

ISSUE 31 **playback** >
Summer 2004

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PLAYBACK is the bulletin of the British Library Sound Archive. It is published free of charge twice a year, with information on the Sound Archive's current and future activities, and news from the world of sound archives and audio preservation. Comments are welcome and should be addressed to the editor.

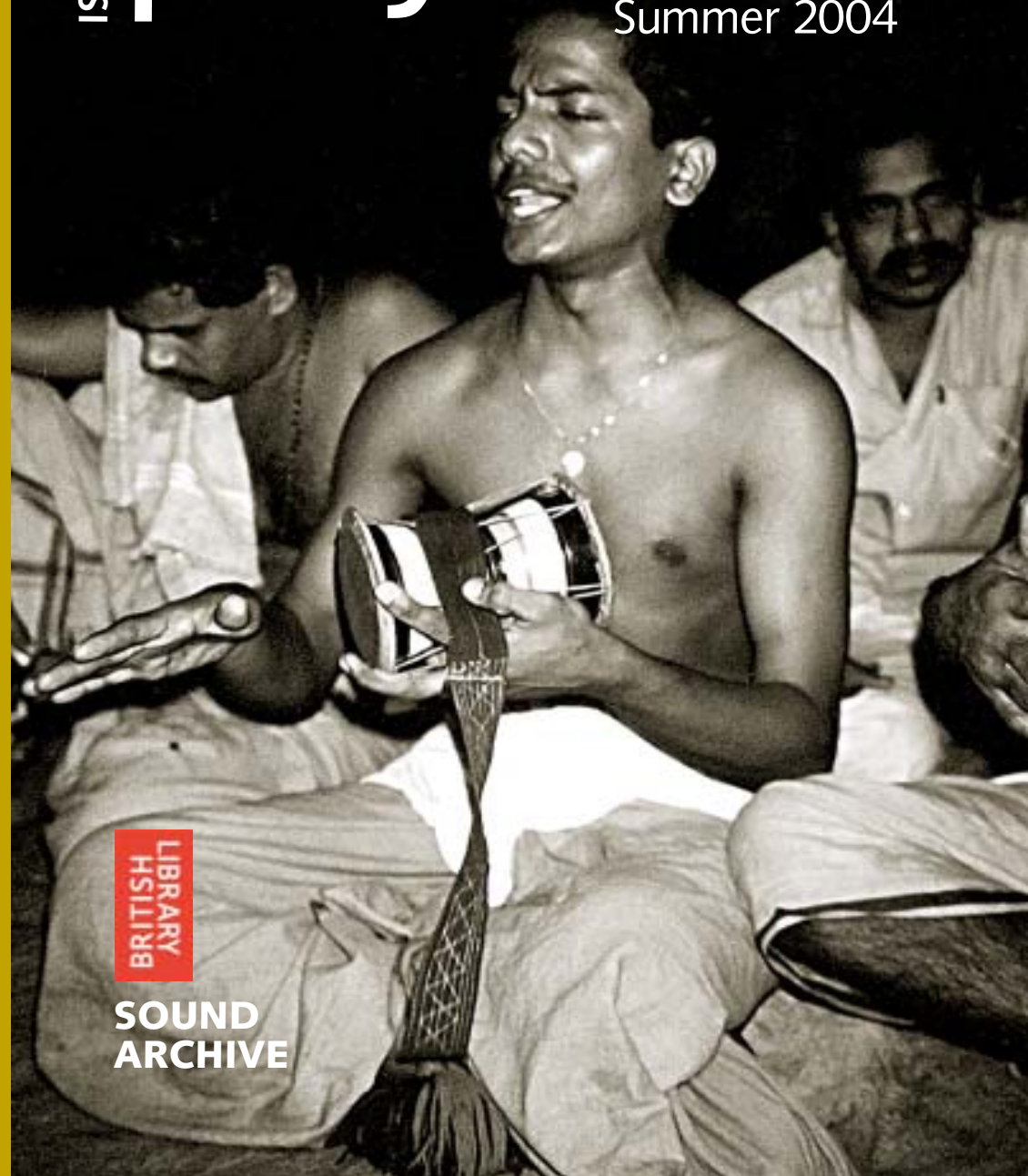
We have a special mailing list for PLAYBACK. Please write, phone, fax or email us, or complete and send in the tear-off slip at the end of this issue (if you have not done so already) if you wish to receive future issues through the post.

