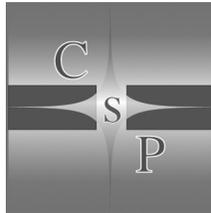# Folk Music,
Traditional Music,
Ethnomusicology

Folk Music, Traditional Music, Ethnomusicology:
Canadian Perspectives, Past and Present

Edited by

Anna Hoefnagels and Gordon E. Smith

This publication is dedicated to the founders of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music/La Société canadienne pour les traditions musicales (formerly the Canadian Folk Music Society/La Société canadienne de musique folklorique) and to all who have participated with commitment, enthusiasm, and inspiration toward the fostering of the Society's ideals.

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PREFACE

These proceedings feature the work that was presented at the fiftieth annual conference of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music / La Société canadienne pour les traditions musicales (CSTM/SCTM) that took place November 3-5, 2006 in Ottawa at Carleton University and the Canadian Museum of Civilization (formerly known as the National Museum, and the National Museum of Man).[1] The site of this meeting was significant, as the Society was founded in 1956 by the folklorist, Marius Barbeau, who was employed by the National Museum (as it was then known) for his entire professional career (1911 until the late 1940s). The fiftieth anniversary conference of the Society can be considered as an historic event with respect to folk music, traditional music and ethnomusicological studies in Canada and/or by Canadians, in that it served as an opportunity for reflection, stocktaking, discussion, and planning for the future. The Conference attracted a large number of participants (approximately seventy-five) from throughout Canada and the United States, and included twenty-five paper presentations, numerous informal presentations, and various types of music-making.

Since its inception, the Canadian Society for Traditional Music / La Société pour les traditions musicales (CSTM/SCTM) has appealed to performers, folklorists and ethnomusicologists as a site for the exchange of ideas, music, and research. Known first as the Canadian Folk Music Society / La Société de la musique folklorique canadienne, the Society has undergone various transformations in its fifty-year history, including the change to its current name in the late 1980s, a change that reflected shifting ideas and practices with respect to folk and traditional musics, as well as the emerging discipline of ethnomusicology in Canada and internationally. Yet the focus in the Society has remained on the sharing and performance of folk and traditional musics, on issues related to music's place and importance in local communities, as well as on scholarly research in and around music as social and cultural practice in

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[1] The Canadian Museum of Civilization / Le Musée canadien des civilisations is situated in Gatineau, Quebec (formerly Hull). Due to the recent renaming of Hull to Gatineau, and for consistency, we refer to its location as Ottawa throughout these proceedings.

various contexts. Ethnomusicology in Canada is a growing discipline, and the energy and enthusiasm of students, researchers, and performers, was palpable at the November 2006 conference. Important discussions about the future of the society, and folkloric and ethnomusicological research in Canada took place, and a commitment to the future of the CSTM/SCTM was reignited by the conference participants.

  The title of these proceedings, *Folk Music, Traditional Music, Ethnomusicology: Canadian Perspectives, Past and Present*, reflects the variety of papers given, with the different focuses, interests and backgrounds of the authors/presenters. The CSTM/SCTM has continued to serve the needs and interests of its membership, which is primarily comprised of performers ("folkies") and academics. Serving its members, the Society is a venue in which researchers and performers of Canadian music and music from around the world are engaged in dialogue and exchange with one another. Attempting to distinguish and compartmentalize music into disciplines and subcategories has always been problematic, resulting in various tensions and discord. However, the CSTM/SCTM has continued to flourish for over fifty years as a site where discussions and comparisons are encouraged, bridging Canadian academics and researchers and performers of Canadian and other musics from around the world.

  This publication showcases the diversity of music research currently being conducted by folk and traditional music specialists, ethnomusicologists, and practicing musicians in Canada. The papers are organized in five sections according to common themes in contemporary research in ethnomusicology and folk music studies, and each section is preceded by a short introduction which highlights the section's theme(s) as well as the individual papers. The first section, Regional and Historical Perspectives, includes articles that have a focus on a particular region of Canada or offer insight into particular historical trends and issues in folk and traditional music scholarship in Canada and elsewhere. In the articles in the next section, Ethnomusicological Studies, Issues and Ideas, the authors engage with various definitions and resources for researchers and teachers, as well as the positionality and assumptions of researchers that may influence their research. The third section, Performers, Traditions and Musical Expressions, includes articles on specific musical genres including hip hop, karaoke, fiddle music and Sephardic music. Section four is First Peoples' Musical Traditions, in which articles on different Native performance practices in Canada and the United States are explored vis-à-vis questions of tradition and diaspora. The final section, The CSTM/SCTM: Reflections and Future Directions, is comprised of

