

Selected Members of the CCL-EAR Committee Review Of Classical Music Library January, 2004

In December 2003 and January 2004, selected members of the California Council of Chief Librarians, Electronic Access and Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" review of *Classical Music Library*.

Classical Music Library, a product of Classical International Inc., is a classical music listening service for library and home computers. The service offers a continually growing music collection, currently consisting of 17,000+ classical music tracks (not works) from over 500 composers, as well as thousands of cross-referenced program notes, suggested playlists, biographies and images. The collection is being built on the Music Library Association's listing of essential sound recordings, with additional works added as agreements are reached with recording companies, orchestras and artists. The database offers recordings from classical music labels in the US, UK and Europe. (A list of recording labels represented in the database can be found at: <http://www.classical.com/index.php?s=18>). All music is fully licensed for both listening and downloading. Libraries can disable the fee-based downloading feature if they choose.

Operating since 2000, Classical International (formerly Classical.com) is a privately owned company with offices in the US and Europe. Classical's Board includes library technology pioneers and SilverPlatter Information founders, Béla Hatvany and Ron Rietdyk. Rietdyk now chairs the company's management team. For more details on the database, see Classical's detailed collection of FAQs at <http://www.classical.com/index.php?s=23>

Other reviews of this database:

Brunning, Dennis. "Classical Music Library." *The Charleston Advisor* 17 September 2003.
<http://www.charlestonco.com> or http://www.classical.com/downloads/reseller/TCA_review.doc

[*Classical Music Library* recently received the *Charleston Advisor's* Third Annual "Reader's Choice Award" in the "Best New Effort" category.]

California State University Libraries. EAR Committee. Review of the *Classical Music Library*. January 2004. <http://seir.calstate.edu/reviews/index.shtml#c>

Mayer, Constance. "Classical Music Library." *Library Journal* January 2004: 176.

REVIEW PROCESS

Selected members of the CCL-EAR Committee, independently or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staffs, reviewed and evaluated *Classical Music Library*. Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member(s) only and not transferred to others. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the proposal to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Attributes of the information resource were assessed on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing the "least value" and 4 representing the "most value".

The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California community colleges as a whole.

SEARCH INTERFACE

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

USER SUPPORT SERVICES

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone help line available?

COST

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

#1 --- No Support

#2 --- No Support at this time. Future support conditional upon enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 --- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to California community college libraries for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below in Comments Section.

#4 --- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campus libraries or their acceptance or rejection.

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review as well as comments taken from the individual Review Reply Forms.

INFORMATION DATABASE - Rating: 3, 3, 3

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California community colleges as a whole.

Rationale for rating:

This database offers users the unique opportunity to locate and listen to over 17,000 tracks (i.e. individual cuts, not works) of recorded classical music, with the main emphasis on the baroque, classical and romantic periods. Users may choose to download a piece of music to their hard drives, or backup disks, at an additional cost using their credit cards. Libraries wishing not to offer this service can disable it; libraries can also request that this feature be enabled only for users logged in remotely so that music is not downloaded to library computers. (Libraries will probably want to provide headsets to in-library users.)

A "Reference Section" offers brief but very well hyper-linked biographical information on selected composers, as well as discussions of various periods of classical music from medieval through 20th century, images, a glossary, thousands of midi files, links to classical music news for the day, and a "Best of Web" list of music websites. A different composer is highlighted on the home page each week.

For new users, a "Recommendations" page introduces the various search categories (composer, artist, orchestral, genre, etc.) and offers links to suggested tracks in each category for users who don't know where to begin.

The service uses its own listening software which can be quickly and easily downloaded and installed on both Windows and Macintosh computers. The sound quality, though not CD level, is very good and is more than adequate for introducing community college students to classical works. (Sound quality will, of course, also be affected by the quality of a user's computer speakers.)

This database is exciting in concept, and it shows great promise for both music students and recreational listeners. The publishers "Content FAQ" indicates that Classical plans to include at least one recording of each item on the Music Library Association's "A Basic Music Library" list, and eventually multiple recordings of the same works so that listeners can compare recordings. They state that many recordings not on the MLA list are also included.

