

# The Bulletin

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### Introduction

In the following account, we intend to give some insight into the history of the most important means of communication in the Council. During times when there was no Internet, when international communication was blocked either by political circumstances or simply by geographical distances, the *Bulletin* (figure 1) served as a bond between the members of the international community of folk music and dance researchers, musicians, and ethnomusicologists. We analyze the development of this publication by highlighting certain key issues and statistics. The most important source for this analysis is the ICTM website (see <https://ictmusic.org>), where all back issues of the *Bulletin* can be found.<sup>1</sup>

The first issue of the publication we now know as the *Bulletin of the International Council for Traditional Music* was published in October 1948 by C. W. Mole and Sons in London, UK, on behalf of the Secretariat of the International Folk Music Council (IFMC). It reported on the “First Meeting of the General Conference” of IFMC, held from 13 to 18 September 1948 in Basel, Switzerland.

The *Bulletin* began to be published regularly twice a year with issue 11 (Mar 1957).<sup>2</sup> Even-numbered issues, published generally in October, would focus on the latest IFMC conference, while odd-numbered issues, published generally in April, would carry news, announcements, and reports written by members, correspondents, and third parties. The issues appearing in April were called “newsletters,” but the title of the publication did not change.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 We thank the ICTM Secretariats and staff at the American Folklife Center – Library of Congress (USA), the Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku (Croatia), the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, and the National Library of Australia for their assistance in making these invaluable resources available.
- 2 One issue was published in 1948, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1953, and 1956; no issues were published in 1954, and two issues were published in 1951 and 1955. These issues focussed primarily on the events from IFMC conferences.
- 3 The covers of issues 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, and 27 include the subtitle “Newsletter and Radio Notes.”

### Editors

The *Bulletin* editor was not identified in the *Bulletin*'s contents until issue 63 (Oct 1983), but according to Maud Karpeles's unpublished autobiography, she was the editor of issues 1 through 24 (Oct 1948 to Oct 1963). Unfortunately, the transition period following Karpeles's retirement as IFMC secretary in August 1963 was both turbulent and not well-documented. We can expect, however, that those involved with editing issues 25 to 34 were the executive and assistant secretaries of that period: Robin W. I. Band (1964–1965), Barbara Krader (1965–1966), Felicia Stallman (1966–1967), Christian Ejlers (1967–1968), Connie Matthews (1967–1969), Jane Skillen (1965–1966), and Chakée Kirkiacharian (1968–1969).

The duties of *Bulletin* editor were carried out jointly by Secretary General Graham George and his wife, Tjot George, from 1969 to 1981 (issues 35–57). Secretary General Dieter Christensen was the *Bulletin*'s editor from 1981 to 1996 (issues 58–88), followed by Nerthus Christensen until 2001 (issues 89–98). Kelly Salloum was responsible from 2001 to 2005 (issues 99–107), and Lee Anne Proberts from 2006 to April 2011 (issues 108–118). Since issue 119 (Oct 2011) and until the time of completing this chapter (Jul 2020), Carlos Yoder has been the *Bulletin*'s editor. Since 2001 the editing is carried out in close collaboration with the secretary general.

### Milestones of structure and content

Issue 1 was exclusively concerned with the report of the 1948 conference. Until issue 10 (Oct 1956), this was the main and oftentimes only kind of information featured in the *Bulletin*. These reports described the Council's state of affairs (including detailed financial matters), as well as providing the minutes of the latest General Assembly.

Karpeles considered issue 11 (Mar 1957) to be “an experiment,” adding announcements, reports, forth-

