Traditional Musics and Ethical Considerations
of Knowledge and Documentation Processes

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Abstract: This paper describes ethical considerations surrounding traditional music knowledge and documents, both from the author's experiences as apprentice to a renowned Irish fiddler, and from other music practitioners. Frohmann's (2004) informativeness of documents, Turner's (2007) oral documents, and writings of Briet and Otlet provide the theoretical underpinnings necessary to argue for and describe alternative documents: memory, metaphor, and storytelling. Examples of these alternative types of documents from the Irish music tradition and other world music traditions provide a basis for examining knowledge and documentation practices in traditional musics. Additional challenges for knowledge organization and traditional musics are related to attribution and ownership, as well as secrecy and privacy. What might be termed an "ethics of evidence" unites these traditional music knowledge and documentation issues into a single challenge for knowledge organization.

1.0 Introduction

This paper describes ethical considerations surrounding traditional music knowledge, namely: knowledge representations and documentation formats that are outside what might be considered typical, such as oral knowledge, memory, and metaphorical descriptions and storytelling; issues of trust between practitioners and outsiders related to sensitive or more secretive information, as well as problems related to attribution and ownership of musical knowledge. Frohmann's (2004) informativeness of documents, Turner's (2007; 2010) work surrounding oral information, and the writings of Briet and Otlet form the theoretical basis for the presentation and discussion of several alternative documents. Examples of these alternative types of documents from the Irish music tradition and other world music traditions challenge the assumptions built into these terms.

Much of this paper was inspired by the author's experiences as an Irish traditional music practitioner and apprentice to a renowned fiddler, as well as ongoing research with practitioners of other musical traditions. Within the contexts of traditional music knowledge, certain aspects of traditional music knowledge prove difficult to incorporate within organization structures. These aspects include: when expectations of secrecy or privacy make knowledge disclosure problematic; when documentary evidence to support knowledge claims are missing, conflicting, or insufficient; or, when knowledge attribution or ownership issues present problems for bibliographic control. Each of these are ethical challenges when dealing with traditional musics.

An additional challenge for knowledge organization is the oral-aural forms knowledge exchange takes within these contexts. Detailed written accounts, and other types of tangible documents, are less common and less heavily

relied upon. A former apprentice to an Indian Carnatic musician (called a "guru" in this context), recalls how "nothing was written down; if you missed it, you missed it" (Weissenberger 2015). In this way, ethical challenges with knowledge organization and traditional musics are based in a problem of evidence. Without sufficient evidence, knowledge remains confined to those within a musical tradition and dissemination outside this closed area becomes markedly difficult—if not impossible. It is also possible that dissemination outside the tradition is not a goal of those within it. Potential solutions to these ethical concerns begins with our understanding of alternative documents, secrecy and privacy concerns, and finding alternative ways of documenting music knowledge relationships.

2.0 Alternative Documents

Recent interest in the document has extended its conceptual and applied scope (see Frohmann 2004; 2009; and Turner 2007; 2010). Frohmann (2009, 295) asks whether documents must be defined at all in order to be discussed, noting the "definition of a document leads directly to questions about how to think about documents and documentation." In the case of documents and traditional musics, the documents possess an "informativeness" (Frohmann, 2004), much as Turner's oral documents. These four qualities define the document through its purpose, which in turn helps justify non-physical phenomena—such as memory, metaphor, and storytelling—as documents.

Turner's work in orally-based information and oral documents is grounded in a social constructivist approach, where these oral utterances are elevated and legitimized through social meaning. Oral utterances achieve document status through their social meaning and significance, as well as possessing the "informativeness" qualities outlined by Frohmann (2004, 405):

> The informativeness of documents, when recognized as dependent on practices, is also dependent on what shapes and configures them... [the four are] the materiality of documents studied, their histories, the institutions in which they are embedded, and the social discipline shaping practices with them.

These four qualities (Historicity, Institutionalization, Materiality, and Social Discipline) are present in the alternative documents suggested here, even if these documents are not necessarily expressed in an oral medium. Table 1 outlines Frohmann's (2004) qualities of informativeness, with Turner's (2007; 2010) application to oral documents, and the alternative documents proposed here.