The collection itself is still in its early stages, and at present is a weak feature of the database. While there are many excellent recordings and works included, particularly for the most well-known and esteemed composers, there are some very surprising gaps in coverage, a problem that might make the database only moderately useful in music and music appreciation classes in its present stage, though it would still be suitable for recreational listeners.

During this trial period, my searching found no recording of the well-known, well-loved and oft-performed Bach St. Matthew Passion (There is one recording of its "Erbarne dich" aria), no recording of the also well known and oft performed Bach St. John Passion, (though oddly the St. Mark Passion is included), no Bach motets (four tracks were added by the end of my evaluating period), no Bach unaccompanied cello suites (a quick look at amazon.com located at least 17 recordings of the cello suites.). No Boccherini cello concertos. No Marin Marais. No Jacqueline du Pre. Leonard Bernstein is here as composer, but NOT as conductor, despite his prodigious body of work in this capacity. At the other end of the centuries, no Terry Riley, Philip Glass or Steve Reich; only five tracks from John Cage. I could go on and on. For a number of the searches I performed, what is there for a composer is spotty, i.e. I found recordings with several tracks of the composer's works, but no recordings of whole works. Indeed so far, individual tracks without a whole recording of a work seem to be a fairly common occurrence in the database.

The Chair of our Music Dept. spent about an hour looking at the database. He commented that composers such as Rachmaninov and Beethoven are well covered, but noted the omission of the following artists and conductors: Schnabel, Rubinstein, Barenboim, Perlman, Ashkanazy, Gilels, Bernstein, Karajan, Carlos Kleiber, Rachmaninov as artist/performer (He recorded a great deal before his death in 1943), Wild, Ashkanazy, Thibaudet, Hoffman, Ormandy, Previn. He also noted that artists celebrated for their interpretations of the works of a particular composer are often not the ones in the database for that composer.

None of these are minor omissions, and we certainly hope that they will be added to the database in the future since it is excellent in other respects and since it could go far to reduce community college libraries' need to maintain extensive classical CD collections and to provide wider access to music recordings.

It should be noted that Classical International is aggressively seeking agreements with classical music recording labels, and when a particular company is signed, its entire catalog of classical recordings is added to the database. The collection is expanding rapidly. (Over 2,000 tracks were added during the few weeks in which I tested and evaluated the database, and the Content FAQ reports an average of 2,000 new tracks per month.) If negotiations currently in progress are successful within the next couple of months, Classical estimates that the pace of acquisitions will accelerate even further and the total number of tracks included in the database will reach 50,000 by the end of the 2004 calendar year.

At present, community college libraries considering this database should have their Music Department faculty take a close look at its content to determine if it will meet the needs of their courses, though of course Music students will certainly not be its only users.

One suggestion: In the publisher's publicity concerning the database, the emphasis on number of "tracks" included in the database is rather misleading; a better indicator of the database's strength would be the number of actual *works* included.

The *Classical Music Library* is first and foremost, a resource for finding and listening to music. There are over 17,000 tracks that are available for instant, or nearly instant listening (depending on the speed of your Internet connection). Undoubtedly, the size of the collection could be criticized even if the collection was many times larger because the intended scope of *Classical Music Library* is so huge. The size of the musical collection is reputed to be growing quickly as the vendor buys the holdings of entire labels. However, the musical coverage seems spotty now, even to a casual recreational listener such as myself. For example, a search in the artist index for something sung by Pavarotti, Battle, Domingo or Callas yielded no hits. When I went to browse Opera and Operetta in the Genre section I didn't recognize any of the names as being "super-stars," but a more knowledgeable colleague recognized a few of the artists.

