Digitizing the Joseph M. Bruccoli Great War Sheet Music Collection

Brianna Hughes
University of South Carolina - Columbia

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Digitizing the sheet music of the Joseph M. Brucelli Great War Collection at the University of South Carolina

Introduction: The Joseph M. Brucelli Great War Collection at the University of South Carolina is a large collection primarily composed of print materials but also including sound recordings, visual material, and realia. The sheet music portion of the collection contains almost 700 individual pieces of sheet music, and is still growing. Digitization of the sheet music began five years ago in an effort to make another portion of the collection available online for the centennial anniversary of the Great War.

Background on the collection: The Joseph M. Brucelli Great War Collection was begun in 1999 at the University of South Carolina by Matthew J. Brucelli in memory of his father, Joseph M. Brucelli, who served in Europe during WWI. The collection at the University of South Carolina contains over 4000 items, including a wide variety of materials: manuscripts, diaries, letters, scrapbooks, books, periodicals, posters, artwork, and realia. Some of the titles in the collection were donated by Dr. Brucelli, his family, and other donors; some of the titles were purchased by the Rare Books Department. The Irvin Department of Rare Books and Dr. Brucelli’s family continue to add to the collection. Over the years, portions of the collection have been exhibited in Thomas Cooper Library as well as McKissick Museum, with future exhibits (both physical and digital) planned.

Use and Methods: The final product will hopefully be used for musicological and historical research, as well as performance study. The collection will be accessible through the USC Digital Collections website, the USC catalog, and Sheet Music Consortium. The digital images will be linked to bibliographic records in the USC Millennium catalog.

We began by scanning on an Epson Expression 10000 XL scanner using Avison version 6.5.1r2. Each image was scanned at 300 dpi and 24-bit color. Then, we converted the images from the archival TIFF format to JPG, and generated the file information, all using Adobe Bridge.

Themes: There are a number of common themes throughout the collection. The most common is that of patriotism. Many of these pieces were used to arouse a sense of duty to country and vanquishing of the enemy. Protection of loved ones is another prominent theme. Many pieces call up images of mothers, girlfriends and children left behind on the home front, defenseless and bereft. A few pieces mention celebrities, either for whom the piece is written, or who have performed the piece. A good number of the pieces also mention either the Allied Powers or the enemy nations; an attempt to either vilify or glorify, depending on the country. Images from the war front were also common: efforts to encourage support of the troops by the American public.


Metadata: When selecting the metadata fields for the collection, an effort was made to consider the variety of end users. Fortunately, many of the same fields required by Dublin Core and the South Carolina Digital Library (SCDL), are also required by the Sheet Music Consortium for harvesting.

The primary issue when discussing metadata was that of the creator field. With music, there are typically multiple creators: composers, lyricists, illustrators, etc. Ultimately, we decided to have fields for each, with their designations, and map them all to creator. Another issue we encountered is the lack of geographical location. A common field in Dublin Core and SCDL, geographic location is not necessarily relevant field when describing a piece of music. We have decided to include the field ‘Place-name subject’ when the lyrics mention a place either in its title or text.