Frohmann's Informativeness	Turner's Oral Documents	Alternative Documents: Memory, Metaphor, and Storytelling
Historicity	Accessing speeches via different mediums than in the past – audiovisual recording vs. transcriptions	Specific details within documents might have changed over time, reflecting technological or social changes
Institutionalization	Institutional norms and processes that perpetuate a certain context	Whether the document has been passed around by peers or within teacher-student contexts
Materiality	How the document adds weight and significance to what it says within it	Philosophical and cultural weight; what the document explains about some aspect of indigenous knowledge
Social Discipline	Role or position of the source/speaker, as a position of authority	Whether the document comes from a practitioner of some aspect of indigenous knowledge, such as a master musician

Table 1. Comparison of documents and informativeness attributes

2.1 Historicity

Accessing speeches via different media than in the past, such as audiovisual recording as opposed to text-based transcriptions, are how oral documents express historicity (Turner 2007). With alternative documents, specific details within documents might have changed over time, such as characters or settings in a story or nouns in a metaphor. These differences reflect technological or social changes, yet the overall essence of the message remains.

2.2 Institutionalization

In Turner's (2007) adaptation, oral documents possess institutional norms and processes that perpetuate a certain context, giving them institutionalization. In the case of alternative documents, institutionalization could derive from whether the document has been disseminated peer-to-peer, or within teacher-student contexts. As a former apprentice of a renowned Irish musician, when the author imparts to her students the same metaphorical expressions or stories told to her as an apprentice, this institutionalizes them as documents. The concepts expressed

292

Knowl. Org. 42(2015)No.5
L. K. Weissenberger. Traditional Musics and Ethical Considerations of Knowledge and Documentation Processes

within the memory, metaphor, or story reflect their institutionalization and perpetuity within the tradition, and therefore within the musicians who practice it.

2.3 Materiality

Oral documents have materiality because of how they add weight and significance to what is said within it (Turner 2007). Alternative documents possess materiality through philosophical and cultural weight; namely, what the document explains about some aspect of epistemological reality or cultural norm. Examples include stories and metaphorical expressions designed to express the traditionally-accepted approach to Irish traditional music, like the concept of "soul" discussed further in section 2.6.

2.4 Social Discipline

Social discipline with oral documents refers to the role or position of the source/speaker, as a position of authority (Turner 2007). With alternative documents, social discipline is reflected in whether the document comes from a practitioner of some aspect of indigenous knowledge, such as a master musician or guru. Authority or position in traditional Irish music is most often socially constructed, achieved over time, and without formal titles. With the formation in 1951 of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann (CCE), the official organization of Irish traditional music, CCE branch leaders and teacher certifications became another means to authority. These examples within CCE have not replaced the more traditional way of earning position through musicianship over time.

2.5 Memory

As the first proposed alternative document, memory could be viewed as a type of latent document that become manifest when the memory is recounted aloud to another individual or group; and even can be captured or archived by the person hearing them. Oral tradition and learning from master to apprentice create a knowledge sharing relationship that can provide philosophical and cultural contexts for practices and techniques that are more difficult (if not impossible) to learn in other ways. In the case of indigenous knowledge and traditional musics, especially the master-apprentice relationship, memories of the master can become ingrained in the apprentice as a way of reinforcing musical and extra-musical concepts.

2.6 Metaphors and Storytelling

Metaphors could be seen as a type of document that convey intangible aspects of musical (or other) knowledge, especially contextual information and philosophical ideas. Olson calls metaphor a "powerful device" (1998, 237) that has the potential to inform change; in the context of the author's apprenticeship in Irish traditional music, metaphor became a lens through which the tradition defined itself across changing approaches, expectations, and modernization. The master musician expressed himself in numerous metaphorical descriptions and in stories from his musical life, often involving musical family members or legendary musicians that were friends of the family.

Examples from Irish traditional music include the concept of "soul" or soulfulness in music or in style/approach, and of "essence" of tunes (Weissenberger unpublished manuscript). Other metaphors spoke to the character of tunes: "We are all actors, playing different roles in different tunes" (Ibid.). The idea of a lifelong musical journey is expressed both in Indian Carnatic tradition (Weissenberger 2015) and in Irish traditional music: "We are all a work in progress, both musically speaking and as human beings" (Weissenberger unpublished manuscript). Another life metaphor from Irish traditional music, explained from master to apprentice, imparts the importance of living a life that reflects musical ideology: "Everything you do in your life is reflected in everything you do in your life. So, if I like to hit people over the head with the fiddle, musically speaking, there's a good chance that's how I conduct myself in everyday life" (Ibid.). At the end of the Irish traditional music apprenticeship, this metaphor described what lies ahead in an apprentice's musical life (Weissenberger unpublished manuscript): "For you, you do realize that it's about peaks and valleys. Your musical life is really about peaks—and valleys! It's the journey from the valley to the peak and it's the journey from the peak to the valley. You can't be stuck in the valley and you can't be up on the peak all the time."