As the name of the database implies, this is a collection of *classical* music recordings, with the term classical being used somewhat broadly to "distinguish serious art music from 'popular' music." Indeed, while the Library is replete with the works of such well-known giants of the Classical Period as Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, the scope is broadened to include works from medieval times all the way up to the 20th Century. Given this wide range of musical content, the Library is surprisingly well organized. At the center are the Playlists, compilations of various music that are pre-arranged for listening and download. Several lists are included under such categories as "Music Appreciation," "Artistic Movements", and the intriguing "Lover's Guide." In the end, the sheer breadth of music available makes it clear that this is a database of, by, and for music aficionados. However, that's not to suggest that "classical music" neophytes and would-be enthusiasts cannot ride along.

One of my listening colleagues enjoyed the fact that the *Classical Music Library's* collection was redundant, often having several tracks of the same well-known piece. The listener can compare renditions of the same piece to get at the nuances of the performance. As the database becomes larger through adding record labels the redundancy could be a problem if, for example, there were more than a few renditions of popular pieces such as Pachelbel's Canon and Gigue or Boccherini's String Quintet Op. 13 No. 5: Minuet.

What seems to set the *Classical Music Library* apart from other online music sources is that it cross-references its music with a wide array of text-based information. The Library includes a substantial Reference Section, where patrons can find biographical and historical material that help to place the musicians and their music in time. A faculty member from the music department said that he currently uses *Classical Music Library's* biographical information for program notes because they are so concise. There is also a collection of helpful images, an extensive Glossary of musical terms, and a section for news and commentary on the goings on in the music world. These value-added features are essential for patrons who might be new to classical music -- and just plain handy for those who are expanding the knowledge they already have. A music faculty member was especially excited to find pictures of the composers' original manuscripts because he teaches about the composers' notations. A final feature worthy of mention is the Discovery Concerts link. The editors at the Library have put together music from various performances that center on a particular theme. For example, during the winter holidays the selections followed a Christmas theme, and included such well-known items as the *Messiah*, the *Nutcracker Suite*, and even a sing-along "Carol Collection" sure to put anyone in the Yuletide spirit. The *Classical Music Library* has a variety of features that appeal to wide audience of listeners.

The biographical information is not extensive, but does provide hyperlinks to other biographies, music tracks, and information.

The playlists need to include explanatory notes regarding the relationship of the music to the title of the playlist. For example, the playlist for "At The Movies," sure to be of interest to students, did not indicate the titles of movies in which the music figured. Also, some commentary on the relationship of the music to the theme or storyline of the movies would have been enlightening.

SEARCH INTERFACE - Rating: 4, 3, 4

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

Rationale for rating:

Major kudos to the developers, who have managed to design a system which works easily and well on both Windows and Macintosh platforms! This is apparently no small feat and will be much appreciated by Mac users.

The search interface for this database is extremely user-friendly. The layout is simple, clean and attractive. Screens are clear and easy to navigate, and links to online help are ubiquitous.

Two levels of searching are available: quick keyword searching and "advanced" searching of specific fields (work, genre, instrument, composer, label, etc.) using Boolean connectors "and" or "or." (Unfortunately, the default connector seems to be "or" which results in a maddening number of false hits and will leave students trying to figure out why they got the search results they did.) Search results can be further narrowed, via pulldown menus.

Browsing is also available. Users can select from A-Z lists under composer, artist, conductor, ensemble, instrument, period, label or genre. "Genre" choices include "orchestral," "chamber," "vocal & choral," "opera & operetta," "stage & screen," etc, with each further broken down into many sub-genres. For example the "Vocal & Choral" genre offers 56 sub-genres, ranging from "Kyrie," "Chorale," and "Oratorio" to "Folksong," "Nursery Rhymes" and "Street Cry."

Search results appear to be organized by title of work (though occasionally there seems to be more than one alphabetical sequence), with the relevant tracks listed separately under each recording. Next to each track, users see the length of the track and several buttons: a "Play" button, a link to information about the work, track, recording, artists, and composer, and lastly, a button which allows users to add this track to playlists which they can create for themselves. Users also have the option of clicking a button to listen to the entire work (or as much of it as is on that recording) rather than having to click on each track separately.