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Front cover photograph:
Ayyappa Pattu performer from Thrikkur village © Rolf Killius



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WHAT'S HAPPENING



The launch of the Children's Writers CD: (l. to r.) Michael Morpurgo, Anne Fine, Philip Pullman and Raymond Briggs

■ 'The Children's Writers' CD published on 20 November last year attracted much media attention. At a public launch held in the main foyer of the British Library four of the writers involved – Raymond Briggs, Anne Fine, Michael Morpurgo and Philip Pullman – read extracts from their books and answered questions from an invited group of local schoolchildren.

Lynne Brindley, British Library Chief Executive asked that each member of the Library staff be given a complimentary copy of Christmas. We pressed 5000 copies originally and have since re-pressed a further 5000.



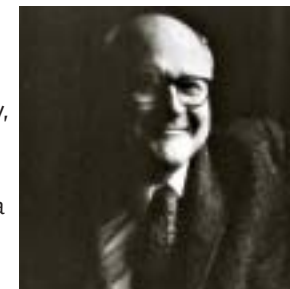
■ The transfer of our early digital recordings from the Betamax platform continues. Interesting collection material rescued from oblivion by this contract preservation project includes: 'Insect Musicians',

a sound picture of the cicadas and crickets of Japan compiled and translated by Stephen Henry Gill from the poetry and prose of Japanese and foreign writers and actuality recordings; Proms 87 – John Cage *Roaratorio*, an Irish Circus on *Finnegans Wake*; two works by the playwright and novelist Peter Tinniswood who died last year – *A Touch of Daniel* and *The full harmonious and totally unauthorised history*; and 'Kaleidoscope – CD or not CD – DAT is the question', an investigation into the dilemmas facing the music business as the first DAT publication is launched in Japan.

■ The adjudication panel considered the submissions for the 2004-5 Edison Fellowships on 15 January. Twenty-eight requests were made this year for full details of the awards. For the first time notices had been circulated through the American Musicological Society's e-list and the Joint Information Systems Committee new e-list for the discussion of musical performance as documented by recordings. Applications were received from Poland, Italy, Switzerland, France

and the United States as well as the UK. The panel recommended that two awards be made, to Dr Mark Katz at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore who will be researching 'Violin performance practice since 1900', and Dr Grant Olwage at the University of Witwatersrand who will be examining 'Recordings of African American solo voices and African black choirs'. Each will receive £5,000 and spend two or three months working in the Sound Archive.

■ On Thursday 11 March the Sound Archive featured in a programme on Radio 4 presented by Julian Lloyd Webber and produced by Andrew Green. 'Mr Memory And The Mating Call Of The Haddock' told the story of our founding Director, Patrick Saul who retired in 1979. (The mating call of the haddock was, allegedly, his favourite recording.) Contributors included Lord Harewood, actress Prunella Scales, historian Andrew Roberts, and current curatorial staff.



Patrick Saul

■ The Sound Archive is supporting a research project led by Professor John McBride, Director of Research in the School of Engineering Science at Southampton University. The project involves digitising cylinders, coarsegroove and microgroove discs by very high-resolution image scans of the grooves, and their interpretation by a computer, allowing the recording to be reproduced virtually. Technical Services staff will be attending progress meetings at Southampton University, providing non-collection 'sacrificial' recordings for digitisation, and offering expert advice on playing speeds, equalisation curves and other audio engineering principles applied to the original recordings.

■ The launch of *The Way We Speak* accents and dialects pages on the British Library's 'Collect Britain' website www.collectbritain.co.uk attracted significant media attention. International, national, regional, local press, radio and television coverage has included pieces in all the national broadsheets, a full page in the *Daily Mirror*, Channel Four News, BBC Radios 2, 4 and 5 Live, and numerous local radio stations and regional newspapers. This first tranche of material reflects changing accents and dialects across Northern England. Further tranches under preparation will cover South-west England, the Midlands, and the South-east.

■ The Wildlife Section supplied recordings to a variety of users, including House Sparrow chirps to a home owner trying to encourage the species to recolonise his garden and the sound of a tropical downpour to stimulate the first breeding attempt at London Zoo of the critically endangered Madagascar rainbow frog.