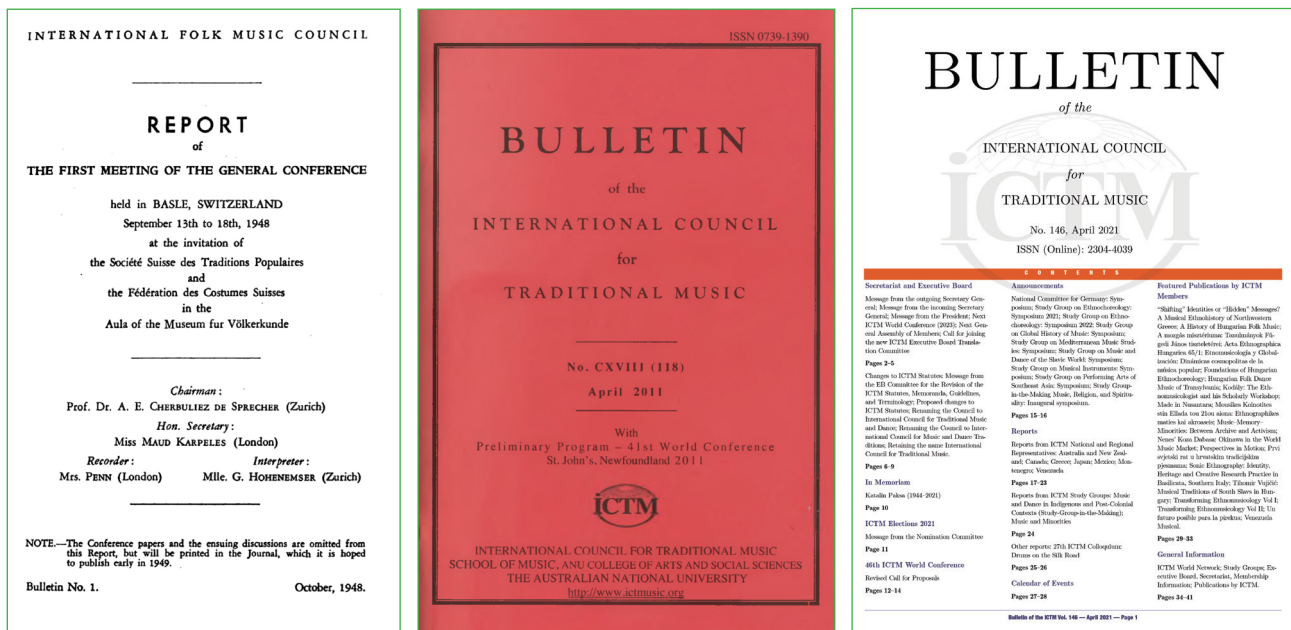


Figure 1. Cover pages of *BIFMC* 1 (Oct 1948), *BICTM* 118 (Apr 2011; last printed issue), and *BICTM* 146 (Apr 2021; one of the latest online-only issues to date).

coming events, and personal notices from around the world (*BIFMC* 11, Mar 1957:1). The issue was novel in many ways: it was the first to list the members of the Executive Board, the Secretariat, and various committees; it included the section “Radio Notes,” with reports from several European broadcasting corporations; signed contributions were presented from Australia (Clement Hosking), Austria (Richard Wolfram), Belgium (Roger Pinon), FRG (Kurt Reinhard), Italy (Luigi Colacicchi), Norway (Arne Bjørndal), South Africa (Hugh Tracey), Spain (Salvador Barandiaran), Uganda (Klaus P. Wachsmann), and Yugoslavia (Cvjetko Rihtman); and it even featured a report written in a language other than English.<sup>4</sup> Gradually, and especially after 1966 when IFMC conferences were no longer held annually, the types of contents included in the *Bulletin* started to coalesce, solidifying into the structure used until today (see below). The “experiment” effectively ended with the transfer of the Secretariat to Canada in 1969, when submissions started to be requested in a more systematic way (*BIFMC* 35, Oct 1969:3).

The name of the publication became the *Bulletin of the ICTM* in issue 59 (Oct 1981), after the adoption of the new name of the Council. The following issue (Apr 1982) included a membership application form for the first time, a practice that would continue for as long as the *Bulletin* would be printed. By April 1984 (issue 64), the structure of the *Bulletin* became standardized, and it would continue practically unaltered until the *Bulletin* became an online-only publication in October 2011.

It is noteworthy that much attention was paid to “sister societies,” from “other musicologies,” as well as from the discipline itself. So, the first “newsletter” also contained a report on the foundation of the “Society for Ethno-Musicology ... for the purpose of establishing communication among persons in primitive, folk, and oriental music, and for furthering research and scholarship in these fields” (*BIFMC* 11, Mar 1957:6), which happened in November 1955 in Boston. This information was and still is important for the membership as ethnomusicology has always been a very dynamic field.

Until 1986, conference programmes and/or lists of participants were predominantly featured in the *Journal* or *Yearbook*. Preliminary programmes or schedules, however, have been featured in the *Bulletin* since 1971,<sup>5</sup> consistently in the issue preceding the start of the conference.

The minutes of General Assemblies published in the *Bulletin* include full financial statements until 1983 (*BICTM* 63, Oct 1983:16–19), but the practice was subsequently reduced (*BICTM* 67, Oct 1985:12; 71, Oct 1987:13) and eventually abandoned (cf. *BICTM* 75, Oct 1989:11). We were not able to establish the reasons for this development.