reflections about the Society prepared and presented by various Society members to allow everyone in attendance to reflect upon the Society's history and consider where it might go in the future. As some Society members noted, we were "whithering" the Society in these reflections. To facilitate further study, we have included with the five section introductions selected relevant reading that readers may consult for further research. Our intent in providing these short reference lists is to provide entry points for further study, rather than to provide complete, exhaustive bibliographies on any given topic.[2]

Folk Music, Traditional Music, Ethnomusicology: Canadian Perspectives, Past and Present is intended as a contribution to published literature on ethnomusicological and folklore research in Canada, creating a new resource of historical, contemporary, and scholarly relevance that will appeal to academics and music enthusiasts alike. This collection of papers especially complements two earlier publications: Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer's *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity*; and Robert Witmer's *Ethnomusicology in Canada: Proceedings of the first Conference on Ethnomusicology in Canada*. This publication expands upon these two existing primary sources for ethnomusicological and historical musicological studies in Canada, updating the literature and illustrating modern currents in ethnomusicological and folkloric studies in Canada, and/or by Canadian scholars. Readers of these proceedings might also want to consult Beverley Diamond's article "Canadian Reflections on Palindromes, Inversions, and other Challenges to Ethnomusicology's Coherence," an informative critical assessment of Canadian ethnomusicology, offered as part of an international roundtable at the fiftieth anniversary conference of the Society for Ethnomusicology in 2005.

We are grateful to all conference participants whose work formed the basis for this conference. The engaging and diverse research fostered stimulating dialogue at and beyond the conference. We would also like to thank the participants who chose to have their work included in this publication. Financial support for the conference and for the preparation of this publication was given by Dean John Osborne and the Office of the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at Carleton University in Ottawa. We also wish to thank Carleton University for the use of facilities and resources during the conference and the Canadian Museum of Civilization

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[2] For important related material to these proceedings, see also relevant sections of volume three of *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music – The United States and Canada* (Garland, 2001), and the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 1992) and *L'Encyclopédie de la musique au Canada* (Fides, 1993).

for welcoming delegates and giving us access to resources. Thanks also to the organizing committee of the conference and all of the volunteers who helped make the conference a success. Special thanks to Nate Meneer for his valuable editorial assistance on these proceedings.

<div align="right">Anna Hoefnagels
Gordon E. Smith</div>

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SECTION I:

REGIONAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

This section includes six papers that address music practices and issues of a particular region of Canada, and offer insights into specific historical and current trends in folk and traditional music scholarship in Canada and elsewhere. While the papers with a regional focus are centered around the Atlantic provinces of Canada, many of the issues raised and trends noted can be found and applied to musical practices in other parts of Canada and beyond. Several of the papers in this section draw on themes and challenges for folklorists and ethnomusicologists while calling attention to the relationships that exist between performers and scholars/collectors of folk music.

In her article "Reconnecting: University Archives and the Communities of Newfoundland," Beverley Diamond reflects on the community/university relationships involved in creating online resources of Newfoundland folk music, highlighting some of the challenges and rewards of this experience, and she illustrates how different communities use such resources. Heather Sparling's article, "Transmission Processes in Cape Breton Gaelic Song Culture," draws on her fieldwork with Cape Breton Gaels querying song transmission processes; Sparling problematizes the idea that Cape Breton Gaelic songs are passed on orally, at the same time illustrating the creative ways musicians are keeping musical traditions and songs alive in this region. Through a review of selected music education sources used in the United States, Lori Elias' article "Atlantic Canadian Folksongs in General Music Curricula" highlights inconsistencies in the information contained in publications about Atlantic Canadian folk songs that are recommended for use in school curricula. Examining the roles of various key individuals in the development of Folkways Records, and the collecting and recording of Canadian folk music, Regula Qureshi illustrates the relationships between this important recording label and the first Canadian folksong revival in her paper "Folkways Records and the First Canadian Folksong Revival." In his paper "'From Both Sides Now?' Ethnomusicology, Folklore and the

Rise of the Canadian Singer-Songwriter," Chris McDonald highlights some of the challenges in defining folksong. McDonald traces the connections between singers and scholarship vis-à-vis notions of authenticity and tradition, and he also illustrates links between folk song scholarship and the development of modern folk music. The final paper in this section is E. David Gregory's "Frank Kidson: The Missing Years, 1886-1900." In this paper, Gregory outlines some of the early influences and philosophies of English folk song collector and scholar Frank Kidson, illustrating his important role in the development of folk song scholarship in England at the turn of the twentieth century.