When discussing textual documents within the scope of the Science of the Book, Otlet observes (1990, 77): "... internally, [they] have the structure of an intellectual organism, a statement of closely linked notions and ideas with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and a logical construction of phrases, sentences ....". Otlet's discussion on the scope of the Science of the Book relies on arguments of physicality/tangibility, and also assumes text or image representations. However, the structure of an oral story, even if the story relies on abstract language and concepts, contains Otlet's elements.

As an apprentice in Irish traditional music, accounts of family musical legacies were common. These accounts took the form of structured stories or stream-of-conscious memories. Personal and familial relationships with important musical figures were recounted to provide a continuity between the person and their music, viewed as intertwined

Knowl. Org. 42(2015)No.5
L. K. Weissenberger. Traditional Musics and Ethical Considerations of Knowledge and Documentation Processes

293

(and reflexive) entities. Memories recounted during this apprenticeship included: watching rehearsals of Ceoltoírí Chualann, the legendary group led by Sean O'Riada, that eventually morphed into The Chieftains. This group had a tremendous impact on Irish traditional music history in the 1950s. Many stories were about individual musicians and how they played tunes, or about the spirit of doing something so new – that is, making traditional music arrangements on a formal stage where people were expected to listen, not dance. These stories served to impart the concept that within this musical tradition, specific tunes were inseparable from particular players, and this was to be respected and internalized. As an apprentice, it was important to understand how to "play this tune the way Junior Crehan played it at the end of his life, with the shivers and shakes, and finger pressure slides" (Weissenberger unpublished manuscript).

3.0 Trust and Knowledge Sharing

Secrecy and privacy expectations within the apprenticeship framework pose ethical challenges to knowledge sharing and description. Within the author's apprenticeship, alternative documents such as metaphor-laced explanations of musical approach and philosophies or stories about the music and musicians often came with the expectation that they would be kept secret. An Indian Carnatic musician discussed something similar regarding what she deemed "trade secrets" involving bending of notes in sitar playing (Weissenberger 2015a). When master musicians share information with apprentices, it can take time for trust to be earned in order to receive this information.

A Caribbean steel pannist described the secretive practices of steel pan makers and tuners in Trinidad (described further in Weissenberger 2015). Instrument making and tuning techniques are considered closely guarded secrets to be kept from other makers/tuners; the only way to access this knowledge is to become an apprentice to one of these masters. Even then, trust must be earned over years of loyal apprenticeship to truly have access to the best secrets of the trade. Arrangers of steel pan ensemble music for important competitions such as Panorama in Trinidad are equally guarded about disclosing any song arrangement details to non-band members. A student of the arranger would be eligible to learn the arranger's practices, but the competition arena—one of the main arenas for this music—typically brings out more secrecy in the arranging world than other arenas.

Oral transmission from master to apprentice creates a knowledge sharing relationship that provides philosophical and cultural contexts for practices and techniques that are more difficult (if not impossible) to learn in other ways. Often, information shared from master to apprentice is given with implicit or explicit expectations of privacy. In the case of the author's apprenticeship with a renowned Irish fiddler, the documents were the metaphor-laced explanations of musical approach and philosophies, as well as stories about the music and musicians that often came with the expectation that they would be kept secret. At the minimum, it was discouraged that these insights would be freely given to those who have not earned the privilege of hearing them; often because it would require a level of knowledge to understand and translate these concepts.

Ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner is known for his book, *Soul of the Mbira* (1978), which includes a personal account of research in Zimbabwe with mbira players, notably the revered Bandambira who reveals a closely guarded knowledge to Berliner. To obtain this knowledge took Berliner years of trust building yet, within a short time, it was presented for the outside/etic audience in a book. This case is used within Ethnomusicology to discuss ethical considerations within fieldwork settings—not necessarily to condemn or condone Berliner (as is the intent here).

As an example of secrecy and privacy in traditional musics, Berliner's choice to publish knowledge that musicians are expected to gain through demonstrated work and privilege opens a debate over knowledge sharing rights versus privileges. As one practitioner of African-Diasporic religious music asked, "what if I don't want to tell you what goes on behind the curtain?" (Weissenberger 2015). As another example of privileged access, Indian music apprentices to master gurus know that if the guru has children, the non-children apprentices never learn as much as the guru could teach them. Those closely guarded secrets are passed down to the guru's children as a matter of family privilege (Weissenberger 2015a).

There is no simple, universal answer as to whether or not access to indigenous music knowledge is a right or a privilege within any context. However, these expectations of secrecy or privacy with knowledge-building practices impact its formal description and documentation. From keeping the true composer of musical piece secret to pass it off as "traditional," to the dilemma of whether to reveal secrets of mbira music given in confidence, ethical issues over who has ownership rights to such knowledge and who has the right to document it are persisting issues that deserve continued consideration.