Finally, it is remarkable that the Secretariat had its email address published in the *Bulletin* as early as 1987 (*BICTM* 70, Apr 1987:8), and that submissions to the *Bulletin* and *Yearbook* were already being “often received” via email in 1994 (*BICTM* 84, Apr 1994:14).

4 Reports in French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish would be occasionally included in the *Bulletin* until 1982.

5 Since 2017, the preliminary programme has been hosted on the ICTM website, but a link to it is also included in the *Bulletin* itself.

## Democracy as featured in the *Bulletin*

Since September 1951, the Council's amended Statutes have allowed members to nominate candidates to serve on the Executive Board (*BIFMC* 5, Nov 1951:24, §11c), but it seems that this right was seldom exercised by the membership. We can see from the *Bulletin* that until 1979 it was predominantly the Board who nominated the candidates.

There were two promising signs of change towards a more participative direction in the *Bulletins* during the period when Graham George was secretary general (issues 35–57). First, starting with issue 49 (Oct 1976), the years of election of all Executive Board members are printed in the inside front cover; and second, information about the 1979 elections is prominently featured on the first page of issue 53 (Oct 1978), including terms of service, possibility of re-election, co-options, and a call to the membership to submit “additional nominations” by correspondence. However, those two practices would not be continued during the time Dieter Christensen was secretary general; it would not be until 2005 that the first modern ICTM elections (i.e., conducted by an independent Nomination Committee) would be held. As a result of this development, the first time that biographies and platform statements of nominees were clearly featured in a *Bulletin* was in issue 106 (Apr 2005:45–50), and the process remains essentially the same today.<sup>6</sup>

## Length

At only 4 pages and 487 words long, the shortest *Bulletin* ever published was issue 3 (Jul 1950). It consisted of a couple of announcements and a notice that Karpeles would be travelling to the USA from July to November 1950. By contrast, the longest printed *Bulletin* was issue 118 (Apr 2011), with 96 pages and c. 29,450 words.<sup>7</sup>

The shortest electronic-only *Bulletin* was issue 137 (Apr 2018), with 30 pages and 12,831 words, while the longest one was issue 122 (Apr 2013), with 100 pages and 61,302 words.<sup>8</sup> The extremely large size of that issue prompted the editor to appeal to the Executive Board to allow an increase of the frequency of publication to three or four times a year (see below).

6 Previously, ballots, platform statements, and envelopes for voting and mailing were included as separate sheets with *Bulletin* mail-outs.

7 The *Bulletin* was printed in A5 size, and the word count listed here is approximate.

8 The online *Bulletin* is formatted in A4 size, which is twice the size of A5.

## Design

Over its seventy-year history, the *Bulletin* has naturally undergone many changes in design, often following new technological capabilities which became available to the Secretariat. It is outside the scope of this chapter to analyze each change in style or layout, so we will just limit ourselves to the most important changes, namely:

- Issue 33 (Oct 1968) marks the first observable stylistic break, most notably introducing covers with colour backgrounds that would change with every issue.<sup>9</sup> Until then, the covers had been grey.
- Issue 49 (Oct 1976) included a photo for the first time, of Maud Karpeles, as part of her obituary.
- Issue 58 (Apr 1981) was, perhaps for the first time, typed in a word processor, resulting in the impossibility of printing characters with diacritics (*BIFMC* 64, Apr 1984:2).

However, the most drastic changes in the contents and design of the *Bulletin* occurred when it became an online-only publication in October 2011.

## The transformation of the *Bulletin* into an online-only publication

### LAYOUT

The decision to make the *Bulletin* an online-only publication caused a complete redesign of its layout in late 2011 (*BICTM* 119, Oct 2011:3–4), including the use of fonts with full Unicode support to properly render diacritics and non-Latin scripts, formatting the text in three columns,<sup>10</sup> and most notably, allowing for announcements and reports to include photos, illustrations, and clickable hyperlinks to online resources. Incremental improvements to the layout have continued over the years (*BICTM* 123, Oct 2013: 4).

### NEW AND UPDATED SECTIONS

Announcements from the Secretariat, the Executive Board, and other ICTM bodies were moved to a new section titled “From the Secretariat,”<sup>11</sup> which also added permanent columns from the secretary general (starting with issue 119, Oct 2011) and president (starting with issue 135, Oct 2017). The remaining announcements (i.e., from study groups, national and regional

9 The first volume of the *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* (1969) also began using differently coloured backgrounds for the cover; this practice continued until the last such cover on the 2016 *Yearbook for Traditional Music*.

