

Moments of divergence in academic and professional perceptions of electronic sheet music and potential for convergence at the library.

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Greg and Ana just provided us with insights into the sources for electronic sheet music and some of the practical issues involved with the acquisition and management of this format. I want you to keep their words in mind as I summarize what academicians expect of electronic sheet music and what practicing professionals (i.e. performers and music educators) expect of electronic sheet music. I promise you - this little exercise will reveal far more moments of divergence than of convergence between the needs and expectations of these two major library user groups. As these two groups are the proverbial bread and butter that give meaning to the mission and values of most academic libraries, we can little afford to ignore their needs and expectations any less than we can afford to wait for something better to come along for e-score publishing. Recalling the words of Ana and Greg, then, I'll conclude with an attempt to situate the library as the necessary moderator between the academics and professionals by drawing on our existing strengths and the experiences with other e-formats.

A few brief explanatory notes before we get started:

- I am choosing to use the phrase “electronic sheet music” to represent all forms of digitally engraved music. While one would not think of an online critical edition as “sheet music,” the more general phrases of electronic music and digital music have already been appropriated in the literature to specify born-digital scores and music whose playback is partially or entirely electronic in nature.

- The observations on the needs and expectations of academicians is based on readings in scholarly journals, both articles and resources reviews, as well as the project information provided on the websites of self-identified scholarly online score projects.
- Likewise, the needs and expectations of professionals have been identified through readings in trade journals and information provided on the websites of commonly recommended electronic sheet music vendors.

Let's begin by looking at what scholars believe about the role of electronic sheet music.

One reviewer of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe Online* conveniently summarized the prevailing notion when he queried the future of the physical score: **[SLIDE]**

... whatever features or advantages they possess, digital editions don't ever seem likely to entirely replace print versions. Printed music remains important and digital versions should not be viewed as an alternative to published editions, but rather as a complement to them. They offer expanded possibilities for both researchers and performers in making a large edition easily searchable and viewable, and in better integrating the important information in the critical report with the music (Henseler, 2011: 599).

To re-iterate: **[SLIDE]** digital editions are intended as a compliment to physical scores, serving primarily as a means to integrate digital versions of source material and supporting critical commentary with a critical edition of the score while also offering improved search capability. In his 2001 discussion of the future of scholarly editions in *Music Reference Services Quarterly*, Paul Corneilson imagined a future of digital scores that **[CLICK]** made PDF files available for people to print and perform from; hyperlinks between text, musical notation, and digital images; links to variant versions; searchable music notation; and “third-party software to do specific analysis (Corneilson, 2001: 34).” The initial value of integrating critical editions with supporting text continues to exist as the foundation of most scholarly digital projects. Indeed, in her

response to the heralding of the end of the editor, Christina Georgiou reiterated this goal in defense of the continued viability of the editor. Writing of the need to integrate what she perceived as the commercial need for printable performance scores and scholars' need to ensure the academically-defined authenticity of these scores, [SLIDE] Georgiou wrote "these digital editions/archives can ideally offer both the 'raw data' (for scholarly use) as well as the 'critically assessed' (for performance or less specialized use),... What digital media can offer is the combination of a wealth of information that can exist both for its own sake and as complimentary material to the 'read text' (Georghiou, 2012: 9-10)." The wide academic adoption of this expectation is corroborated by a brief review of scholarly online editions: [SLIDE]

- Chopin's First Editions Online: "The project's chief aim was to create an online resource uniting all of the first impressions of Chopin's first editions in an unprecedented virtual collection, thereby providing direct access to musicians and musicologists to some of the most important primary source materials relevant to the composer's music (CFEO, home page)."
- The Online Chopin Variorum Edition: "the new phase further exploited the possibilities inherent in an online medium to create a research environment for music with complex compositional or publication histories, recorded in both manuscript and published sources. The emergent system was intended not only to facilitate research on musical sources but also to encourage wider modes of comparison and the reconstruction of creative histories to an extent which could not be easily achieved outside a digital environment ([www.ocve.org/about](http://www.ocve.org/about))."
- Digital Mozart Edition: "The DME will provide world wide access to the complete works of Wolfgang Amadé Mozart (1756-1791) in digital form via the internet for study and

performance purposes. In addition to the presentation of all works of music online, the DME will include a critical edition of letters, documents and libretti as well (DME, Project Outline).”

Similar language noting a marriage of primary resources, critical commentary, and scores, appear in many more scholarly online editions. The Web Library of Seventeenth Century Music, is an exception to the rule as it seeks to provide printable critical score editions of music from the 17<sup>th</sup> century at no cost. Unlike their scholarly counterparts, they provide only scores ([www.sscm-wscm.org](http://www.sscm-wscm.org)).

Even though by 2001 there had been considerable advances in online reading (manifested in e-journals and early e-book platforms), we can still make excuses for the print culture that becomes evident in Corneilson’s emphasis on printable PDFs for performers. This same assumption of the use of printed scores by performers, however, continues to appear in contemporary writings. Speaking of the advantages of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe Online* as recently as 2011, however, [SLIDE] Henseler wrote:

Of great interest to librarians will be the ability for users to view any part of the edition, download it as a PDF file, and print a hard copy if needed. This will reduce wear and tear to printed editions and decrease use of copy and scanning equipment... (Henseler, 2011: 598).

Henseler continued, with the observation “The ability to print is useful for musicians since users can annotate their own copies of a score with greater ease (ibid.: 598).” This assumption of a performance preference for print is evident in every online edition listed above, with their scores available in printable PDF formats with no options for viewing on portable devices or mark-up of the digital version.