■ Following on from the very successful 'Hidden Treasures' conference in October 2002, the Sound Archive has been working with colleagues from national and local sound and moving image archives across the United Kingdom to develop a strategy for better provision across the audiovisual archives sector. Support was provided by Re:source (now re-named the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council). The recommendations of the report, which was published at the end of March, include the mapping of existing provision to identify gaps in coverage such as recordings of local radio and television, development of a strategic overview of current and future resourcing, and the establishment of a UK-wide representative body to advocate the needs of the sector to government and other funders. The focus is very much on a coordinated approach to access and services and the work will continue under the aegis of the National Council on Archives.

BIRDS IN SONG

Two new wildlife CDs by Richard Fairman



The two CDs are available separately from the British Library Bookshop, price £9.95 each, plus postage, either from the Online Bookshop at www.bl.uk, or by phone on +44 (0)20 7412 7735.

Following the success of our earlier wildlife audio publications the Sound Archive has released two new CDs this spring. They take contrasting approaches, one offering an audio guide for the identification of birds in the garden, the other a selection of aural landscapes for relaxation. The recordings on both CDs have been taken from the extensive collection of the Sound Archive's wildlife section, which holds the most diverse collection of wildlife sounds in the world.

'Songs of Garden Birds' features recordings of the songs and calls of the 52 birds most likely to be found in gardens in Britain throughout the year. Here are familiar birds like the House Sparrow and the Robin alongside rarer species such as the Spotted Flycatcher. There are summer visitors such as the Chiffchaff and the Willow Warbler, and those that spend the winter here, such as the Redwing and the Brambling. Among the most beautiful songs are those of the Blackbird with its relaxed, mellow, fluty tones and the sweet, twittering song of the Goldfinch, but you can also hear the cooing feral Pigeon, the harsh chatter of the Magpie, the strident screech of the Jay and the 'sea-side' cry of the Herring Gull as it flies overhead. There is even a recording of the Rose-ringed Parakeet, an exotic parrot

which has become a regular visitor to our gardens in London and the south-east.

All 52 birds are identified with a description and details of the recordings in the accompanying 16-page booklet. This single CD will be an essential audio guide for any bird-lover who wants to identify the birds that come to our gardens.

'Dawn Chorus' brings together five uninterrupted recordings depicting British woodlands at sunrise. At dawn in our countryside there is a pronounced peak in bird singing activity especially noticeable for about an hour after first light in temperate zone woodlands during the spring and early summer. At this time male birds defend their territories and attract females with their songs. The recordings here range from Brock Wood in East Sussex, where the dawn songsters include Blackbird, Woodpigeon, Robin, Wren, Carrion Crow, Song Thrush, Chiffchaff and Pheasant, to an early morning in May on Dartmoor in Devon, where Cuckoo, Wren, Raven, Willow Warbler, Carrion Crow and Blackbird sing to the background sound of a distant stream. Phil Riddett, who made the recordings, is an active member of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society and has recorded nature sounds in Britain, Hungary, Canada, and India.

AND THE GODDESS LOVES MUSIC

New World and Traditional Music web pages by Janet Topp Fargion



© Rolf Killius

We launched a large suite of new pages in March to enhance the World and Traditional Music section's coverage on the World Wide Web. The pages provide an overview of the section's holdings, breaking them down broadly into published, unpublished, and broadcast or radio recordings. We also have a description at this level of our own remote recording programme, featuring our 20 years of recording at the WOMAD festival, for example, and we highlight recent significant projects, namely our 'Traditional Music in England' and our 'Traditional Music in India' projects. At this introductory stage we also link to our ethnographic wax cylinder collection, representing our earliest recordings, some of which form part of the British Library's 'Collect Britain' project sponsored by the New Opportunities Fund.

The collection is then broken down by geographic region, each of which has an introduction on published and unpublished recordings, followed by a detailed list

of ethnographic collections. In these sections our aim has been to give as much information as possible about the collections without duplicating the catalogue. Each of our almost 350 discrete collections is listed with its collection number and title, and a short narrative description providing date ranges, country locations and certain highlights of the collection. Once work on a collection on the catalogue is completed we shall add a link directly from its mention in the web pages to the catalogue thus inviting people to explore the full collection and, hopefully, a range of related material.

Furthermore, it is general practice in the World and Traditional Music section to write an article on a collection once documentation is complete. Through our recently completed backlog cataloguing project, we have built up a store of over 30 such articles. We will be working through these to edit them for the web, and to find image and audio illustrations before linking to them.

