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MOUG DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

2011 MOUG Distinguished Service Award  
Alice LaSota

PRESS RELEASE

MOUG ANNOUNCES 2011 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT

The Executive Board of the Music OCLC Users Group (MOUG) is honored to name Alice LaSota (University of Maryland – College Park) as the ninth recipient of MOUG's Distinguished Service Award today, February 8, 2011, at its annual meeting in Philadelphia. This award was established to recognize and honor those who have made significant professional contributions to music users of OCLC. The MOUG Executive Board selects recipients based on nominations received from the membership.

Thoughtfulness and careful deliberation have characterized her approach to music cataloging and the profession of music librarianship as a whole, but her specific accomplishment goes far beyond such generalities. For the past two decades, Alice LaSota has been recognized as the NACO-Music Project's preeminent expert on music series, the most vexing and difficult aspect of authority control. She was one of the first two members of the NACO-Music Project to undergo the series training program at the Library of Congress when it was offered to non-LC staff in the mid-1990s, and in 1997 she co-taught a day-long workshop on music series with Phillip De Sellem of LC as part of a pre-conference continuing education workshop co-sponsored by MOUG and the Music Library Association at the MLA meeting in New Orleans. Thereafter, when series questions would come up on NMP-L, even those few catalogers who were probably Alice's equal in series knowledge would often defer to her, offering their opinions but also asking her opinion as well, loath to consider the issue du jour properly settled until she had weighed in.

While she has never formally mentored large numbers of people, those few who have been so fortunate have publicly acknowledged her influence on their careers. One example was Jim Alberts, who praised her guidance in the Fall 2001 issue of the MLA Atlantic Chapter's newsletter at the time his career was launched with his first job at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. But she also did a great deal of informal mentoring. Neil Hughes relates the following: "I can't tell you how often Alice would come up to me after an Ask MOUG session or an MLA:BCC subcommittee meeting and say, 'You know, Neil, I generally agree with what people are saying, but there's some 'stuff' that still bothers me about this. . . .'—at which point I would take the hint that it was time to retire with her to the lobby for a beverage and a long, stimulating discussion of topics that might appear arcane to some, but which would definitely affect patron access to music materials if implemented via Method X, as opposed to Y or Z. She did this with many other colleagues, too, because she loved to think aloud in the company of colleagues, saying that it helped her to clarify her own thoughts on the subject at hand. Whenever I was the lucky beneficiary, she taught me to think more deeply and more carefully about my craft, and to appreciate that there really isn't that much that we do that doesn't matter. I will miss her steady, focused navigation through all the rules and rule interpretations, and her amazing ability to remember just the perfect example of an analogous situation from many years past."

Alice's NACO-Music statistics for series are among the very highest for any institution where only one individual contributed music series through March of 2010, with a total of 443 new series and 63 revised and an uncountable number she contributed using a general NACO authorization at UMCP.

Alice LaSota's contributions to the education of her fellow catalogers, particularly in the myriad arcana of series authority work, have improved the quality of access to music materials in the OCLC WorldCat database, and improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of many of her colleagues. To quote Neil Hughes one more time: "Alice has set an example of quiet, persistent dedication to our craft worthy of the finest Swiss watchmaker or Asian calligrapher. She is an unsung hero of MOUG about whom it is finally time to sing."