

Research Aids 1 - Song Indexes

One of the recurrent problems of research into traditional songs is the scattered and uncontrolled nature of the source material, and the difficulty of locating songs. Thousands of versions have been published in song collections and on sound recordings, but many of these are hard to come by and difficult to use. Thousands of other songs remain unpublished. These difficulties face the enquirer who simply wishes to find other versions of a particular song, as well as those who want to research the repertoire of a certain area, songs on a particular subject, or of a particular type. The same song can turn up under different titles, while completely different songs can share the same title. A song recorded once from a particular singer can appear a dozen times in publications, but with varying degrees of fidelity to the original. The quest for historical or contextual information on a particular traditional song can take the enquirer into the realms of pop song, broadside ballads, music hall, and so on, in which they have little knowledge, and face similar problems of location and access.

The following indexes will be helpful to enquirers but please note that in the case of privately-compiled indexes, you should be aware that you have no right to demand information, and don't get upset if the compilers are too busy to answer your enquiry immediately.

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML)

English Folk Dance & Song Society, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London NW1 7AY (Tel 0207 485 2206). E-mail: library@efdss.org, website: www.library.efds.org

The library has a number of resources which may be of help. Their on-line presence has grown considerably in recent years and is set to continue to do so.

Their online resources include:

1. The Folk Song Index and Broadside Index – see below for an explanation of **Steve Roud's** indexes
2. Collectors indexes (which include Cecil Sharp, Lucy Broadwood, Maud Karpeles, Ralph Vaughan Williams, The Hammond Bros., George Gardiner, and Percy Grainger)
3. The 'Take Six' archive of folk song manuscripts from a number of leading collectors (including Janet Blunt, George Gardiner, Henry Hammond, Sabine Baring-Gould, Francis Collinson, Anne Gilchrist, and George Butterworth). This will be augmented in the future with other manuscript collections from Harry Albino, Lucy Broadwood, Clive Carey, Percy Grainger, Maud Karpeles, Frank Kidson, Thomas Fairman Ordish, Cecil Sharp, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Alfred William as a result of the 'Full English' project, recently awarded Heritage Lottery Funding.
4. A number of other resources of value to researchers.

In addition, the library has resources that can be accessed by visiting or by telephone. These include:

1. An extensive card catalogue of song titles built up over many years, giving access to the Library's unrivalled collection of books, manuscripts, and sound recordings.
2. Card indexes to dances and tunes, partially converted to electronic form.
3. The Library's own in-house Song Index which includes material (e.g. revival performances) not included in other indexes
4. Numerous other indexes and catalogues, including indexes of informants named in manuscripts of Cecil Sharp, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Lucy Broadwood, Francis Collinson, Maud Karpeles, etc.; Mumming plays; Manuscript collections held elsewhere; plus catalogues of their own holdings - books, periodicals, photographs, film and video, press cuttings, event programmes, and so on.

Folk Song Index And Broadside Index

Compiled by **Steve Roud**. These are two linked databases which are designed to provide easy electronic access to the bulk of traditional songs and those printed on broadsides, chapbooks, songsters, and other printed media of the past. Both indexes are available for home-use by subscription to the compiler, with updates issued fairly regularly. Publicly-accessible copies are held at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (London) and the Irish Traditional Music Archive (Dublin).

The Folk Song Index seeks eventually to include all English-language traditional songs collected in Britain and Ireland, North America, Australia, New Zealand, etc., including both published and unpublished, written and sound material. Details included are: song title; first line; singer's name; place of collection; date of collection; collector's name; master numbers (Child and Laws); whether or not a tune is given; and (in some cases) a plot synopsis and subject key-words; plus details of the book, record, collection, etc. in which the song can be found. A specially-created master-numbering system (Roud numbers) enables users to identify and locate other versions of a particular song. Contains about 90,000 references.

The definition of 'traditional' song adopted in the Index is reasonably broad, but for the sake of clarification, it does not include revival singers or singer-songwriters, such as Martin Carthy, Ewan MacColl, Steeleye Span, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, etc.

The Broadside Index seeks to include all the songs published in ephemeral printed form (broadsides, chapbooks, popular songsters) and other material which will have had an influence on, or been a source for traditional song, such as ballad operas, music hall, popular poetry, and so on. Details included are: song title; first line; name of tune; author; printer's name and town of operation; location of copies, and so on. Contains over 90,000 references. Can be used alone, or in combination with the **Folk Song Index**.

Songsearch Database

Compiled by **Gregg Butler** this is a database index of books, microfilms and fiches in the compiler's collection. The focus is on popular song in the period 1580-1880, but including folk songs collected more recently. Broadside ballads represent the largest class by number in the collection, with the Roxburgh, Madden, Baring Gould, Harkness, Thomas Crampton, Euing and Poet's Box amongst those indexed. Standard works such as Branson, Chappell, Pills to Purge Melancholy, Percy's Reliques, and folk song collections such as Baring-Gould and Greig-Duncan are among the many other items included.

Entries are searchable by Song title, First line, Named tune, Author/composer, Printer's name and town, and keywords including subject-matter, origin, geographical connections, and so on. Contains over 110,000 references. Email: gregg.butler@btinternet.com

Irish Traditional Music Archive

63 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, Ireland (Tel. (+353-1) 661 9699)

Foremost repository for Irish song material. Indexes under construction. See their website www.itma.ie

Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads

www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/

Professionally-produced database of the Bodleian Library's collection of 30,000 broadsides. Searchable online by Song title, First line, Subjects, Authors, Printers, and, uniquely, Subjects depicted in the sheets' illustrations (using the Iconclass system). The user can also view a complete scanned image of the sheet on-screen.

Traditional Ballad Index

Compiled by Robert Waltz and David G. English. Available online and as downloadable version at www.csufresno.edu/folklore/BalladIndexTOC.html

Searchable by Song title (with cross-references to variant titles), Child and Laws numbers, and Synopsis. Gives references to books in which the song appears.

The Digital Tradition

Available online at www.mudcat.org. Includes full texts of versions and midi tunes. Its all-inclusive and non-critical inclusion policy make it excellent for the singer wishing to locate a text of a particular song, but of little help to the scholarly researcher.

Originally written by Steve Roud. Updated by Martin Graebe March 2011