10 Later reformatted to a two-column layout, starting with issue 136 (Jan 2018).

11 Renamed to “Secretariat and Executive Board” in issue 135 (Oct 2017).



representatives, and related organizations) were moved to a separate section. Likewise, the “Reports” section was also reworked in this fashion, adding subsections for national and regional representatives, study groups, and other reports.<sup>12</sup>

New sections were added as well, such as “World Conferences,” which includes reports from past conferences, as well as announcements of forthcoming ones; “Featured Publications by ICTM Members,” which includes publishing information, direct purchase links, cover images, and blurbs; and “General Information,” which showcases information about the Council that previously was scattered in different parts of the *Bulletin*.

The list of liaison officers and national committees, which used to be printed in the inside covers, was reworked into the section “ICTM World Network,” which was subsequently enhanced with direct links to representatives’ emails. Similarly, pages listing members of the Executive Board and Secretariat were added, with profile pictures, direct email links, and terms of office.

## OPERATIONS

As a consequence of no longer having to print and distribute the *Bulletin*, in 2011 the deadlines for submissions were extended by two weeks, and the calls for submissions were distributed via the newly created mailing lists for the World Network and study-group authorities.

As the new *Bulletin* would no longer be constrained by the cost of printing, and perhaps due to the interest generated by the new format, the size of the first electronic issue increased dramatically to 43,818 words, a 49% growth over the largest printed issue (118, Apr 2011), which counted only 29,450 words. However, the high number of submissions to the new *Bulletin* made it necessary to establish a strict set of guidelines in 2014, and an Editorial Board consisting of one Executive Board member (Don Niles), the secretary general (at that time, Svanibor Pettan; succeeded by Ursula Hemetek), and the *Bulletin*’s editor (Carlos Yoder).

Finally, in 2011 the *Bulletin* also became an open-access publication, without any attachments to existing ICTM memberships or subscriptions, and protected only by a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 Unported License.<sup>13</sup> This allows the *Bulletin* to reach a much larger audience and increase the visibility of the Council’s aims and activities.

year	total words per year	average words per issue
2012	89,010	44,505
2013	93,919	46,959
2014	83,455	27,818 (beginning of publishing 3 times a year)
2015	76,795	25,598
2016	70,971	23,657
2017	84,200	28,066
2018	60,255	20,085
2019	55,119	18,373
2020	57,496	19,165

**Table 1.** Number of words in issues of the *BICTM*.

## Increase of frequency

As mentioned above, issue 122 (Apr 2013) had 100 pages and 61,302 words. The extremely large size of that issue, which included a painstakingly proofread preliminary programme for the 2013 world conference, made it very difficult to edit, distribute, and read. Following an appeal by the editor, the Executive Board approved the increase of the frequency of publication from twice to three times a year, adding a new issue in January. The goal was to maintain a similar yearly word count, but distributed over three issues a year instead of two, making them easier to produce, distribute, and read, as well as giving more flexibility to submitters.

Table 1 shows that the number of average words per issue, as expected, was strongly reduced following the addition of a third *Bulletin* in the year of 2014. The further reduction in total words per year from 2018 on was caused by no longer including the full text of announcements (call for papers, programmes of study-group symposia, etc.) in the *Bulletin* itself, instead linking them to online versions at the ICTM website.

## Conclusion

After having done the research for this chapter, we can conclude that the *Bulletin* has been, and still is, the most constant vehicle for communications within ICTM. It reveals many facts that can be very useful to the Council’s members, not just due to their scholarly content—which was not our primary goal of investigations—but also by looking at what facts were featured. The *Bulletin* gives a unique insight into the operations of the Council and how these have changed over the years; therefore, to a certain extent the *Bulletin* is the repository of the Council’s history. Indeed, without *Bulletins* it would be next to impossible to reconstruct many aspects of the Council’s past.

12 For example, reports from UNESCO, RILM, or ICTM colloquia.

13 See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/> for more.

The *Bulletin* has been a precious publication of the Council for over seventy years, and it definitely shows the imprint of many editors, to whom we owe great respect. Without them we would not be able to define our own identity in the history of this great body called the International Council for Traditional Music. The present always is a result of the past, and for the challenges of the future, it is important to be able to look back.