



WHEN THE LIBRARY MET THE RECORDING STUDIO

A recording studio thrives on the creation of sound, whereas libraries – although now changing – have usually discouraged any kind of sonic ‘creativity’. But, as **ROB THOMSON** reports, the recording studio and the library have a lot more in common than you might have thought.

In October last year I went with Connie Ross, Library Technician at Rosebank College, a secondary school in Sydney’s Five Dock, to the famous Studios 301 in Alexandria, Sydney. These studios are the longest-running and largest professional recording studios in the southern hemisphere.

We were at Studios 301 because they are now a supplier with libraries that have – together with the State Library of NSW – worked on digitising some of their audio collections. Studios 301 is helping libraries to digitise their audio collections – oral histories, for instance, that may have been recorded on cassettes. I met Ron Haryanto, Operations Manager at Studios 301, at the ALIA National 2016 Conference, and soon after I asked him to come to the COLLABOR8 NSW Library Unconference in early October to talk about what Studios 301 could do with and for libraries.

The visit to Studios 301 revealed that we are very different industries, but there are also many similarities. Both libraries and recording studios like quiet – and while I know libraries are no longer quiet, there is an expectation that even in a noisy library there will be a

quiet nook somewhere. Studios are soundproofed, and when we stood in one on our visit we realised that they are incredibly quiet spaces. We both thrive on technology and are burdened by the need to sometimes cater for obsolete technologies and redundant hardware. We both cater for collaboration and creation. As Seán O’Faoláin, the acclaimed Irish short story writer, once said, ‘People should think not so much of the books that have gone into the ... library but rather of the books that have come out of it.’

We have both been digitally disrupted. Studios 301 is the last of the large-format recording studios in the southern hemisphere. The huge 72-channel mixing desks are still being used, but a lot of digital recording and editing is also being done on computers. Libraries went through digital disruption early and have made it through; they are now no longer the disrupted but are instead the disrupters. The recording and music industry was also hammered by digital disruptions, especially because of the illegal downloading of music. That experience then impacted the publishing industry, which didn’t want books and journals to be subjected to what had occurred in the music industry. This then impacted e-lending, resulting in, for instance, some publishers not being made available on OverDrive.

After I got home I sent this text to Connie: ‘The music industry and libraries seem to have a bit in common. We both talk (a lot) among ourselves and don’t very often talk to outsiders. Nobody really knows what we do. They think they do but we know more.’

The visit to Studios 301 showed me that we need to get out of our library-land and engage with others in the creative industries, as we seem to have a lot more in common than we realised. 🌟

ROB THOMSON
Teacher-in-Charge
TAFE Illawarra
robert.thomson24@tafensw.edu.au