Together, the papers in this section highlight some of the current and important issues that folk music scholars, music educators and ethnomusicologists are examining in their research. The connections and links between music education, archive and resource development, and the examination of the roles of individuals in the promotion and dissemination of music, illustrate the important relationships that exist between performers and academics.

Selected Relevant Reading

Berger, Harris M. and Giovanna P. Del Negro. 2004. *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.

Cohen, Norm. 2005. *Folk Music: a Regional Exploration*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945-1980*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.

Rosenberg, Neil V., ed. 1993. *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

RECONNECTING: UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND THE COMMUNITIES OF NEWFOUNDLAND

BEVERLEY DIAMOND

When I moved to Newfoundland four years ago, two wonderful new opportunities converged. One was the clear imperative to help make some of the more than fifty thousand audio recordings in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) more accessible to the public. Both the university (with its ever-under funded archive) and members of the public made it clear that they expected me to play a role in this. A second opportunity was the possibility of rethinking how media projects might reconfigure the relationship between university and communities.

Together with colleagues at the Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place,[1] I began asking really basic questions: what uses are made of what media for what purposes? The only pattern that was really clear was that some people seem still to prefer commodified objects (the CD-as-album for instance) while others prefer internet circulation modes.[2] So our attempt to repatriate the music of the province to culture bearers and their families and to circulate this treasure trove to the world beyond clearly had to make audio recordings available in both CD and internet formats.

If it was old news to view the medium as the message, as Marshall McLuhan did decades ago, the question of the messenger still seemed fresh. Was one sort of media a different kind of messenger from the other? What sort of messengers were we as the content producers? How could we use media to re-cast authority, to stimulate public discussion and creative interaction? In the next few minutes, I'd like to report on a few of the projects we developed to answer that question.

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[1] Established in January 2003 in conjunction with my Canada Research Chair in Ethnomusicology.

[2] While our informal consultations revealed that the different preference for audio objects or audio internet files generally corresponds to older and young generations of listeners, respectively, the pattern was not entirely uniform.

The Archival CD Series

We have produced two CDs so far in our archival CD series.[3] In my view, CDs produced by universities should differ fundamentally from commercially produced CDs in that they should reflect substantial research and present copious documentation, particularly with a view to pedagogical needs. Because we wanted to provide extensive documentation with each recording, we debated whether we should create print documents with CDs in them, or CDs with small books in them. By using DVD cases that could accommodate a fifty or sixty page booklet in an easy-to-read 5x7" format, the latter was feasible and more cost-effective. In addition to producing historical information, transcriptions, song notes, and performer biographies, we aimed to achieve a second objective for each project. We sought to raise an issue—one that was of concern both to academics and community members—in order to stimulate public response, conversation, and feedback.

The first CD, *It's Time for Another One: Songs from the South Coast of Newfoundland* (St. John's: Memorial University, 2004), raised the well-worn but still relevant topic of "tradition" and "modernity." It presented a collection by Jesse Fudge[4] from the 1960s. In addition to the old recordings, however, I included three modern arrangements that I had explicitly commissioned from local singer-songwriters or arrangers, including one who created a hip hop style response to the old song. I interviewed guest producers[5] as well as the sound engineer about the reasons for their choices, the differences between communities then and now, and even the mixing techniques that distinguish a vintage from a modern sound. The modern arrangements are back-to-back with the archival variants on the CD. With great support from the CBC, we did indeed get some feedback and stimulate some controversy.

The second CD, *Folklore of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations, and Tunes* (St. John's: Memorial University, 2005), was produced by Peter Narváez who had been working toward such a

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[3] A third, on the popular radio program of the 1960s, *Saturday Night Jamboree,* is in production as I write this. Neil Rosenberg and Ted Rowe have authored the booklet, focusing on the role of radio in the cultural formation of post-confederation Newfoundland.

