solo tenor saxophone, sometimes with live electronics. I asked him to do a lecture/demonstration, something closer to Daniel Rothman's original concept. This was a very interesting show, but possibly one of the less successful ones. It is possible that an artist explaining difficult work in a German accent is more off-putting than the work itself, but I also have noticed, at this and other shows, that audience members do not appreciate violations of the concert ritual. They want the lights to go down, the performer to emerge from backstage, take a bow, etc. If artists are in street clothes, are mingling with audience members or adjusting gear up until the downbeat, etc, it does not make the music more accessible but rather gives skeptical listeners excuses to not take the music seriously. A post-performance question and answer period is much more acceptable, and audience members are happy to be able to walk up to the stage after the show to examine instruments and scores, to talk to the performers, and to buy CDs and other merch.

This contact is important. In popular culture musicians are magical creatures who live in castles and appear in showers of glitter. What do Taylor and Kanye really do all day? How did they get those jobs? Soundwaves brings world class artists, people who have won Grammys, Guggenheim fellowships, and *Downbeat* magazine polls, into a 130 seat theater with free admission where you can see that they are people with day jobs who live in tract houses and also happen to make extraordinary sounds by turning knobs and blowing into tubes. They're not different from you. You can apply discipline to imagination and do things no one has done before.

In May of this year I presented a more successful show which broke the format along these lines. LA is home to the Partch ensemble, who have not only built replicas of Harry Partch's unique instruments and learned to play his music, but have won a Grammy. I wanted to do a show and tell program but knew the instruments were large, awkward, and temperamental. The group's leader John

Schneider proposed bringing a modified guitar and one of Partch's more compact mallet percussion instruments, and combining solo and duo performances, a lecture/demonstration, and a vintage documentary of Partch himself. This format worked, I think for three reasons: it had great variety, John has years of experience as a KPFK DJ and is quite comfortable talking on stage, and the show was a co-production of Soundwaves and John's annual Microfest series of concerts of music in alternate tuning systems.

These cross-promotional alliances have been very valuable. Each partner lends their credibility and audience to the other. The Library acquires legitimacy from association with long-established and/or cutting-edge organizations and they gain from association with the growing roster of Soundwaves artists, my publicity work, and a westside venue. Besides Microfest, I have partnered with the Southland Ensemble and the Dog Star Orchestra Festival, and in February will begin working with PianoSpheres, who will present shortened free preview versions of most of their regular shows on Soundwaves.

These alliances were greatly facilitated by Daniel Rothman, who has been working with some of these groups for years. One of my initial disappointments running Soundwaves was that some organizations I was interested in collaborating with never replied to my queries. while Daniel brought in great things. Now that I have a couple of years of experience, I understand this a little better. First of all, they knew him and may have played shows he booked before. My track record as a presenter is much shorter, and may not have been known to them at all. Second, I did not make a specific proposal or go through mutual friends for an introduction, instead sending a message announcing my series and openness to collaboration via whatever contact form or address I could find online. Running a series or ensemble is a lot of work, on top of doing your own creative work and earning a living. It is very easy to ignore vague propositions from strangers.

Last May we presented the music of Anne LeBaron, performed by several artists. There are two

topics I want to discuss in the context of this show. First, this concert included the second performance of "A-Zythium," a tribute to the *Oxford English Dictionary* commissioned by the Los Angeles Public Library and premiered at the Hammer Museum. Most new music only gets performed once; it is a treat for the composers to get to hear it again and for the performers to get a second use from the work of learning it and perhaps to make fewer or different mistakes. The economics of new music and of library performances are odd, so Daniel and I try to look for other ways to reward the performers. Opportunities for second performances are one.

Another is that all the shows are filmed. Funding permitting, I have used a professional videographer who specializes in classical and avant-garde music. The artists get the footage to use as they wish and, pending their approval, I post it on the SMPL YouTube channel. The videos are my appropriation of the claim I first heard as part of "Library 2.0" and which continues into the Makerspace phenomenon, that technology is transforming libraries from sites of passive cultural consumption to ones of active production. This is of course an insult to anyone who ever wrote something in a library, from Karl Marx to Ray Bradbury to most of you, but I thought I could use it to get money to film these shows, and it worked. Response from the artists and public has been moderate; we may all be overwhelmed with documentation, so I am on the fence about including videography in my 2018-19 budget proposal. I don't know about your IT department, but I found it expeditious to eliminate ours from this project. The videos are backed up on flash drives bought in our regular office supply orders, hosted on YouTube, and linked on SoundwavesNewMusic.com, a basic WordPress site which costs $18/year for the URL.

The second issue I want to discuss via Anne LeBaron is conflict of interest. I have booked bands which I play in three times, but each ensemble includes DRAM artists, is of quality and style consistent with the series, and audience response has been excellent. The work that I do as a concert presenter with Soundwaves unavoidably affects my stature within the creative music community. So far it has

been positive: I am not aware of repercussions from turning down someone for a booking for example, and my relationship with Alex Cline, who books the long-running Open Gate concert series in Eagle Rock, has become much more of a peer one since I was able to give him a Soundwaves show. Anne LeBaron, who is an improvising harpist as well as a composer, will be playing a set with me on Alex's series next February. It would have been much harder to get Alex to book me or Anne to join me if I was not doing Soundwaves. There is no quid pro quo given or implied, but this work has enhanced my status as a musician as well as a librarian. I don't think it's a real ethical problem, especially relative to the current intense corruption of just about everything, but I try to be as conscientious as possible. I would never insist that an artist use me, or any particular band members, and I have booked more than one artist who had called me for a gig once and never called me again. That's show business.