4.0 Implications for Knowledge Representation and Organization

Two aspects of bibliographic models that prove especially problematic for accommodating traditional musics are the ideas of relationship(s) and authorship. Examples drawn

from the author's knowledge of Irish traditional music, particularly the ongoing musical-informational relationship between a master Irish musician and the author, will help illustrate the problematic nature of authorship/composer and other relationships. Ethical considerations are embedded in the notion of authorship/composer, in how to accurately describe relationships between "works," and even titles, geographic relationships, and significant musicians related to the work, who are not necessarily performers or composers of the work.

4.1 Ownership and Attribution

When talking with traditional music practitioners, and from the author's own apprenticeship experience, there are several situations when it can be problematic to attribute music to a person. An example from the Trinidadian steel pan world is the issue of arranger/composers of pan ensemble music. If an individual composed a song (terminology used to describe this music by the steel pannist herself), he or she would prefer to be listed as the arranger than the composer, as this is held in higher esteem by fellow musicians and those associated with the major competitions like Panorama (Weissenberger 2015).

Other instances where composers hide association with their compositions involve the desire to be seen as "traditional" and not modern. Irish traditional musicians have concealed their composition of tunes in order to have the tunes included in music collections or albums compiled by folklorists, or to encourage dissemination of the tune in local musician circles. An Indian Carnatic musician also described her desire to have her traditionally-based compositions received well by her traditional audiences by concealing their true origin until after favorable reviews came out in local Indian newspapers (Weissenberger 2015).

There additional issues with ownership, related to attributing musical pieces to what might be considered a composer. An example of this is the Native American Plains and Flathead tribes' concept of composition, which is very different from a concept of composition found in Western Classical music (Merriam 1964, 166-171). One practitioner of classical harp described the image of a composer as someone who creates a masterwork from his or her own musical inspiration (Weissenberger 2015). For Plains and Flathead tribes (Merriam 1964; Weissenberger 2015a), "music composition is an indirect process that happens through visions or through supernatural encounters, meaning the composer does not necessarily take individual ownership of the resulting composition." Relationship types available within bibliographic control may need to be expanded in order to accurately express relationships that do not neatly fit within Western Classical music's concept of composer.

4.2 Ethics of Evidence

Turner observes (2007, n.p.) the document's purpose is no longer to educate, but instead to preserve: "It provides evidence over time." Briet offers several definitions of document, (2006, 9) including "a document is proof in support of a fact." Her preferred definition, (2006, 10) something she calls both accurate yet abstract, is: "any concrete or symbolic indexical sign [indice], preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon." In short, documents preserve knowledge by providing evidence. Expectations of what constitutes evidence are tied to our expectations of how documents appear, as well as formats of knowledge products.

Potential barriers to including information within a formal knowledge structure, as discussed earlier, may include: problems with disclosing the piece of knowledge; knowledge relying upon alternative documents as proof; and, attribution or ownership complications. Each of these barriers is affected by what might be termed an "ethics of evidence." What we can prove as fact, we can trace back to a document(s) or create a new document(s), then organize based on properties or attributes, and finally, place in context with other related knowledge. What cannot be proved through conventionally-documented forms continues to remain outside the boundaries of knowledge organization. The question becomes: What kinds of evidence, and therefore documents, are acceptable to legitimize knowledge? Our views and expectations of documentation and representation practices influence what we might accept as evidence; this in turn influences the scope of knowledge made accessible to wider audiences.

5.0 Conclusion

Acceptance of alternate ways of knowing and documenting depends upon expanding not only the idea of what constitutes a document, but also who is allowed to define the term in which contexts. Dick (2013, 9) alludes to oral information and alternative documents:

> Whereas Popper requires the storage of all knowledge in books, libraries, and other physical formats, the epistemology of indigenous knowledge regards knowledge storage as insufficient and even detrimental for the process of knowledge generation.

Dick's contrast between the epistemological approach based on alternative documents and the approach that relies upon physical storage, begs the question of whether the storage or capture of alternative documents should be considered at all.

Creating strategies and approaches to better understand and organize these alternative documents, while incorporating them within existing knowledge frameworks, are potential challenges for the knowledge organization field. Before such approaches are developed, it is essential to understanding the types of problems associated with knowledge and documentation processes of traditional musics. Additional research into alternative documents is needed to further extend our understanding of them in conceptual and applied contexts. Alternately-documented knowledge may be difficult to include within representation structures, just as secrecy and privacy considerations between music practitioners can make attributions, relationships, or other information claims difficult to verify. It is hoped the knowledge organization community will consider how these ethical challenges might be accommodated within existing and future frameworks.

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