

Music Scholarship Online: Problems for Digital Musicology and a Potential Solution

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Paper Abstract

There has been significant interest in digital musicology lately. High-profile projects such as the “Transforming Musicology” project out of Goldsmith’s University of London and the “Marenzio Project” out of the University of Pennsylvania are revealing the benefits of utilizing technology for musicological research. Alongside these, institutions and libraries are digitizing their holdings at an extraordinary pace, which together provide unprecedented access to musicological resources and analyses. Out of this digital deluge arise issues of discoverability, interoperability, and authority. With each project determining its own methodologies for reporting and describing digital objects, there is no way for interested users to discover and search musical content across a number of potentially relevant digital collections and resources. Furthermore, there is no ready way for scholars to determine the quality of a particular digital resource.

Texas A&M University recently hosted a workshop that gathered musicologists, digital musicologists, and music librarians to discuss these issues. The group recommended that a new portal dedicated to music research should be built. Based on the successful model of the Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-Century Electronic Scholarship, this new portal would aggregate high-quality musical collections and resources, providing a formal method of evaluating the content of those collections and resources through traditional peer review. The new music portal will become a single-stop web resource for reliable, high-quality research. This paper describes the systemic problems for digital musicology, and presents a potential solution to them in a portal called Music Scholarship Online.