



The New York Public Library Music Division

Guide to the

Susan T. Sommer papers

1965-1996

JPB 14-19

Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

Summary

Creator: Sommer, Susan T.

Title: Susan T. Sommer papers

Date: 1965-1996

Size: 4.2 linear feet (10 boxes)

Source: Donated by the Estate of Susan T. Sommer in 2008.

Abstract: Susan Thiemann (Suki) Sommer (1935-2008) was an American music librarian, teacher, and scholar. The Susan T. Sommer papers, dating from 1965 to 1987, primarily document her activities in the Music Library Association and her teaching career at the Columbia University School of Library Services.

Conditions Governing Use: For permission to publish, contact the Chief, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Preferred citation: Susan T. Sommer papers, JPB 14-19. Music Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Matthew Snyder, 2014

Creator History

Susan Thiemann (Suki) Sommer (1935-2008) was an American music librarian, teacher, and scholar. She grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, and graduated from Smith College in 1956. She received her master's degree in musicology in 1958 (studying in Florence on a Fulbright scholarship), and earned her master's in library services in 1967; she received both degrees from Columbia University.

Sommer had a long and distinguished career at The New York Public Library, joining the staff in 1961. In 1969, she became head of the Rare Books and Manuscripts section of the Music Division and curator of the Toscanini Memorial Archives. She was Head of Circulating Collections from 1987 to 1997, and Chief of the Music Division from 1997 to 2001. She also served as acting director of the Library for the Performing Arts from 1999 to 2000.

Sommer was a renowned teacher of music librarians, and a scholar of music. In 1969, she was appointed lecturer in music librarianship and performing arts bibliography at the Columbia University School of Library Services. From 1975 to 1981 she lectured on opera for the Metropolitan Opera Guild, and beginning in the 1960s, she was a contributing editor for *High Fidelity* and *Musical America*.

Sommer was active in the Music Library Association. She served as book review editor for *Notes* (the association's journal) from 1978 to 1982; as editor from 1982 to 1987; and as president of the association in 1989 and 1990. She was also an active member of the International Association of Music Libraries, and served as editor of its journal, *Fontes Artis Musicae*.

Suki Sommer died at home in New York City after a long illness on March 4, 2008.

Scope and Content Note

The Susan T. Sommer papers, dating from 1965 to 1996, document Sommer's career as a librarian, educator, and scholar. They primarily contain evidence of her activities in the Music Library Association (MLA) and her career at the Columbia University School of Library Services. Smaller portions of the collection pertain to her work with the International Association of Music Libraries (IAML), the Metropolitan Opera Guild, *High Fidelity* magazine, and the Music Division of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

The MLA files (1964-1996) contain correspondence regarding the association's journal, *Notes*, meetings of the association, the board, and the various committees on which Sommer sat. These included the Standards Committee, the Education Committee, the Executive Officer Search Committee, and committees regarding the Répertoire International des Sources Musicales (RISM) and Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals (RIPM) projects. Also present are files of general correspondence.

The Columbia School of Library Services files (1969-1991) hold syllabi and notes for the courses Sommer taught on Music Librarianship and Literature of the Performing Arts, as well as files on the Columbia Rare Book School, for which she also taught. Also present are her notes on topics in music librarianship and performing arts bibliography, lists of students, and student papers Sommer kept for her own reference. Student papers can be found among the student list files as well as in the division titled student papers. The collection also contains small files on music bibliography courses taught at the City University of New York.

Files on IAML (1975-1996) mainly consist of correspondence regarding the association's journal, *Fontes Artis Musicae*, and association meetings. Correspondence pertaining to the United States branch of IAML is also present.

The Metropolitan Opera Guild files contain notes and texts for public lectures Sommer delivered in the mid- to late-1970s. The New York Public Library files (1968-1997) are composed of inter-office memoranda discussing cataloging procedures for rare materials, and a file on the Library's legislative relations. Typescripts of Sommer's reviews for *High Fidelity* and her recording liner notes are contained in the writings files.

The collection holds general correspondence with colleagues or friends, and correspondence with the publishers R.R. Bowker, Garland Publishing, Broude Brothers Limited, and H.W. Wilson; the editors of the *Grove* and *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (regarding Sommer's contributions); the

Wicker Family Foundation; the Harvard Music Library; the American Musicological Society; the International Musicological Society; and the Desoff Choirs.

Other topics in the collection are the Music Librarianship in America conference of 1989; copyright (in a mock play titled *Ariadne Auf Xerox*); job qualifications for music librarians; Sommer's involvement in the RIPM, RISM and RILM (Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale) projects; appraisals of special collections; and letters of reference or recommendation for former employees or interns.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by subject, person, or organization.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Commercial correspondence
Lectures
notes
Personal correspondence
Syllabi
Typescripts

Occupations

Librarians
Teachers

Subjects

Library education
Library schools
Music libraries

Geographic Names

New York (N.Y.)