In some cases the articles are fairly short biographies of the recordists with a select bibliography and description of some of the recordings. In other cases, we have transcribed interviews conducted with the recordists. In yet other cases, we have invited the recordists to write their own articles.

We experimented with this last strategy by inviting Rolf Killius to write a piece on his work on temple music in Kerala, South India (C815). This project stemmed from our 'Traditional Music in India' project conducted in collaboration with Rolf: from November 2000 to April 2002, Rolf travelled to four rural areas of India, including Kerala, where he spent time building on work he undertook on temple music during 1995-7. These two recording trips have resulted in some 200 hours of audio and visual recording from Kerala. In 2002, Rolf registered for a MMus in Ethnomusicology at the School of Oriental and African Studies. For his dissertation he chose to

present his recordings from Kerala as a web site. We invited him to host it within the World and Traditional Music section's new pages. He wrote over 20,000 words and provided 40 photographs and 35 sound extracts. The dissertation is entitled '...and the Goddess loves Music: Kshetram Vadyam – the ritual and ritual music of Kerala, South India'. Rolf introduces it thus:

'The main purpose of this website is to introduce the reader to the numerous and complex religious ritual and ritual music styles of the Hindu population of Kerala, southwest India. ... Kshetram are the tiny Kerala temples surrounded by paddy fields, coconut and areca nut trees. The ritual experts, the *Namputiri* Brahmin, conduct the religious rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. Professional musician communities (especially the *Marar* or *Pooduval*) accompany the rituals with a bewildering variety of

musical genres and instruments (*vadyam*), thus creating an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere for the goddess and her devotees.

'How do the temple rituals link to the ritual music? How does the music generally support and express ritual meaning, and how are both interdependent and relatively independent from each other? After investigating these questions, we provide an overview of the kshetram genres, their musical structure, instrumentation, and performance context.

'In the first two chapters we discuss the two main ritual forms in Kerala, the *kavu* (shrine) and the kshetram (temple), their relationship, the meaning of ritual, and how the temple's architectural structure relates to ritual and ritual music. The next four chapters deal with ritual music in general, and detail the three genre groups,

namely the orchestral forms, the solo, and the smaller ritualistic ensembles. The last two chapters are devoted to the musician communities and the kshetram musical instruments.'

This is, thus, a detailed scholarly study of kshetram musical communities and traditions. One might ask what place such a specialised study has within the context of an archive like ours. It is my opinion that we need to engage more fully with the researchers who donate recordings to us if we are to continue to recruit collections and be allowed to disseminate them in any way. The Kerala pages serve as a publication platform for Rolf, and as a means of dissemination for us. But perhaps more importantly, we need to continue to be relevant for the research community (alongside the wider community) if we are to play our role in the advancement of knowledge.



Maddalam players

All photos © Rolf Killius

DRUMMING AND CHANTING IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY: THE TEMPLE MUSIC OF KERALA IN SOUTH INDIA

Rolf has also compiled a CD with these Kerala recordings which was released on the Sound Archives joint label with Topic Records in October 2003 [TSCD922].

The CD is available from the British Library Bookshop, price £12.99, plus postage, either from the Online Bookshop at www.bl.uk, or by phone on +44 (0)20 7412 7735





THE WAY WE SPEAK

Accents and Dialects on the Web

by Jonathan Robinson

Despite a supposedly increasingly homogeneous society we all still take great pleasure in travelling to different parts of the country to experience the changing physical landscape and to discover the variety of architectural heritage this country has to offer. For many of us there is an equal fascination in hearing the gradual, but nonetheless perceptible change in the nature of the sounds we hear – the accents and dialects that immediately conjure up a sense of the place to which they belong.

This rich diversity is now captured on a new website that draws on two large audio resources, recorded 50 years apart. *The Way We Speak* website forms part of a New Opportunities Fund-supported digitisation project that gives users a glimpse of the variety of holdings within the British Library, all thematically linked by the concept of place. By September 2004 the completed site will contain over 100,000 images and 350 hours of recordings using material sourced from the Library's huge resources of maps, books, topographical drawings, photographs, newspapers, music and sound. Visitors to the site www.collectbritain.co.uk/collections/dialects/ can already listen to 131 voices from the north and by the end of the summer further extracts covering the whole of England will go online, amounting to over thirty hours of recordings from some 600 locations.