[4] Fudge was a Memorial University Folklore student when he made the collection. He had previously taught in the region and frequently returned to visit friends there with his wife Emily.

[5] Jim Payne, Pamela Morgan, and Glenn Collins were invited to do the modern arrangements. Spencer Crewe did the mixing.

project with graduate students in Folklore for a number of years. This anthology strove to challenge narrow definitions of what the Newfoundland canon was, or perhaps to question if such a thing existed. It included American pop songs and tunes, bawdy ballads and polite ones, localizations of stories from printed collections, French and Gaelic as well as English songs, and so on. While the diversity of the CD still does not reflect the province's ethnocultural diversity (no Inuit, Métis or First Nations material for instance, and nothing from more recent immigrant communities), it does challenge those who think that Newfoundland music consists of Anglo-Irish ballads and little else. Again, an essay in the introductory booklet discussed this very issue. As Narváez writes in the CD booklet, "This CD, therefore, is not an album of 'old favorites,' and given the wealth and diversity of Newfoundland and Labrador folklore, we are the richer for it."

Website Projects[6]

A third project, and the one that I will discuss most this morning, was an internet site—www.mun.ca/folklore/leach—that presented the earliest recorded collections from Cape Breton and Newfoundland, made by American folklorist MacEdward Leach in the late 1940s (Cape Breton) and 1950-1951 (Newfoundland). [7] After consultation with the curators of MUNFLA who were fully aware of their role as custodians and protectors of intellectual property rights, we decided we had the legal authority to use this collection on-line. While we had contacted all collectors as well as family members of every singer for the CD projects, we decided that it would unduly delay the project if we took the legally unnecessary step (albeit a courtesy I usually recommend) of contacting every singer's family for so many songs. Since the project had received widespread encouragement locally, we proceeded since we had legal authority to do so. With ca. seven hundred songs altogether (from twenty-three Gaelic and nearly one hundred Anglo-Irish singers and players), two teams of graduate students in Ethnomusicology and Folklore worked with me to digitize and edit sound, correct transcribed texts, make source notes, create community and singer profiles, clickable maps, and background

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[6] In addition to the project described here, MMaP is working on one site relating to Indigenous Music and Dance as Cultural Property: Global Perspectives, and is in the early planning stages for another on Accordion Cultures.
[7] Leach's later collection from Labrador was published posthumously but very little of the earlier material has been available in either audio or print form, except for one Smithsonian Folkways recording of a few of the English-language songs.

information for this massive project.[8] The site also includes a biography and bibliography of Leach, a profile of the collection, and a reprinted essay by Peter Narváez on the history of collecting in Newfoundland and Labrador. In some cases, we had good cooperation from families as well who provided old photos, and in one case even a painting of the family homestead and a piece of local poetry about the "times" there.

On the site itself, we invite responses via a dedicated email address. Obviously, an email address differs fundamentally from a blog or chat room, precluding connection with anyone other than the web design team. Since March 2004, over sixty individuals have contacted us, many of them repeatedly and we've returned complete copies of their family recordings to approximately forty individuals.

Toward an Understanding of Internet Music Cultures

Our project seems to have elements identified in studies of *both* "contemporary" virtual communities and studies of archival sites that represent "historical" communities. Studies of contemporary internet music cultures demonstrate how the web collapses time and space, allowing web users to feel "linked" socially. Krister Malm (2001) has called these virtual communities "interlocal communities of interest." His work with his Swedish colleagues Lundberg and Ronström (Lundberg 2003), on the contemporary reinvention of the Assyrian community, for instance, demonstrates how the web can substitute for actual institutions, and create a space of possibility for community (or, in the absence of a homeland, virtual nation) building. Their work also shows that the uncontrolled nature of the internet makes it very difficult to build consensus.

The Swedish Assyrian study resonates in some ways with explorations of popular culture and the internet. One internet study that I find useful is Andy Bennett's interpretation of a Canterbury website that sought to portray the popular music of that city in the 1960s and 1970s. The site's romanticized construction of a notion labelled the "Canterbury sound" became a useful slogan for the tourist industry even though many local

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[8] The site design and original team manager was Ian Brodie (now at Cape Breton University). The team manager for the site revision in 2005-2006 was Kelly Best. Phase one of the project was supported by a grant from Industry Canada's Canadian Culture On-line program in 2003-2004; phase two of the project received support from the AV Preservation Trust branch of Canadian Heritage. We were grateful for their support. The total budget for both phases was approximately $25,000.

musicians argued that the website gave an oversimplified account. Bennett concludes that the website fired the creative imagination of fans, gave raise to competing narratives and "fictive interpretations of place and space" (2004:218).

