Music History Textbooks and Music Anthologies:
Navigating the Shift from Printed Books to Digital Resources

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Developments in electronic publishing are affecting music textbooks profoundly, with the print model that served for the last century giving way to the new digital environment. In this case, the differences between the old and new technologies are striking for the ways they affect the scope of content, the mode of presentation, and pricing. This paradigm shift warrants a comparison between the features of print and the benefits that digital technology offers for online textbooks, anthologies, course packs, and more, as music pedagogy moves into the twenty-first century.

The Print Paradigm and Its Limitations

A product of the last century of humanities publishing, music anthologies emerged as supplements to traditional music textbook, so that the authors could illustrate their in-line text examples with entire pieces for students to place the music in context. The music included in anthologies is mainly familiar works, which are available in various editions. The pieces associated with early music, especially the Middle Ages and Renaissance, are relatively short compared to the selections from later eras. Depending on the piece, a motet or madrigal can occupy fewer than ten pages, but sonatas and other larger forms are much longer. Chamber music and works for full orchestra can occupy dozens of pages. Since print space is costly, difficult choices have to be made, and this limits content. The resulting collection of 100 to 125 pieces to support a single text is nonetheless a substantial publication print, and some publishers

have opted to issue their anthologies in multiple volumes. Each additional volume increases the cost of print and, ultimately, passed to students.

When assembling print anthologies, publishers often reproduce existing, published music to save production costs, and while this is convenient for typesetting, it poses challenges for instructors and students. When print anthologies reproduce existing music, imperfections transfer into print. The result is an expensive bound book that often looks like a collection of photocopies.

These variations in resolution and clarity are an unnecessary barrier in printed anthologies that is also complicated by the variety of editorial styles that the student must learn in order to get to the music itself. At times C-clefs and various, older clefs are used; conventional barring is part of many editions, but in some cases *Mensurstrich* is used with some styles of early music, with the editorial barlines between the staves (rather than over them) to reflect the unbarred style of the original notation. In addition to old clefs, some editions use mensuration signs and earlier styles of meter signatures. Other elements, like key signatures are similar, with old notational styles printed alongside editions that use modern conventions. This should not be a problem for trained musicians, but it is important that instructors gauge the abilities of their students when they use the print anthologies. Naturally, teaching moments exist with any publication, but the cacophony of editorial styles is a serious consideration when evaluating music anthologies.

The resulting anthology is a selection of pieces that instructors can use to explore with their students various concepts in tandem with the textbook. Even here, print has limitations. As a pedagogical tool, the rigid organizational scheme of the print anthology locks in the order to match the author's intentions, and limits the instructors' use of the music pieces to serve the

purpose of the textbook author and not necessarily the goals of the course, let alone the needs of students. Instructors are essentially tied to the method of presentation found in print, without much leeway to deviate from the textbook.

While it is possible to work around it, the hegemony of the required print textbooks and anthologies suggests adherence to the contents, especially after students invest in these often expensive publications. After all, print anthologies have become increasingly expensive in recent years, with the potential of causing each student to spend hundreds of dollars for a single course. In some instances, faculty experience significant pushback from students because of the increasingly high cost of textbooks, and this affects the perception of the faculty's effectiveness. This is an unfortunate consequence of print culture that needs to be addressed in the digital world, since advances in technology provide increased enhancements at significantly lower costs. Technology can also solve the issue of limited accessibility. Even if some programs make texts available in libraries, the reserve copy serves only one student at a time, not the multiples of concurrent users possible with electronic textbooks.

Opportunities in the Digital Paradigm

Given the limitations of print, it is easy to envision the needs of the music history textbook and anthology in the digital milieu. Each of the features found in print can be surpassed electronically, with additional benefits of lower costs to students and greater accessibility. Thus, the limited number of specific selections found in print can give way to a large amount of material online. Even the searching tools online are more sophisticated than the relatively simple table of contents and, when included, index found in print. The materials themselves also differ online. Ideally, the materials should not merely be facsimiles of print editions, but newly edited

and clean, so that issues of notational style and graphic resolution are resolved with consistent and uniform content. More than that, the entire contents should be available to view and print, so that students can work easily with the materials.

In the digital world, the publisher also has the option of making the online textbook fully customizable. The option is not just to have a lot of material available, but to provide instructors with the means to choose pieces, order them, and revise the organization, as needed. The ideal in music should match the models in other disciplines, like the Harvard Business School's site that allows instructors to create, maintain, modify, and revise course packs derived from the vast amount of material it contains. This is one of several models that need to be incorporated into the digital humanities in this crucial shift from print to online publishing. As a result, the textbooks in the digital world can offer newly written articles by a variety of experts instead of single-author texts with a solitary viewpoint. Instructors are then able to choose the materials that they need and allow their students to benefit from multiple viewpoints found in the wide selection of materials that they can use, as needed, in custom course packs.

At the same time, publishers of digital textbooks include pre-made course packs that the instructor can use off the shelf, as it were, in order to save time when they adopt the online text for their teaching and yet are still able to customize them for their students. The pre-set courses are an important means of access for instructors who might not have a depth of experience to build course packs on their own. It is essentially an aid in developing the curriculum that guides students to materials they need. The time saved by using pre-made course packs allows instructors to focus on their students, something that does not happen in the print environment, when instructors sometimes need to compensate for the shortcomings of physical books.

Instructors can also incorporate online materials from those course packs easily into the various online learning management systems, like Blackboard, Angel, and others.

The digital world also involves a website in which instructors can invite their students directly to their course-pack, thus bypassing the old-fashioned and sometimes arcane logistics of bookstore inventories that are ultimately dependent on the delivery of physical materials to a brick-and-mortar building. Instead, the digital textbook is not limited to its physical space and, instead, lives wherever students have access to the Internet. For the required courses that are so important in various programs, this allows students to have in-depth access that can result in a deeper knowledge of the content and deeper immersion in the courses they are taking.

Digital Textbooks and the Digital Humanities Library

While individual faculty adoptions of the digital textbooks occur, the online textbooks can be available by library site license, so that entire communities in higher education have similar access to these important publications. Here the digital world surpasses print in reaching entire communities simultaneously. After all, any reserved textbook can be viewed by one student at a time, and so the time it takes for a class to use a book or even a set of reserved books is a factor to consider. In the online world, if properly configured, any number of students can use the textbooks simultaneously, without restrictions that hinder use. Optimally the digital textbooks in music are resources that will enhance the rich collections of materials in the digital humanities. Librarians should be able to assist faculty and students in making the best use of materials to assist teaching and learning, something that is rare in the passive world of print. This is part of the vision for the digital humanities recently discussed by the ALA in its journal *American Libraries*. In this new digital paradigm, libraries can gain additional prominence in

music programs by offering materials that benefit its communities because of the ways in which digital textbooks build on the native creativity of faculty and the innate curiosity of students. The resulting centers of digital learning restore the library to the intellectual core of the humanities, as librarians curate digital texts and raise the bar on not only content, but also the technological acumen that is essential in the twenty-first century and beyond.