The database is extraordinarily well hyper-linked, with opportunities to access composer and artist biographies, play tracks by a particular composer, artist or ensemble, add tracks to the listener's personal playlist, perform a new search and access search tips and help, available from numerous places throughout the database. Libraries who subscribe to Wilson biographical products can use a link from the biography of a composer or artist to the relevant entries in their Wilson product, but I could not return to the online Music library product from Wilson and had to close my browser and begin again. Classical is currently exploring the possibility of linking with entries in the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

I did find a couple of problems and inconsistencies, one of which had been corrected by the end of my testing period, and I found a couple of links that lead nowhere. But all in all, the search interface worked very well.

A couple of suggestions:

I wish that the information about specific recordings (orchestra, performers, etc.) were displayed at the TOP of each item in the search results rather than the bottom, so that a user could very quickly see the distinction between recordings in the search results. This would be especially helpful in cases where there are numerous recordings of the same work (Handel's "Messiah," for example) and the listings go on for pages. Currently, one has to click to the next page to find out whether or not a particular recording is the desired one, then has to click back to the original page for the beginning tracks of that recording..

The ability to create some kind of locked playlist which could be accessed by all users (or passworded for some subset of users) would be a useful addition for faculty who want to create a sort of "reserve book room" playlist for individual classes.

Change the default Boolean operator in basic search mode to "and" for more relevant search results and include a method for phrase searching (like the double quotes used in many Web search engines). This would significantly decrease the number of false hits.

In the rare cases where there are more than one composer with the same last name (Bach, for example), it would be useful if there were some kind of display which alerted users to this fact and offered them choices or instructed them to pull down the "Composer" menu to narrow their search. A quick search for "Bach" results in a list beginning with Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach's "Magnificat." I suspect that many of our students would not even notice this and would assume it to be the work of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Central to the *Classical Music Library* is its ability to find music and related information quickly and easily. The website employs a number of stylistic and navigational features to make this happen. The Library's Homepage, for example, is divided into sections, each offering patrons different ways to approach the collection.

For those who have an idea of what they are looking for, the Library provides several search mechanisms. Each page on the site includes a *googlesque* search bar that allows for simple keyword searching. However, unlike Google and most other keyword searches, the default search for two or more words is the Boolean OR. This is almost an unforgivable weakness of the simple search. Searching "bach cantatas" yielded a huge number of hits, most unrelated to the intent of my search. From the result list one is able to narrow down the hits by selecting from among number of limiters: conductor, artist, genre, sub-genre, etc. but it is counter-intuitive to make getting to the intended "bach AND cantatas" a multiple step process. Also with a big database, and one that is getting bigger, the default OR will only continue to compile ever-larger result lists. Similarly, enclosing a phrase in quotation marks did not force a phrase search as the searcher might expect. Searching the phrases "Beaux Arts Trio" and later "Chronos Quartet" yielded a huge number of hits on works for various trios and quartets instead of no results for the groups. The slap-dash searcher might assume that the result lists were all works performed by the group since there is no evidence to the contrary.

From the help section I learned that the simple search actually searches for recorded tracks not for keywords within the major fields. The explanation above the simple search box states: "search for the music you want to hear" but most casual searchers are going to assume that they are doing a general keyword search. It would be clearer to the user if the search explanation above the search box read: "search for recorded tracks."

Search results are ordered by relevance. Searching "Bach" resulted in a huge hit list but I couldn't see any pattern within the result list. For example, the first three results were the Magnificats (one by Carl Phillip and one by Johann Sebastian) followed by Clavierbuchlein II. Narrowing the result list by Genre produced a smaller result list but not one with an apparent order.

Also available is the advanced search option that is actually quite sophisticated. Patrons can choose various fields to search including genre, period, key, opus number, and soloist. They not only can use the traditional Boolean operators but may also divide searches into "group" or "individual" movements. Moreover, the advanced search has a spell check option for those not quite sure of the spelling of their query. These all add up to very effective information searches.