Unlike these websites devoted to contemporary musical practices, archival projects have focused more often on the very things that popular culture studies have tended to ignore: not so much the users, but the individuals and organizations that jointly enable content to appear on the web. Perhaps because we value transparency about the sources of information, archival sites (including audio sites of course) generally have an air of authority. They tell us which collections, which singers, and which collectors. They cross-reference sources and identify song variants. To my knowledge, archival websites have rarely been designed as spaces of dialogue about past and present. In retrospect, however, I see that our archival site links interlocal communities of interest, and generates competing narratives or even potentially fictive interpretations. I argue, then, that the social technologies of websites devoted to contemporary cultures may have relevance for this study of an archival internet project.

The project speaks to the relationship academic institutions have to the communities in which they are situated, raising implications about "authority." I consider in what ways it is useful to think about *some* forms of publication, especially internet publication, not as end points for research but mid-points—unapologetically vulnerable spaces for sharing data, and struggles toward interpretation. Our experience of working on this site lead us to ask how we can best use the unprecedented means we now have to construct knowledge differently. What are the implications if we accept the impossibility of a final text, a final authority? Will it be moral chaos? Scholarly mayhem? Deeper understanding? Or a little of each? We shall have to be vigilant.

MacEdward Leach and the Songs of Atlantic Canada: "Who Responded?"

I have more than two hundred pages of emailed responses to the website, arguably enough to reveal something about how the web functions in the creation of Gaelic and Anglo communities of interest. Respondents are obviously those who are fluent internet users. The sons and daughters of the singers on our sites, for instance, often lacked access to or interest in this technology. The grandchildren of the singers, on the

other hand, were the largest group of respondents, both on-line and, in some cases, in person.[9]

Many archivists attest to the pleasure expressed by community members who find something of their family history. Our website brought responses such as the following:

- "an amazing coincidence…until today I never heard his voice…an amazing experience."
- "I just wanted to say thanks…found this website and lo and behold here is my grandfather singing on it…[it] brought back a lot of memories of him."
- "I was six years old when he died in 1958 and to hear his voice after all these years is amazing."
- "thanks for this surprising and wonderful archive."

I was struck by how often surprise and amazement registered in the community responses and gradually realized that this is one of the huge attractions of Internet searching—arguably more playful than research with print sources. There is a magic about the discoveries that we make when we least expect them. Very few respondents searched intentionally for their relatives but finding the voice of someone whom they had never heard or whom they dimly remembered, was a powerful, often accidental, pleasure. Furthermore, audio embodied and recovered the person in a way that print could not.

Responses came from nine communities in Newfoundland, and two in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, four from other Canadian cities, as well as Washington, D.C. and other American locales, the Isle of Barra in Scotland, Ireland, England, and Spain. For the most part, people wanted copies of their relatives' songs, for their own pleasure, to give to an older member of the family, or, in one case, to woo a girl-friend. Three requests were from school children who asked to use "The Tidal Wave at Burin" (1929), in school projects following the Asian Tsunami of 2005.

One respondent wrote in Gaelic, undoubtedly in hopes of connecting to other Gaels, but reaching a community of one on our web-team. More significant, I think, were the "feedback loops" that were initiated by users.

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[9] One singer's great-great-grandson from Ottawa included a visit to the MMaP research centre on his vacation to let me know that a newborn great-great-great-grand-daughter would now hear the songs.

Community Feedback Loops

Our hopes that community respondents would help to correct and extend documentation were not in vain. The detail they provided speaks clearly about social values and about how song functions to reinforce those values.

