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Musicological Publications in the Digital Age: Charting a New Course

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A New Ecosystem of Early Music Studies

Musicological Publications in the Digital Age: Charting a New Course

EarlyMuse COST action

The field of musicology is experiencing a dramatic transformation, fueled by the rise of digital technologies. From massive digitization projects to the explosion of online music platforms, these advancements offer exciting opportunities for research and communication. However, they also present a unique set of challenges, requiring a shift in how we think about scholarship and publication. As we navigate this new landscape, it's crucial to ensure that musicological research remains accessible, impactful, and inclusive.

BEYOND NOTATION: THE CHALLENGES OF MULTIMEDIA INTEGRATION

Traditional musicological publications, often limited to text and notation, struggle to adequately convey the richness and complexity of musical research. The integration of multimedia elements, such as sound and video recordings, poses significant challenges. Funding, technological expertise, and the need to ensure long-term accessibility are just a few of the hurdles to overcome. Consider, for instance, the daunting task of

archiving a vast digital collection of recordings, ensuring its preservation and accessibility for future generations.

This shift towards multimedia also necessitates a rethink of our approach to the scholarship itself. How do we effectively integrate multimedia elements into our research without sacrificing scholarly rigor? How do we ensure that these elements enhance, rather than detract from, our arguments? These are critical questions that we must grapple with as we move forward.

A DIGITAL DIVIDE: INEQUITIES AND THE FUTURE OF MUSICOLOGY

The transition to a digital landscape also highlights existing inequalities within the field. Researchers from under-resourced institutions or those working in less widely spoken languages often face significant barriers in publishing and sharing their work. Access to funding, cutting-edge technology, and peer-reviewed journals can be limited, hindering their ability to contribute to the broader scholarly conversation.

Furthermore, the disparity between performance-based doctorates and traditional research doctorates requires attention. Many institutions award doctorates in music performance, where the research component often takes a backseat to practical skills development. While performance-based research is valuable, it often receives less recognition within the academic world, leaving these scholars at a disadvantage.

BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE: SOLUTIONS FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

So, how can we navigate these challenges and unlock the full potential of digital musicology? The answer lies in a multifaceted approach that addresses both the technical and the social aspects of this transformation.

- **Creating a Platform for Collaboration:** A comprehensive digital platform that supports diverse research outputs and seamlessly integrates multimedia content would be a crucial step. This

platform could serve as a hub for scholars to share their work, collaborate on projects, and engage in broader discussions. Imagine a platform where researchers can embed audio and video recordings directly into their articles, creating a more immersive and engaging reading experience.

- **Past and Future:** Collaboration with digital archives and libraries is essential for developing robust strategies to ensure the long-term accessibility and integrity of digital musicological resources. These partnerships are crucial for creating sustainable repositories that can house not only traditional musicological materials but also the growing body of digital resources being created today.
- **Building Digital Literacy:** Comprehensive training programs for researchers should focus on digital tools and methodologies, data management, and preservation techniques. These programs could equip scholars with the skills they need to utilize digital technologies effectively, ensuring that they can not only access and manage digital resources but also contribute to the creation of new digital scholarship.
- **Addressing the Cost Barrier:** Funding models that combine public and private resources, as well as crowdfunding options, can help address the cost barriers associated with multimedia integration. Creative funding strategies are crucial for supporting the development of digital platforms, the creation of multimedia content, and the dissemination of research findings to a broader audience.
- **Bridging the Gap:** Flexible publication formats that accommodate both traditional research outputs and performance-based studies are needed. This might involve developing new journals or platforms that specifically cater to performance-based scholarship, ensuring that these scholars

have the opportunity to showcase their research and be recognized for their contributions.

- **Amplifying All Voices:** Multilingual and multicultural approaches to research dissemination will ensure that research from underrepresented regions and musical traditions is readily accessible. This might involve supporting the translation of research articles, developing online platforms in multiple languages, and encouraging the participation of scholars from diverse backgrounds in scholarly conferences and publications.
- **Policy and Career Alignment:** Policies that promote the digitization of cultural heritage must be aligned with the practical realities of academic careers to support digital humanities research. This means ensuring that scholars are rewarded for their work with digital resources and that their efforts in digitizing materials are recognized in promotion and tenure decisions.
- **Engaging the Public:** Outreach programs like interactive online exhibitions, podcasts, and video series can help engage a wider public, highlighting the relevance of musicology to contemporary life. These programs could showcase the exciting discoveries being made in the field, demonstrate the practical applications of musicological research, and inspire a new generation of scholars.
- **Accessibility for All:** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) should be adhered to in all digital platforms, ensuring that musicological resources are accessible to users with disabilities. This means designing digital materials with accessibility in mind, providing alternative formats for content, and ensuring that everyone has equal access to the wealth of knowledge that musicology has to offer.

Successfully navigating this new landscape will require a collaborative effort from all stakeholders in the field. We must remain open to new approaches, engage in continuous dialogue, and prioritize the needs of

the wider musicological community. With a concerted effort, we can ensure that musicology thrives in the digital age, remaining a vibrant and impactful field of scholarship for generations to come.

This text edited by Philippe Vendrix (vendrix@univ-tours.fr) is derived from the works of the WG Publication of *EarlyMuse*, a COST action (<https://earlymuse.eu/>). The following people contributed to its conception: Andrea Puentes Blanco, Vincenzo Borghetti, Anne Piejus, David Lewis, Angel Olmos, Nataša Marjanović, Christoph Riedo, Guntar Pranis, Vincente Parilla, Vilena Vrbanic.