

EDITORIAL

ARSC has been in existence as an officially incorporated entity for some five years; and since a change of administration in the Association is bringing with it a change of editorship for the JOURNAL, the undersigned as the outgoing incumbent is taking advantage of the occasion to voice some personal opinions as to where ARSC stands at the moment and where its future course may lie.

As of early 1972, I see ARSC in much the same position as the Music Library Association was in its fledgling days back in the middle 1930's – functioning on a fairly minimal basis due to lack of seed money for a fully operational secretariat and for a publications program functioning on firmly established foundation. The need has also been recognized by the new ARSC administration for consideration of establishing a regional chapter organization, if only to create a means for face-to-face communication among ARSC members other than that offered by annual or semi-annual national meetings and by periodic bulletin and Journal mailings.

Like MLA in its early days, ARSC has been kept going up to now by a volunteer core group, most of whom are associated with libraries and academic institutions. Contrary to the feelings of some, this does not mean that the past ARSC administration has been unaware of or unconcerned with the special interests and needs of its private collector and record dealer members. Indeed, it seems to me that the special interests of private collector and dealer members of ARSC can be served most effectively through the aforementioned establishment of regional ARSC chapters – since the meetings of these groups will serve as a medium for exchange of both information and recorded sound materials, the very lifeblood of any organization involving serious collectors.

This writer, together with his colleagues in the ARSC administration, has recognized as basic the role of private collectors not only in the building of the major institutional archives and record libraries in the U.S., but also the major role they have played in published research in the field, especially that of discography. Without the “enthusiastic amateur”, most of what we today consider to be the standard works in the discographic field never would have come into existence.

While the private collectors continue to till new ground in areas of sound recordings materials and to circulate and hopefully to publish discographies – most lately in the field of radio broadcast transcriptions, the role of the major institutional archives appears to be that of functioning as key public access points for purposes of long-term preservation, audition and information coordination in the recorded sound field.

As indicated in the statement of purpose accompanying its membership application blank, the purpose of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections is to act as a channel of communications among both private and institutional collectors with the object of (a) assuring basic preservation of sound recordings of cultural significance (in the sociological meaning of that word); (b) developing easier, and consequently wider public access to these sound recordings for those interested in them; and (c) developing and coordinating information of a discographic, technological, and historical nature both for general publication and for exchange among ARSC members.

The 1967 *Preliminary Directory of Sound Recordings Collections in the United States and Canada*, the half-dozen issues of the JOURNAL published to-date, together with the national meetings held in Washington, D.C., Bloomington, Ind., Los Angeles, Calif., Nashville, Tenn., and New York City, represent the sum and substance of ARSC activity to-date in its public manifestations.

There is much more ARSC public activity and publication in prospect – but what comes of it will depend to a large extent on the success achieved during the coming year in raising foundation seed money that will enable among other things establishment of a paid executive secretary position to assure handling on a prompt and regular basis the day-to-day correspondence and general operations of the organization.

Among the prime projects for ARSC in the immediate future should be, it seems to me, is the up-dating of the *“Preliminary Directory”*. This has been in the serious exploratory stage, and hopefully will come to pass within the year. A matter intimately involved with widening general access to unique sound recordings materials held by institutional archives is the hoped for development by the recording industry and by government of ground rules which will establish simple and workable procedures whereby these institutions may provide single tape copies of such holdings for educational and scholarly purposes. The Fair Use Committee of ARSC has been struggling with this problem for some years. But even if ARSC agrees to an official organizational stand relative to the Committee’s proposals, it is my guess that other organizations, such as MLA and even ALA will have to join with ARSC as a lobbying force to help put library-archival institutions in a position to undertake such authorized single copies from their rare or unique holdings.

This writer hopes that his successor as Editor of the JOURNAL will enjoy greater good fortune in procuring for publication from ARSC members articles of major interest to fellow members and to the sound recordings collecting community at large. While the JOURNAL in its present size and format is not able to accommodate out-size discographies, an ARSC monograph program as a going operation should be able to perform this function. Other grist for such a monograph program should be a handbook for sound recordings appraisal,

designed to be of use to dealers, institutions, and private collectors alike. Last but not far from least, I should like to see a program for reprinting either in the JOURNAL or in separate monograph form some of the classic writings of the past on records and recording, ranging from the Fewkes account of early recording of American Indian chants on Edison's then novel cylinder equipment to Constant Lambert's unwittingly prophetic 1933 essay in his collection, *Music Ho!*, on *The Appalling Popularity of Music*.

Because the field of sound recordings covers so very many facets of human experience, represented by such disciplines as anthropology, ornithology, history, theatre, music – each in turn supporting a multitude of specialized associations, the Association for Recorded Sound Collections has its own particular role to play, which is that of helping make the sound recordings medium work more effectively in both its informational and experiential functions. By this is meant not merely what is recorded on magnetic tape here and now, but more especially whatever of cultural significance can be developed from the whole range of sound recordings accumulated throughout the world and in all fields over the past three generations – be it the sounds themselves transferred to tape or vinyl, or simply the written down accounts – articles or company catalog citations – of what was done, but which may not have survived for salvage in our own day.

The samplings appearing in the present JOURNAL issue from the research of Raymond R. Wile in the realm of Edisonia stand as a prime example in point.

-- D.H.