- Names of a singer's children
- The maiden or married name of a singer's wife
- The place where the singer's family now lives
- Corrections to singer attributions based on voice quality
- Houses where Leach stayed in specific communities
- Other children of informants who are now good singers
- Corrections to birth and death dates or to a singer's age
- Names of people in photographs
- Photographs

It was clear that the most incomplete dimension of the website were the singers' biographies. People were valued less than the songs themselves by many collectors of Leach's generation, but of course, people matter most to the singers' families and friends. To know the children, but also the children who continued to sing, is a lesson some respondents were trying to teach us. We expected this emphasis on song lineages in the Gaelic tradition but such responses also addressed the English-language singers. The largest number of corrections about the children of singers relate to female descendants. We learned that local gazetteers often fail to record name changes of married women, and in some cases are careless about recording daughters at all. Respondents were often told where people now live. Tracing family migration helps connect members of the Newfoundland diaspora. In light of the out-migration of Newfoundlanders, especially after the decline of the North Atlantic cod fishery in the 1990s, and with resettlement from small fishing outposts to larger urban centres, these networks are highly valued. These respondents asked us, implicitly, to help keep track of the interlocal.

We were given important data about the collection process. We learned where Leach stayed. The host family invited the singers who made the recordings for Leach and had agency in shaping the collection. Leach was, to a large extent, at the mercy of his hosts as we all are in many field situations.

Corrections in birth and death dates helped us determine if changes in performance practice were congruent with generational aesthetics. The

Irish-dominated region where Leach collected was populated by many singers who used a drawn out, ornamented style, reminiscent of Irish *sean-nós* . I had previously associated that ballad style with an older generation but we now have enough data about singers' ages to say that it was sometimes a matter of family and personal choice. In two performances by girls seventeen and thirteen years of age, for instance, it is the younger child who retains a drawn-out style.

Academic Feedback Loops

In contrast with community respondents, academic site users offered information about the songs, not the people: song histories, corrected text transcriptions, references to related websites, and inventories of other collections. The dichotomy between the academic emphasis on textual material and the community emphasis on human lives was really striking.

The Archive of Folk Life at the Library of Congress which had assisted us with the original research by providing copies of Leach's Newfoundland correspondence, responded to the site once it was launched because they realized they were unsure about the congruence between tape copies they had from Leach and those housed in MUNFLA. They sent us CD copies of their Leach collection and asked us to identify their tapes. This request led us to reflect on our own practice in two ways. Only one tape in the LC collection was not in our own. The songs on that tape were in French and while we had no evidence that Leach had collected from French singers his Cape Breton work was close to Acadian communities that he might have visited. But there were two differences between this one tape and all the others. The songs all speeded up drastically after a minute and a half. We figured out that a spring-loaded recording device had been used. Information about the machine Leach used is available in the correspondence; he didn't use such a device. The experience reinforced the importance of knowing the technologies of the day and I hope to develop a web page on the site about this in the future. The second difference on the mystery tape was that the collector's own voice was not heard. Leach usually turned the tape recorder on before asking the singer to begin. He left his voice print on his field tapes, in other words. We realized that we had edited his voice out of the audio examples in phase one of the project, including usually a single stanza of each song on the website. In some recordings mounted in phase two of the project, we now left Leach's introductory words. In the future, we may re-edit other songs to include Leach's voice on-line.

An indexer for the Traditional Ballad Index contacted us to say that only if we published a print or CD-ROM version of the site could the material be included in their index. The relative legitimacy of print and cyberspace led us to consider a limited-run CD-ROM.[10]

Conclusion

A one-time colleague of mine is fond of saying that research projects are never finished, but simply abandoned at the point of publication.[11] The project I have been speaking about challenges us to rethink the abandoning of projects to publishers. The internet recasts the ways we construct and represent knowledge, allowing it to be ever-evolving and incremental. Such an approach challenges concepts of authority and intellectual responsibility. It suggests new kinds of relationships between educational institutions and communities. We must recognize that this way of working threatens the orderliness of scholarship. As Mary Douglas has written: "…Disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realized in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite…It symbolizes both danger and power" (1966:94). Furthermore, the revision of the website will, in itself, be a social construction. We should ideally track the evolution of knowledge among, for instance, academics as one interlocal community of interest and the descendants of the singers as another. Our archival site is perhaps not very different from the Canterbury site studied by Bennett. I suggest that the first hearing of a grandparent's voice (distorted by the technological imperfections of 1950 and the aural degradation of the tape since then) undoubtedly plays into the creative imagination of singers' descendants who become, in essence, like fans. The differences between academic and community feedback definitely point to competing narratives, each partial if not fictive. The correspondence between archival and popular music websites, then, may be greater than we think. At any rate, this way of working really does demonstrate "music's richness as a resource in the construction of narratives of the local" (Bennett 2004:217).