This past June Soundwaves presented the Southland Ensemble and Dog Star Orchestra performing several text pieces by Pauline Oliveros. The centerpiece of the show was a long version of "Rock Piece." As a dozen or so people slowly paced the room clinking rocks together in intentionally uncoordinated patterns, I noticed my former colleague Jonathon Bijur walk in with his baby strapped to his chest, sit for a few minutes, then leave. I assumed he thought we were all insane. A few weeks later, I got news that the Friends had approved all the funds I had requested for the 2017-18 fiscal year and that Jonathon, who I did not know was on the Friends board, had been my strongest advocate. I am constantly surprised by the public's reaction to these shows. These are largely crowds who would never seek out this music, but they will check it out because they trust the library. Cred is an under-recognized library resource. We can use it for good.

On the other hand, and I am not going to tell you which show this was, out of respect to the performers, which did not include me, there was one night with below average attendance, and an audience member who walked out early left a comment card saying: "This music is terrible, that's why there are only 30 people here." This returns to my critique of quantification. For this patron, as for

anyone applying a quantitative assessment, the show that attracts and satisfies the largest audience is the best. An unpopular work is a failed work. Our role as public cultural workers should be the opposite: to identify and protect what the market will not. There is no need to use government resources to promote material which is thriving on its own. Of course we should collect Lin-Manuel Miranda, but he can sell out the Pantages for a year just fine without library help. Besides Franklin Foer's book, which I mentioned earlier, there is a steady flow of progressive critiques of quantification: Jonathon Taplin's *Move Fast and Break Things* and Cathy O'Neil's *Weapons of Math Destruction*, for example.

I want to conclude by showing you the "Community and Cultural Connector" element of the SMPL Strategic Plan, written by consultant Maureen Sullivan and now former City Librarian Maria Carpenter. Notice that there is nothing in it about culture as human expressive activity or collective identity, and that every program proposal on this slide is about job training and business growth. I started Soundwaves in part as an act of resistance to the Strategic Plan, which cultivated input from tech startups and ignored the City's educational and cultural organizations.

While we can be cynical about consultant-driven buzzword-laden documents like mission statements and strategic plans, the strategic plan goals are used to make the annual work plans for the entire organization and are going to be used to judge the candidates for the head of Reference job currently open. Projects and worldviews that don't support the plan don't count.

The Plan is based in part on the work of Richard Florida. You probably know his 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, which argued that we were experiencing a transformation to a creative economy, essentially what previous futurists had called a knowledge economy. Florida's innovation, which gave him a long career as a consultant, was to propose that creative cities needed "technology, talent, and tolerance." By looking at the Bay Area tech boom, Florida invented the modern hipster, telling other cities they needed to be diverse and interesting to attract the businesses of the future, that

domestic partner benefits, good coffee, etc. were not simply moral and aesthetic goods but also keys to economic growth, and backing this up with data. In 2002 user-generated content and social media had not yet become dominant; the Internet still required substantial original content, so tech was still in part a jobs program for English majors. However, multiple tech-driven boom and bust waves had already swept the Bay Area and Austin, leaving them spotted with unfinished office buildings where beloved rock clubs had been and artists driven to Oakland or east of the highway, disrupting existing ethnic and working class neighborhoods. Florida's new book regrets the gutting of cities he fueled, but it was already plainly underway when he wrote his first one.

In his recent *Culture Crash*, Scott Timberg offers a rant/eulogy for what has been lost. I was particularly taken with his analysis of independent book, record, and video stores as not only offering meeting places for like-minded people, expert curation, and a physical public presence of culture, but also as a local economic infrastructure for the arts and humanities. Amazon, Spotify, and Netflix may deliver a broader selection of media faster and cheaper, but the money goes to Cupertino, Seattle, and investors, not movie, book, and music lovers in your town.

For the last seven or eight years I have worked on a committee including members of the City's Office of Sustainability and the Environment to award the Green Prize for Sustainable Literature. No one was sure what it meant when the City added "cultural sustainability" to their list of goals. Some, like my aforementioned colleague Jonathon Bijur, developed some pretty cool crafts programs using recycled materials, but I knew there had to be more. Everything I could imagine seemed impossible. Cultural institutions that could survive without massive philanthropy? Artists who could earn a living by their work?

Attempting to reckon with Florida and Timberg has brought me closer: cultural sustainability is the opposite of Joseph Schumpeter's idea of creative destruction as embraced by tech startups. If we cannot prevent the economic and cultural versions of clearcutting and strip-mining currently underway, we can

at least ameliorate their effects. Libraries may not be able to safely deflate the bubble or facilitate a peaceful transition to a managed economy, but we can fill some of the holes left in our communities by the destruction of our bookstores, record stores, video stores, performance spaces etc. "New Worlds Emerge," but they don't emerge on their own. We can fight for the future we want.