Names

Columbia university -- School of Library Services
International Association of Music Libraries
International Inventory of Musical Sources (Organization)
Metropolitan Opera Guild
Music Library Association
New York Public Library -- Music Division
Rare Book School

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-2 General Correspondence 1973-1993
- b. 1 f. 3 American Musicological Society 1981, 1990-1992
- b. 1 f. 4 Broude Brothers Limited 1988
- b. 1 f. 5 City University of New York 1987
- b. 1 f. 6-7 Collection Appraisals 1991, 1993
Columbia University
- b. 1 f. 8-22 Rare Book School 1983-1991
- b. 2 f. 1-3 Rare Book School 1983-1991
School of Library Services
- b. 2 f. 4 General 1988-1990
- b. 2 f. 5 Bibliography of Early Music 1975
- b. 2 f. 6-7 Composer Bibliographies undated
- b. 2 f. 8-9 Dictionaries and Encyclopedias undated
- b. 2 f. 10 Faculty 1974
- b. 2 f. 11 Histories and Surveys of Music undated
Literature of the Performing Arts Course
- b. 2 f. 12-13 1975-1976
- b. 2 f. 14-15 1982
- b. 2 f. 16-20 1987-1991
- b. 3 f. 1-9 1987-1991
- b. 3 f. 10 Music Library Catalogs undated
- b. 3 f. 11-14 Music Librarianship Course 1970-1974
Students
Lists
- b. 3 f. 15-22 1970-1977
- b. 4 f. 1-10 1978-1984, undated
- b. 4 f. 11-28 Papers 1965-1984, undated
- b. 5 f. 1-2 Syllabi 1972-1977
- b. 5 f. 3 Copyright 1978
- b. 5 f. 4-7 Dessoff Choirs 1991-1995
- b. 5 f. 8 Garland Publishing 1986
- b. 9 f. 18 Gregorian Chant Notes undated
- b. 5 f. 9-11 *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 1975-1976
- b. 5 f. 12 H.W. Wilson 1986
- b. 5 f. 13 *Harvard Dictionary of Music* 1985
- b. 9 f. 19 Harvard Music Library 1977
International Association of Music Libraries
- b. 5 f. 14-15 General 1981-1983
Fontes Artis Musicae

International Association of Music Libraries (cont.)
Fontes Artis Musicae (cont.)

- b. 5 f. 16-17 1985-1986
- b. 6 f. 1-5 1992
- b. 6 f. 6-18 Meetings 1978, 1984-1994
- b. 6 f. 19 Research Libraries Committee 1983
- b. 6 f. 20 United States Branch 1993
- b. 7 f. 1-2 International Musicological Society 1971-1977
- b. 7 f. 3-21 Metropolitan Opera Guild Lectures late-1970s
- b. 7 f. 22 Music Librarianship in America Conference 1989
- b. 7 f. 23 Music Librarianship Summer Institute undated
- Music Library Association
- b. 7 f. 24 General 1967-1973
- b. 7 f. 25 American Library Association 1976
- b. 8 f. 1-3 Board Meetings 1974-1976
- b. 8 f. 4 Education Committee 1973-1974
- b. 8 f. 5 Executive Search Committee 1978
- b. 8 f. 6 Fundraising 1990
- b. 8 f. 7 Goals and Objectives Committee 1975
- b. 8 f. 8 Manual 1973
- Meetings
- b. 8 f. 9-18 1975-1981
- b. 9 f. 1 1991
- b. 9 f. 2 1996
- b. 9 f. 3 Membership 1969
- b. 9 f. 4 Notes 1970-1976
- b. 9 f. 5-9 Regional Chapters 1986-1989
- b. 9 f. 10 Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals 1975
- b. 9 f. 11-16 Répertoire International des Sources Musicales 1972-1991
- b. 9 f. 17 Self-Study Steering Committee 1996
- b. 9 f. 20 Nein, Ken 1989-1990
- b. 9 f. 21 *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 1984-1991
- b. 9 f. 22-23 The New York Public Library 1968-1997
- b. 10 f. 1 *Opera Review* 1976-1977
- b. 10 f. 2 Petrucci Bibliography 1971-1975
- b. 10 f. 3 Professions for Women in the Arts - Librarian undated
- b. 10 f. 4 R.R. Bowker 1982
- b. 10 f. 5 Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale 1995-1996
- b. 10 f. 6 Répertoire International des Sources Musicales 1965-1980
- b. 10 f. 7 Wicker Family Foundation 1986
- b. 10 f. 8-15 Writings 1967-1974, undated