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[10] We have been unable to proceed with such a CD-ROM as yet.
[11] With thanks to Robert Witmer.

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Transmission Processes in Cape Breton Gaelic Song Culture

Heather Sparling

I wanted to write a paper on the transmission processes involved in Cape Breton Gaelic song culture for several reasons. My interest in this topic began as I realized that despite the fact that Cape Breton Gaelic culture seems to be stereotyped as a largely oral culture (as is still the case for many cultures identified as "folk" or "traditional"), from both within and without, that has not been true in my experience. In fact, over the years, I have become increasingly fascinated by the interactions between orality, print, and recordings in the transmission and maintenance of Gaelic song culture. As I began to investigate the topic, I was surprised by the general lack of resources focused on the relationship between processes of transmission and how they change over time and in response to various stimuli, which resulted in my current investigation.

I want to take, as my point of departure, an insight made by a popular music scholar Keith Negus regarding the relationships between modes of transmission. Negus argues that, in the history of popular music, there have been several modes of transmission, from the oral, to print (particularly broadsides), to recordings, each mode of transmission resulting from particular technological developments. But, he warns:

> Although such distinctions might suggest an historical periodization, these should not be taken to imply that one mode of distribution simply replaced the other in a developmental fashion. Not only has the spread of these different forms of musical mediation occurred at different paces and in a variety of ways across the world, the introduction of each did not simply replace the preceding mode but instead introduced new relationships between them. (Negus 1996:71)

In this paper, I will examine the relationships between oral, print, and recorded transmission in Cape Breton Gaelic song culture. I do this both to refute any notion of Cape Breton Gaelic culture as a predominantly or exclusively oral culture, and, more importantly, to acknowledge and

honour the creative, resourceful ways in which this particular community has responded to changing and challenging circumstances.

Orality

I will begin by addressing the issue of orality. In the preface to the second edition of anthropologist Ruth Finnegan's important book, *Oral Poetry*, she writes:

> In the face of changing values and power-shifts, of newly developing independent nations and of expanding cultural links in a world-wide perspective, it is scarcely tenable to regard oral forms as belonging to some particular category of society or of behaviour, or to argue that one can make simple and meaningful oppositions between "tradition" and "modern." …Simplified generalizations of this kind are happily becoming less acceptable nowadays—though still common enough even in some scholarly writing, let alone in popular conventional wisdom, to warrant continuing challenge. (Finnegan [1977] 1992:xii)

The problem of equating "oral transmission" with "folk/traditional" culture has long dogged various disciplines. In ethnomusicology, for example, although the definitions of "folk music" and "traditional music" have been critiqued and nuanced of late, one of the most persistent aspects of such definitions has been an emphasis on oral transmission. This is particularly evident in earlier ethnomusicology, such as Maud Karpeles' 1951 definition of "folk music" as "music that has been submitted through the course of many generations to the process of oral transmission" (Karpeles 1951:11). But even thirty years later, Nettl devoted a chapter to the study of oral transmission in his book *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts* because he felt there was a need to focus on oral transmission as a corrective to historical musicology's emphasis on notated musical traditions (1983:200). By implication, ethnomusicologists are concerned with oral traditions in contrast to the concerns of historical musicologists. This definition persists today as well, such as in the document, "Whither the CSTM," circulated via email to members of the CSTM board on January 5, 2006, in which then-CSTM President Rika Ruebsaat and Jon Bartlett define traditional music as "music and songs that are passed on informally, often orally."