For those who prefer browsing, there is the *Browse Tracks* feature. Here, patrons can peruse the music collection neatly organized by Composer, Artist, Conductor, Ensemble, Instrument, Period, or Genre. They can also open up the Playlists page, to see what the editors have compiled for their listening pleasure. Again it is well laid out and easily navigated. One of the strengths of *Classical Music Library* is its browsability. The links from almost any page encourage the user to learn and explore. In fact, the attractiveness of the links almost lures the user into spending time investigating the service.

Finally, for those who just want to know more about classical music, there is the Reference page filled with links to information and images for the patron to use. Patrons have access to Biographies, Images, MIDI files, the Glossary, and Historical Periods. The biographical entries are limited in number and brief. For example there is just one Bach (Johann Sebastian) with a biography despite the prominence of Carl Emanuel Bach in classical music. There is no reference to the source of the biographies. The Reference page is surprisingly clutter-free, given all these links to data. What I found most impressive was that no matter where you are in the *Classical Music Library*, a link to a music file is always just a click or two away.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES - Rating: 3, 3, 2

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone helpline available?

Rationale for rating:

The database provides clear, concise user Help which is accessible throughout the database. (Unfortunately, it is not context-sensitive, so users have to hunt around a bit for the answer to their questions.) Help includes technical troubleshooting tips as well as searching tips. For example, a concise "compatibility overview" at <http://library.classical.com/help/compatibility.php>, clearly outlines requirements concerning firewalls, proxy servers, platforms, browsers, browser music plug-ins, cookies etc. and even provides links to sites for downloading plug-ins, browsers, etc. for both Macintosh and Windows operating systems. A 24-page Library Integration Guide at http://www.classical.com/downloads/library_integration_guide.doc gives technical details on exactly how a library sets up its service.

Multiple very detailed FAQs are also offered. (View them at <http://www.classical.com/index.php?s=23>.) Unfortunately, they are not easy to find without the above URL. They're accessible via the "About Us" link which appears at the bottom of the opening page and is not likely to be seen unless one scrolls clear to the bottom of the page, and they're also two levels down in the Help pages (Help→About Us→FAQs), but it would be handy to have an FAQs link in more visible places throughout the database.

An e-mail address is given in the Help section in case all the FAQs and instructions do not answer a user's question, but I never received a reply to the questions I e-mailed about the database. Toll-free telephone contact is available for feedback, problem-solving and general questions, and the Classical representative I spoke with was helpful and enthusiastic.

The *Classical Music Library* includes a fairly thorough Help feature that patrons can access from any point on the website. However, the Help section is not context sensitive nor is the user given the choice to search Help by keyword or by using an extensive alphabetical topic index.

When chosen, the help screen offers four types of help: a service guide (essentially a crash-course in how to listen and download online music files), a troubleshooting section, a searching help page, and compatibility link. I found each to be full of clear, well-written information. The help on compatibility concerns was especially pertinent, as I struggled initially to actually hear any of the great music the Library provides. It turns out that some computers like the default settings of the website, while others require some fine-tuning. While the help screen is useful in addressing such issues of firewalls, proxies, and cookies, my concern is that remote users with minimal computer skills may not "want to go there." Moreover, problems could arise if listening to music becomes "homework" – and users find that their computers are perhaps slower and not quite as well equipped and supported as those in many college libraries. Technical support for the individual user is offered via email. The user is asked to answer quite a number of questions for their support query, questions that they may or may not be able to answer.

Examples of the questions are:

1. Are you on an institutional network or not?
 - a. Does it use a firewall?
 - b. Does the institution block MP3s, windows media or other media?
 - c. What bandwidth onto the Internet does the computer you are using have?

Telephone help would be more useful to the remote user (but possibly prohibitively expensive for the vendor) as the email support prescreens the technically savvy users from the users with minimal computer knowledge.

The "Help" interface is not particularly user-friendly. Upon selecting the type of help required (such as **Searching**), the user has to go through a "cover page" before getting to the search information. The "Search Help Section" does not permit students to quickly go to the type of help they need; they must scroll down the page looking for the section that answers their need.

