

INTERIM REPORT ON THE AIRS “GLOBAL” TEAM

Introduction

In an email to me, dated 8 April 2011, project director Annabel Cohen referred to “the global group which has not formed”. Although requested to fulfil the position of Chair of this team, I noted from the beginning that I was unable to perform this role, due to other work pressures. I indicated that I saw the function that I could best and most achievably perform as being that of using my contacts throughout Africa to introduce to AIRS young scholars with whom I come into contact, in the field of Music Education, to increase representation of the so-called “dark continent” in the project. This is arguably a role more difficult for other AIRS team members to fulfil than it is for me, and this is what I have endeavoured to do throughout my AIRS involvement to date. In late July this year I intend holding an “AIRS information session” at the Pasmae (Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education) biennial conference in Gaborone, Botswana, which will have attendees from all over Africa. Such conference opportunities in Africa can be put to good AIRS use, as has been the case with other conferences, for example at the ISME (International Society for Music Education) biennial World Conference in Beijing, China, in August 2010.

There not being a Chair of the Global team, I have nevertheless agreed to write a brief report on behalf of the “group which has not formed”, although I have had some correspondence specifically with Patricia Campbell and Stephen Clift on the matter, and thank them for their input.

Goals

Project director Cohen also referred in the same email correspondence referred to above to the fact that there “were 2 kinds of goals of that committee - making the most of the global opportunities for research - this is being done fairly well with projects that are including members from different countries, and in studies in which the same procedures are being carried out in different countries. There are 2 examples in Theme 1, and then the example in 3.1 ... There is still more to be done that could be done - seeing that all persons from various countries are active (or if not, why not, and can others interested in joining AIRS from other countries then join instead), seeing more studies carried out in more places that are strategically chosen, not chosen simply because someone in the other country happens to be interested, and maybe other points should be made along similar lines (e.g., involving UNESCO in different countries, as just another kind of example).

The other goal was to encourage acceptance of all AIRS members by all members across disciplines and cultures ... Part of our project has to do with using singing to bridge cultures and to facilitate

cultural understanding. Ironically, the same problem may be present in AIRS membership itself. And ... singing together may help reduce it, but still, what else can be done to solve the problem. One idea is to have a global group meet and discuss this issue as well as the easier issue”.

Links with the Digital Library team

Clearly, a team without a leader is a rudderless ship, and this has notably contributed to the lack of activity of the Global group. I believe that another reason for lack of activity has been the length of time it took for the website and the Digital Library team to become fully functional. Although not specifically mentioned under Goals above, I believe that one of the most useful things that can be done, from an international perspective, is linking existing resources, to be found around the world, to the AIRS website. Despite my having conveyed such information, since the inception of AIRS, this has not as yet shown results on the AIRS website. I am unaware of how many other AIRS members may have done the same, but this can of course be done by everyone with such information at their disposal, regardless of whatever teams they may be members. As simply one example, in a response I received by email yesterday from Stephen Clift, he mentioned the Aarya Foundation, <http://www.aarya.org.uk/>, an organisation of which I was previously unaware and yet which is clearly an excellent example of a grouping with which AIRS should be linked, in our opinion.

Future tasks

A statement/statements of policy, philosophy and practice on “global matters” need(s) to be drafted for review by the larger AIRS group, also given the fact that the actual membership of the Global team has not been established. In fact, I believe that the very function of the group needs to be debated; whether it overlaps all the themes, and whether, therefore, it should be seen as a cross-cutting theme and not be constituted as a separate team, as originally envisioned. In the case of such a decision being taken, the need for a Global Chair is reduced; if not, then this is in my opinion the most urgent priority, in order to provide leadership.

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