

Modelling Music as Linked Data: Works, Events, and Worldviews

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Describing performed music resources has always been an imperfect undertaking in libraries. The MARC format is not well-suited to the expressing the rich complex of associations in and among sound recording resources, which may include multiple works/expressions with various groups of performers, which all in turn may be associated with multiple other works/expressions. MARC, as well as associated cataloging rules such as RDA, also tend to present a model of musical works that is based on western classical music, and so may misrepresent music from other traditions by imposing an incompatible ontological framework.

Linked data provides a major opportunity for describing performed music resources. Associations among works, events, and people in sound recording resources can be expressed through machine-linking of the data elements, and made available for further enhancement as linked open data on the Web. Without the restrictions imposed by the MARC format, more subtle relationships amongst performed music instances, the interrelationships of musical groups and musicians, the relationships between works, all can potentially be better expressed in linked open data. It also presents the possibility of offering more flexible views of the musical work, allowing a more inclusive description of non-Western and popular music. In this paper I explore some of these possibilities in library linked data, concentrating on BIBFRAME, the linked data framework developed by the Library of Congress and its associated ontologies, with an emphasis on how events, musical works and their relationships are expressed as linked open data.