Although some scholars have acknowledged the role of print in early Cape Breton Gaelic song circles, the oral aspect still tends to be emphasized. For example, Effie Rankin starts her recent book *As a' Bhràighe* (Beyond the Braes), "in the largely oral culture of the pioneer

Gaels of Nova Scotia, a poet's works were preserved through recitation and especially through singing" (2004:5). Rankin makes this claim despite acknowledging in the very next paragraph that her collection of nineteenth-century Gaelic poems by Allan "the Ridge" MacDonald, a Scot who lived most of his life in or near Cape Breton, is based mostly on two manuscripts which were mainly transcribed by the poet's son but also by several other family members. Charles Dunn's work provides another example. In his book, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia* ([1953] 1991), he dedicates an entire chapter to documenting Gaelic publications available in Nova Scotia. And yet he writes, "despite, or perhaps because of, their lack of literacy, the Highlanders nevertheless perpetuated a complete culture orally" ([1953] 1991:37). John Lorne Campbell, a well known collector of Gaelic song and folklore in both Scotland and Cape Breton, wrote that Scottish Gaelic immigrants took "a great deal of their magnificent oral literature with them" (Campbell 1990:1). These quotations suggest an understanding of Gaelic culture as one that was once oral, but also imply that by comparison today, this orality has been lost or at least no longer exists in the same way.

Publications and Literacy in Gaelic Culture

There is no question that orality plays an important role in Cape Breton Gaelic song culture, and I will return to this point later. But Gaelic culture also has a long, distinguished, and valued print tradition. Gaelic song culture has not been an exclusively oral culture for some time. *The Book of Deer* features Scottish Gaelic from the twelfth century. Dating from the fourteenth century, the earliest surviving book of praise poetry is *The Book of Magauran* from County Covan in Ireland. Another well-known manuscript is *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*, from the sixteenth century. These, of course, are just some of the surviving manuscripts which are known today and others may also have existed of which there is no longer any record.

As various scholars have noted, books and publications have long been perceived to lend legitimacy to cultural materials in Gaelic communities (Shaw 2000:35; see also McKean 1997:161). Consequently, we can trace an extended history of Gaelic publications in Cape Breton as well as in Scotland. For example, *Sàr Obair nam Bàrd*, (The True Work of the Bards), was originally published in Scotland in 1841 but, due to its popularity, was reprinted several times, including once in 1863 in Halifax, as it was so popular in Nova Scotia. *An t-Oranaiche* (The Songster) was

originally published in 1879, also in Scotland. It remains hugely popular in Cape Breton, where original copies still circulate and where, due to demand, it was recently republished (Mac-na-Ceàrdadh [1879] 2004). In 1898, the Canadian Reverend A. MacLean Sinclair, whose grandfather was the celebrated Bard MacLean, published in Charlottetown, PEI, the two-volume work entitled *MacLean Bards*. The longest running Gaelic newspaper in history was published in Sydney, Cape Breton: *MacTalla* ran weekly (and later bi-weekly) from 1892 to 1904 and included in each issue at least one song. Helen Creighton published *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia* in 1964, another collection that is proudly owned and consulted by many native Cape Breton Gaelic speakers and singers.

During my fieldwork in Cape Breton, I spoke to many Gaelic singers and speakers who proudly showed me their Gaelic song publications. Published Gaelic song collections were clearly valued and collected amongst diaspora Gaels elsewhere in Canada as well. Margaret Bennett, a folklorist and Gaelic speaker and singer from Scotland, tells of her Codroy Valley friend, Allan MacArthur, who was non-literate in Gaelic. She describes the reverence with which MacArthur handled his copy of the Gaelic poem collection, *Sàr-Obair nam Bard Gaelach: The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry and Lives of the Highland Bards*. MacArthur avidly read the book's English sections about the songs' bards, and could recognize the songs he knew. He would painstakingly study the words on the pages to determine whether there were any unfamiliar lyrics. If there were, he would ask someone to read and teach the words to him (Bennett 1989:59-61).

One native Gaelic speaker with whom I spoke, Donald MacDonnell of Mabou, was unable to read Gaelic for most of his life. He attended the Cape Breton Gaelic College in order to develop Gaelic literacy so that he could reference his Gaelic song books. He told me: "I did learn a few songs because I went to night school down in St Ann's College there. I could speak Gaelic and all that but I couldn't read it. So I learned how to. So I could read a Gaelic song if it's not too deep." He showed me his collection of Gaelic song books: Creighton's *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia, An t-Òranaiche* (The Songster), *Fad air Falbh as Innse Gall: Beyond the Hebrides*. But in the same interview, Donald *dismissed* Gaelic as an irrelevant language and agreed with his wife that it was a useless school subject because it will not lead to many jobs the way other languages, such as French or German, might. The way Donald framed it, the pursuit of Gaelic fluency and literacy might be irrelevant *economically*, but it is apparently of *musical* necessity.