Technical support is available through email. While the "Compatibility Overview" seems to address most issues clearly, this is probably not enough when technical help is need immediately.

COST - Rating: 3, 4, 4

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

Rationale for rating:

Assuming that the collection itself eventually becomes more robust, the price quoted the consortium seems very good. Whether the price becomes astronomical once the target of 50,000 tracks is reached remains to be seen.

One caveat: The number of simultaneous user licenses needed to support the demand once this database became widely known could prove problematic since the database would undoubtedly be very popular with the classical music lovers among a college's student body and staff. I can imagine users just turning it on and playing music in the background while they work (I would certainly want to!), which could keep Music students from being able to use the database for class assignments if all user slots were in use at the time they tried to access the database. A reasonably priced site license or some way of restricting access for academic use, maybe during certain time slots, might provide a solution.

The cost seems quite reasonable especially if the quantity of recordings becomes more robust. However, if the service gets much use as a recreational listening device then an institution will need to purchase more simultaneous users or risk turning the academic user away.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE - Rating: 4, 4, 4

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

Rationale for rating:

The database is accessible by PCs with Windows 98 or above and Macintoshes running OS 9 and above. The publishers note that "Due to the nature of the Internet and computers, some operating systems and browser configurations are not compatible with the service." A complete list of compatible hardware and software is available via e-mail.

Authentication is via IP addresses or by "token authorization." Detailed information about token authorization is available in the Library Integration Guide (http://www.classical.com/downloads/library_integration_guide.doc). Classical's customer support representative assured me that they will work individually with libraries to make referring URL, proxy server, User Name and PIN setups and other types of remote authentication work for subscribing libraries.

The system seems very stable; I had absolutely no trouble accessing this site at any time I tried, day or night, and in two months of listening, only one case of the sound "skipping" and cutting out, which I assume was due to network congestion.

Classical states that "The recordings on *Classical Music Library* currently stream at 22kbps - more than adequate for people dialing up from home, as most modems are 56K." I did not test it over a dial-up connection so cannot comment on the speed or the quality of sound delivery over this type of connection.

The access from work and dial-up access from home were equally good. My only problem at home was that my ISP disconnected during a long Playlist selection. The site itself seems reliable and stable. After that, it is all up to the serviceability of the individual user's computer and the speed and stability of his/her connection to the Internet. At work I had some pauses while I needed to wait for a longer piece to buffer. Unfortunately, these pauses interrupted the listening flow. With a slower computer one could expect many interruptions due to lack of memory.

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OVERALL ASSESSMENT - Rating: 3, 3, 3

#1 --- *No Support*

#2 --- *No Support at this time. Future support conditional upon enhancements noted below in Comments Section.*

#3 --- *Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to Library Directors for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below in Comments Section.*

#4 --- *Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to Library Directors for their acceptance or rejection.*

COMMENTS:

Classical Music Library claims to be the first database of its kind, and it shows extraordinary promise for supplementing community college libraries' CD collections and for providing access to classical music in smaller libraries which might not even have CD collections. At present, the only real weak point is the shallowness of the collection, but it appears that Classical International is aggressively moving forward with signing additional recording labels and building needed breadth and depth in the collection. The progress made even during the period of this trial and the participation of Hatvany and Rietdyk are heartening and confidence inducing.

The ability of a large number of recreational listeners to prevent Music students from having access to the database when needed for class assignments could also be problematic. Though we understand that the database was not really developed for an academic audience, we hope that Classical International will consider working on a solution to this problem since it would greatly increase its appeal to college libraries.

My overall rating for this database would probably increase to 4 if 1) the collection were to reach a more suitable breadth and depth, 2) the problem with the default Boolean "or" were corrected, and 3) some workable solution to the problem of recreational users tying up all available simultaneous user logins were found.