It has all been made possible by the fact that the Sound Archive's oral history holdings include two wonderful collections – the Survey of English Dialects,

Photograph: Stanley Ellis (SED fieldworker) and the informant Tom Mason of Addingham Moorside, Ilkley, c. 1967.

Courtesy of the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture. The LAVC is currently the subject of a 3-year AHRB-funded project to catalogue materials from the Survey of English Dialects and Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies (University of Leeds, 1964-1983).

carried out by Leeds University during the 1950s and still the only systematic survey of spoken English, and the Millennium Memory Bank, a joint British Library/BBC project in 1998/9.

A short extract from each of the Survey of English Dialects [SED] recordings has been matched to a speaker from an identical or similar geographic location taken from the massive Millennium Memory Bank archive. Although these speakers were not selected for the purposes of a dialect survey and are therefore not strictly comparable with the SED speakers who were essentially rural males, there is, nonetheless, a similar geographic spread. Every effort has been made to use speakers who could be said to be representative of their respective speech communities - in some cases this is at the 'broad' end of the spectrum, in others less obviously so. The recordings are accompanied by detailed explanations of the vocabulary, structure and sounds that define the speech of a particular location.

The recordings reflect not only ways of speaking but also ways of life that have changed forever, making the site a treasure trove of local and social history. Listeners cannot fail, for instance, to be intrigued by Miss Dibnah's description of baking bread, recorded in Welwick, near Hull in 1955. Her speech is peppered with echoes of long lost Middle English pronunciations, dialect words, such as *nobbut* and *sicche* and archaic verbal inflections, such as *gotten* and *baken*. And they will be equally enthralled by Arthur English's impassioned description, recorded in Barrowford in 1998, of the atmosphere at Burnley FC home games in the 1950s – enlivened by his Lancastrian vowels, use of dialect words *naught*, *aye* and *thou* and his reduced version of the definite article 'the'.

Not only does this give a sense of the changing nature of speech from place to place, but users will also have the unique opportunity of charting the evolution of English over time, by comparing, for instance, the experiences and speech patterns of a collier from Washington, County Durham, who spent the early part of the 20th century *hewing* with his *marrows* at

his *cable* before *ganning hame*, with those of an apprentice draughtsman from Washington working on the bustling Tyneside of the early sixties. Small linguistic details may have changed, but the overall flavour remains and one is immediately transported to the north east.

The way people speak has changed over the last half-century, but contrary to popular belief there is still an incredible amount of regional diversity and the recordings on the website illustrate elements both of continuity and of change, while celebrating the extraordinary variety of English spoken on these shores. The project is now seeking funding to extend the work into changing urban accents, with a look, among other things, at the impact migrant communities have had on spoken English.

Glossary *nobbut* = only; *sicche* = such; *naught* = nothing; *aye* = yes; *thou* = you (familiar); *hew* = to hack, cut (in mining); *marrow* = work-mate; *cable* = set area of coalface assigned to particular team of colliers per quarter; *gan* = to go; *hame* = home

THE MILLENNIUM MEMORY BANK

The Millennium Memory Bank, one of the largest single oral history collections in Europe, was a joint project between BBC Local Radio and the British Library Sound Archive to create an archival 'snapshot' of 'ordinary' Britons' opinions and experiences at the turn of the century. During 1998 and 1999 forty BBC local radio stations recorded 5429 personal oral histories from a broad cross-section of the population for the series 'The Century Speaks'.

www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/millenni.html

THE SURVEY OF ENGLISH DIALECTS

The Survey of English Dialects was the brainchild of Harold Orton at Leeds University and Eugen Dieth from the University of Zurich. By the late 1940s, Orton and Dieth thought it vital to survey spoken English because, they believed, the linguistic landscape of post-war Britain would be drastically altered by increased social

and geographical mobility and by wider access to broadcast media and education. From 1950 to 1961 a team of fieldworkers collected data in 313 localities. Their findings, published between 1962 and 1971, continue to be used by linguists worldwide and work on the resource continues at the AHRB funded Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture.

www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc/index.htm

ROBERT BLYTH, BORN 1883, RETIRED FARM HAND, RECORDED 1953, LOWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND.

Fieldworker: Do you keep your own pigs?

Informant: Yes, I've always kept pigs, but I haven't got *yin* this year – this is the first year that we've never had a pig. We used to have two pigs and you put them in, *mebbies*, say February, or *afore* February if you want a good pig for to kill him for to kill him in October. The first thing you do when you're gonna kill a pig is put a rope up his nose and in his mouth and round his top round his nose and fetch him out and just take the axe and give him one if you hit him hard enough.

