Open Access Archives in the Music Classroom: Examining Primary Sources and Information Privilege

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“Music Information Literacy” Course
Music students at Chapman University are required to complete a zero-credit, seven-week course with the Performing Arts Librarian. In this course, students learn about searching, understanding, evaluating, and ethically using music resources for their performance needs and scholarly pursuits.

One week of this course is dedicated to primary documents, in which we discuss the nature and importance of primary sources as well as how to use them.

Open Access Archives and Discovery Tools (Selected)
- National Libraries
  - Single Composer archives:
    - Digital Mozart Edition
    - Chopin’s First Editions Online
    - Haus Bonn Digital Archives
  - Large music archives:
    - Europeana (Searches many European archives)
    - Digital Resources for Musicology
    - Juilliard Manuscript Collection
    - Henk Fres Home Collection
    - Music Treasures Consortium (Lib. of Congress)
    - Digital Commons (Chapman University)
  - Local digital collections:
    - Henri Temianka Archives (Chapman University)
    - Tools to search music archives:
    - Digital Resources for Musicology
    - Online Resources for Music Scholars (Harvard)
    - Large music archives:
    - Juilliard Manuscript Collection
    - Music Treasures Consortium (Lib. of Congress)
    - Single Composer archives:
    - Beethoven-Haus Bonn Digital Archives
    - Chopin’s First Editions Online
    - Digital Mozart Edition
    - National Libraries
    - Europeana (Searches many European archives)
    - Library of Congress Performing Arts Databases

Learning Objectives
- Recognize the importance of primary sources.
- What are the defining characteristics and types of primary sources? How are primary sources used in research?
- Imagine you were the first person to write a biography of Mozart. How would you do it?
- Interact with Open Access Archival Resources.
- How are archives accessed today vs. decades ago? Who had access and financial means before archives became digital? How does this change who can write history?
- Broach the subject of information privilege.
- What kinds of sources can you find in open digital archives? How do you find the archives? How do you search or browse them? How do you navigate the different interfaces?

Assignment: Primary Sources
Task 1: Find a music manuscript online through a database.
Questions:
- Who is the composer?
- What is the title of the work?
- Provide a short, 2–3 sentence description of the manuscript. Is it a sketch? When was it written? Is it legible?
- Is there something interesting about it?
- What website or database did you use to find it?

Task 2: Find a digital correspondence from a composer or musician.
Questions:
- Who is the composer or musician?
- What is the letter or document about?
- What website or database did you use to find it?
- Summarize the content of the letter or document.
- At least two sentences.

Correspondence Example
In this letter from Chapman’s open access Henri Temianka Archives, Dmitry Shostakovich gives a highly detailed critique of a recent recording, led by Temianka, of his Symphony No. 14, Op. 135.

ACRL Framework application
- Information Has Value
  - Knowledge practice: Learners “recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources.”
  - Disposition: Learners “are inclined to examine their own information privilege.”
- Information Creation as a Process
  - Knowledge practice: Learners “access the fit between an information product’s creation process and a particular information need.”
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
  - Knowledge practice: Learners “identify interested parties, such as scholars, organizations, governments, and industries, who might produce information about a topic and then determine how to access that information.”
- Information Privilege

Information Privilege
- A definition from Chair Booth, author of Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning: Instructional Literacy for Library Educators:
  - “The concept of information privilege situates information literacy in a socio-cultural context of justice and access. Information as the media and messages that underlie individual and collective awareness and knowledge building; privilege as the advantages, opportunities, rights, and affordances granted by status and positionality via class, race, gender, culture, sexuality, occupation, institutional affiliation, and political perspective.”
- “In this class, students begin to consider their privilege and access to research materials as a result of their institutional affiliation. Not only does this help students better understand the context of scholarship, but also opens a discussion into sources available for lifelong learners or musicians who do not enter academia.”