There is no question that the *Classical Music Library* is a great resource for listening to and learning about classical music. It appeals to a wide range of listeners, from beginner all the way to master in the field. Its browse features encourage learning and participation. It is a sophisticated website that carefully weaves the current audio technology with traditional online database searching and text-based information. However, the simple search interface needs work. The default to the Boolean OR is a major flaw. The fact that the simple search actually searches for recorded tracks, not for keywords within the major fields, is also a problem.

It is hard to write anything but a glowing review of *Classical Music Library* because of its attractiveness and "browsability". That said, the longer I thought about it the more I realized that I was reviewing from my own middle-aged point of view and not from a young person's viewpoint. I don't know whether a GenXer who listens to rap or hip-hop would be as beguiled by the content of *Classical Music Library*.

For a larger college that currently devotes a fair amount of money to an audio collection *Classical Music Library* should definitely be considered for purchase, especially as the database becomes more robust and if the vendor corrects the problems with the simple search. For a smaller college or one with a less active music department *Classical Music Library* should still be considered for purchase if there is a little extra money in the budget. *Classical Music Library* is a unique project that would do a lot to enrich and add breadth to a college's database offerings.

As more and more students opt for online courses, libraries will need resources such as this one. Also, schools without listening centers or room for media collections will be interested in the online *Classical Music Library*. The tracks load quickly and since the length of each piece is clearly listed, students know exactly how much time will be expended.

Instructors could make creative, innovative use of the organization and content of the *Classical Music Library*. Also, though the principle users of the CML would be the music department, access to the database could enrich other curriculum, such as Humanities, Early Childhood Education, Teacher Preparation, History, and others.

There are problems that need to be addressed for colleges hoping to use the product in their libraries; the simultaneous user restrictions, for one. Also, the absence of single user time limits does pose an interesting problem. Since the music streams, libraries need to consider bandwidth as well.

What would your rating be if product were evaluated based on utility for your home campus only?

Rating: 2, 3,

Rationale for Rating:

At this time, it appears that *Classical Music Library* would be low on our library's priority list for a couple of reasons.

- 1) Due to the current California State budget problems, money is extremely tight these days, so we are not even able to purchase CDs. Although the cost of the database is good and it would be wonderful to have something to offer Music students in addition to our existing music CD collection, this would not really be a high-use item for us (except by recreational listeners), so we would not be able to justify the cost. (This is a condition which I hope will change in the future.)
- 2) Until many of the gaps in this collection are filled, it doesn't appear that the database would be very well received by our Music Department faculty. The chair of our Music Department, who was excited by the prospect of having access to such a database, took a look at it, offered a lengthy list of omissions about an hour later, and commented that it is a "very curious library" and that so far he was "definitely not impressed." Presumably he would be more impressed if the database gained more depth.

We would definitely revisit the issue when these two conditions change.

I am sure that the music faculty would love to have *Classical Music Library*, especially after the collection is expanded and balanced more carefully and the search interface problems are corrected. I am attracted to the idea of having a relatively inexpensive database that is so different than what we are currently offering but would buy the product only after all the databases that are necessities were purchased. I am concerned that recreational listening (I would be one of the culprits) would use up the simultaneous user pool and make the database less available as a teaching tool for the music faculty.

My music faculty love it and want it. Even with the gaps and the omissions, this product would be of great use to both our on site and remote students. The instructors see many ways in which it could benefit their curriculum and course activities.

The cost is one of the biggest issue as to whether we would subscribe or not. The other major issue is access. For the most part, our students would access by remote authentication from their individual locations. Limits on simultaneous users would seriously affect our consideration. The pay-as-you-go download option is undesirable as we would be using the product for educational purposes, not personal collection building. The lack of user time restrictions is a serious issue, and *Classical Music Library* needs to address it right away. For subscribing libraries, there should be no limit on the number of simultaneous remote users, but the online access period should probably be limited to some reasonable amount of time, perhaps the length of a selection or 1 hour for multiple tracks.

The company also needs to improve its online help, but this is a relatively minor issue if cost and access are acceptable.