Fieldworker: What with?

Informant: With the axe. But then you're not allowed to do that now, you know. It is done here, you know, but you're not supposed to do it. You *hae* to hire a humane killer, but they just take the axe and give him one, right in the mouth there and then he's down and you keep him ... his legs up like that, you see, or back like that ... and then hold him fair on his back till the *herd* cuts his throat and then you *hae* to *scrat* him – put him in the tub and *scrat* him and scrape him and then pull him up on the *shear-legs* and clean him.

Glossary *yin* = one; *mebbies* = maybe; *afore* = before; *hae* = to have; *herd* = swine-herd; *scrat* = to scratch, cut; *shear-legs* = apparatus for raising heavy weights

If you are not already on the Sound Archive's mailing list and would like to be, please fill in and return this slip to
PLAYBACK, The British Library Sound Archive, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB
ADDRESS

USER PROFILE

Brian Capon



Brian Capon was for many years a university teacher and research worker in Chemistry, both in the UK and Hong Kong. When he retired in 1991 he realised that he would not be able to continue carrying out research without a laboratory, so he decided to combine his interest in opera with his knowledge of computer programming in constructing an operatic database. Called CLOR, it includes details of all recordings that have been commercially available at any time both of complete operas and of extended excerpts from operas lasting longer than 20 minutes. Although the database contains information on nearly 12,000 recordings it is far from being complete – and probably never will be.

When did you first visit the British Library Sound Archive?

It was in 1996 when it was situated in South Kensington, though I was aware of its existence as the British Institute of Recorded Sound years before when it was still based in Russell Square. I also used to read the Institute's journal, entitled *Recorded Sound*, at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, where I was Professor of Chemistry. In particular, I recall an article on the baritone Mattia Battistini with a discography attached and thought how I would love to hear all his recordings.

What did you hear on your first visit?

I've never heard anything! I come to the British Library to collect information for the database I am compiling and so it is the printed

collections of the Sound Archive that I use. On my first visit I was searching for details of recordings of zarzuelas - light Spanish operas – and so I was consulting Spanish record catalogues, which would be difficult to find anywhere else in the UK.

What is valuable about the Sound Archive's printed collections?

There are large runs of magazines and books on open access, so they are very easy to use. Then there is the microfilm copy of EMI's written archives, a marvellous source of information, especially as it includes recording sheets for so many early recordings. My only regret is that EMI is the only company to have deposited a copy of its written archives with the British Library in this way. I also use the collection of commercial record

catalogues, many of them going back to the pre-war era, which must be unique in the UK. The challenge in trying to compile a complete opera discography is that I have to consult such a large number of sources and the Sound Archive's printed collections are by far the best public reference source that exists in this country.

Are there any improvements to the service that you would like to see?

I sometimes wish that the British Library had a wider range of books in languages other than English, but as far the services are concerned, I have no complaints. By and large I serve myself, but when I do encounter a problem, the staff have always been helpful. And how user-friendly it is that we can plug in our laptops. Not every library allows that, you know!

EVENTS

■ Oral history training courses

One-day courses in oral history techniques
10 June at the Planned Environment Therapy Trust Conference Centre, Cheltenham
19 June at King's College, University of Aberdeen
6 July at the British Library
T +44 (0)20 7412 7405 F +44 (0)20 7412 7441
rob.perks@bl.uk
www.ohs.org.uk/training/

■ The Saul Seminars

What have recordings done to us?

by Robert Philip (Open University)
Robert Philip discusses some of the topics in his new book, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*.
At the British Library
Tickets from the British Library Events Office
T +44 (0)20 7412 7332
boxoffice@bl.uk
3 June

■ JTS 2004

Joint Technical Symposium: 'Preserving the audio visual heritage – transition and access'.
At Isabel Bader Theatre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
T +1 323 463 1500 F +1 323 463 1506
www.jts2004.org/english/index_en.htm
24-26 June

■ 25th International AES Conference

'Metadata for audio'
At Church House, Westminster, London
www.aes.org/events/25/
17-19 June

■ WOMAD

The annual WOMAD ('World of Music, Arts and Dance') festival.
At The Rivermead, Richfield Avenue, Caversham, Reading
www.womad.org
23-25 July