And with that, let’s turn to see what people in the professional realm – that of performance and education – seek in their online sheet music. From this area, as well, we see

professionals trying to answer the question of the continuing relevance of print editions. Writing for *The American Music Teacher* in 2009, Ajero asked the question “will paper music scores ultimately disappear?” his answer: **[SLIDE]**

They probably will not in the immediate future. However, a paradigm shift will occur due to a couple of factors: More musicians and educators will realize how much digital sheet music technology improves the efficiency of their daily workflow. In addition, the demand for digital downloads of musical scores will increase to the point where publishers should offer their libraries for purchase and download where musicians can work with them on a variety of devices and displays no matter where you go (Ajero, 2009: 59).

What exactly does Ajero mean by improved workflow? The most oft-repeated efficiency is the ability to carry thousands of pieces with you wherever you go on a single digital device such as an iPad (Litterst 2010/11, Ajero, 2009). Kiniko Ishizaka’s Open Goldberg Variation, perhaps the best cross-over between scholarly and performance-based web application, makes further efficiencies possible as it allows users to download PDF copies of the score, view the score on their iPad, annotate and mark-up the score on your iPad, and embed the score and accompanying audio on a website (Bayley, 2012: 40). Referencing implementations of online sheet music as early as 2002, James Daugherty found the format offered numerous opportunities to restructure the use of his choral rehearsal time by allowing his singers access to the score with his markings, to diction practice, and audio samples all prior to their first rehearsal (Daugherty, 2002: 71). For a more general online sheet music wish list we can look to columnist George Litterst, who noted that online sheet music offers: **[CLICK]**

- “the ability to replace an entire room full of print materials with a single, handheld device;
- “search, highlighting and annotation features;
- “ease of access (such as Amazon’s one-click purchase feature);

- “copy-and-paste (...);
- “readability in low-light conditions;
- “Hands-free reading;
- “audio-interpretation of the text (...) (Litterst, 2010/11: 50).”

To the music professional’s wish list we must also add the ability **[CLICK]** to locate a wide variety of scores in one place. Citing an informal customer survey, the CFA of MusicNotes.com noted that when “we asked if customers would rather purchase digital music through a one-stop outlet than at different stores controlled by different music publishers, ... 82% preferred a one-stop [experience] (Bessman, 2003: 52).” The sources for this one-stop shopping most commonly cited in the literature **[SLIDE]** are IMSLP/Petrucci Music Library and MusicNotes.com. Most of us are perhaps already familiar with IMSLP, an open access online resource for public domain scores editions. Visitors to IMSLP can navigate a fairly intuitive search interface and download and print PDFs of scores free of charge. A commercial enterprise, MusicNotes.com offers digital sheet music which customers can purchase, download, print or view on their iPad. With the appropriate app, iPad users can even annotated their scores. While MusicNotes.com offers functionality that IMSLP does not, the scores themselves are not much different; according to information on their website, the scores are “a new engraving of the composition’s original printed arrangement (MusicNotes.com).”

In short, what we see from professionals is a desire for easy access, portability, and the ability to annotate the score regardless of format (print or digital).**[CLICK]** The concern for quality that is fundamental to academics is absent from the professional literature. As Georgiou noted, not only are these early editions that are beginning to spread throughout the professional

sphere rife with inaccuracies and “misinterpretations,” they “also present rather ‘romanticized’ readings of earlier works, having altered or ‘enriched’ the text with their own incorporated performance directions... (Georgiou, 2012: 2).” Should things stand as they are, does that mean we will soon see a reversal in performance practice away from the historically informed performance to one of mere convenience? A rather terrifying supposition, I think. But let’s use this to bring in the library, which is also notably absent from both sides of the conversation.

**[CLICK]**

Among other things, the licensing issues of electronic sheet music are never raised, nor are the needs for long-term, secure digital file storage and preservation. Without consideration of these three central issues, the library’s ability to keep up with existing publishing and user practices is severely handicapped if not outright negated. Given our previously central role to both scholars and performers as a primary source for their printed music, this is a little surprising. Perhaps from this absence we can surmise that scholars and professionals alike increasingly see libraries as a store house for printed information, relics, perhaps, of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If so then in addition to the problems of electronic sheet music we also have an enormous image crisis on our hands. Among libraries, however, there is no doubt that as we progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> century we must become active players in the digital world of information, taking a central position at that. Given the needs outlined above, where does the library sit, and is there potential for us to take on a key role in the management of electronic sheet music?

Certainly.

Greg and Ana have offered us some ideas and outlined current activities in this vein. But is there something more we can do to move toward a model of electronic sheet music that not only meets the needs of scholars and professionals but that is also viable for libraries? I believe there

is. By now we have quite a bit of experience with e-book platforms. They offer much of the functionality demanded by professionals, the copyright protection required to promote the digital publication of scores still in copyright (and therefore current, critical editions) demanded by academics. The digital nature of these works should also permit the scholarly demand for accompanying texts, variants, and resources without diminishing the availability of performance scores required by professionals. As these e-book platforms also come from our vendors, they offer a relatively easy acquisitions process and hosting solution. Our current e-book platforms are by no means the perfect solution, but, I believe, they offer a starting point. Furthermore, as a community we have by now sufficient means to provide not only for the easy “findability” and one-stop-shopping beneficial to both groups, but also to advise on the preservation and maintaining access even as hardware and software develop. As an institution whose primary mission is to serve the information needs of scholars, educators, performers, and the public in full compliance with the law, no one is better situated for this task than the music library. This is the challenge that I offer the music library community: **[CLICK]** bring all parties to the table, academics, professionals, librarians, and even members of the technology field, to begin the conversation that will bring the diverse array of needs together to work towards a viable product that meets all constituent needs.

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