

An Academic Music Library User Survey that
Guides Collection and Service Development

Research Proposal

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Executive summary

Should academic music libraries purchase print and physical music materials or invest in electronic database subscriptions? Are music students confident in their ability to navigate library catalogues and access music materials, or are they more likely to resort to non-library search engines, YouTube, and Wikipedia? Does information literacy instruction influence which tools and resources are preferred and used by university music students? These are some of the critical, but unanswered questions for academic music libraries. Although collection development and information literacy instruction are concerns that impact all music libraries, very little research has been done on this subset of library users. As music library resources evolve along with technological advances, the accompanying complexities inherent in accessing them may result in their underuse. A greater understanding of user experiences is required in order to ensure that academic music libraries are serving the needs of their patrons.

Because research about the information needs and behaviors of music library users has failed to keep pace with rapidly evolving technological advances, the proposed study will fill an urgent void. This research will examine the perspective of academic music library patrons. A survey will be administered to a representative sample of university music students in the United States. Questions will probe preferences and use of music library materials, formats, and search tools. Participants will rate levels of confidence and satisfaction as well as indicate whether they have attended a library workshop. Demographic information will be collected to ascertain the effect of certain characteristics on information needs and preferences. Analysis of the resulting data will indicate which music resources are needed by this population, and which formats are

preferred. Results will demonstrate whether students who have had information literacy instruction are more confident in the library and whether their confidence relates to preferences for and use of materials, search tools, and formats. Insights drawn from the proposed study will benefit all academic libraries housing music collections. With a better understanding of the information needs and behaviors of music students, librarians will be able to develop relevant collections, provide input in the creation of user-friendly library search tools, and tailor information literacy instruction to suit the needs of their patrons. Appropriate instruction will equip students with the skills necessary to access relevant collections and resources.

The research project will culminate in a scholarly article that includes charts, tables, and graphs to illustrate findings. Data derived from the research will be interpreted, and conclusions and recommendations drawn from the evidence will be valuable to academic, public, conservatory, and orchestral music libraries. Financial requirements include the salary of one professional consultant for a period of twelve weeks and the purchase of an online tool for data collection and analysis. Funding, in the amount of \$12,210, is requested from your agency to cover the cost of conducting the proposed research.

Introduction

The specific information needs of music library users include a wide range of music materials, which are available in a variety of formats, languages, and editions. The search and evaluation processes are complicated by the nature of the materials and the tools required to locate them. In addition to the complexities inherent in music resources, information needs and behaviors among this population have transformed dramatically in recent years due to technological advances. Search and navigation tools have evolved along with formats. The difficulties involved with navigating library catalogues may result in frustration and underuse by patrons. Is it therefore crucial to pinpoint preferred resources and to equip users with the skills necessary to access these materials.

The changing needs and behaviors of music library users impose significant implications to music library collections and services yet remain a largely neglected area of research. Existing studies focus on preferences for collection development, formats, and search tools. However, as yet there has been no attempt to draw together the variables identified in previous research into one study, or to examine the relationships between these variables. Also, since the existing research involves small, localized samples, findings are not generalizable to the larger population. The proposed research will survey a large array of university music students to understand these issues from a user's point of view. The study will also attempt to identify factors that influence student behaviors and attitudes toward music resources. This research will provide a valuable user-based perspective on academic music libraries. Findings will be relevant to all university music libraries, contributing insights regarding how well their collections are serving the needs of their patrons, why some resources are used or underused, and where

improvements can be made. Results will provide a basis for taking steps to better serve the evolving needs of this population of library patrons.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the information needs, usage patterns, and collection preferences of the general population of university music students from a user perspective. This study also aims to extend the scope of previous research by exploring factors that influence the information needs, usage patterns, and preferences of music students, including year and program of study, confidence levels in using search tools, and information literacy instruction. Findings of this study will advise academic music librarians in developing relevant collections, instruction, and search and navigation tools.

The proposed study will address the following three research questions that have not been answered in previous studies:

- Are university music library collections meeting the academic and performance needs of music students?
- Are students receiving adequate information literacy instruction to enable them to access library music resources?
- What factors influence the information needs, usage patterns, and preferences of academic music library users?

For the purposes of this study, academic music libraries are defined as music collections that support students of an institution of higher education. The term "university" encompasses colleges. Orchestral, public, and conservatory libraries are excluded. It is assumed that all academic music libraries contain a collection of music resources in a variety of formats, including electronic databases, online streaming media subscriptions, and physical and digital books, recordings, music scores, and journals.

Users are defined in this study as students enrolled in university music departments. Findings of the study will be limited to the perspective of matriculated university music students. This research will not consider the perspectives of faculty, who are also academic music library patrons, and who may have different perceptions regarding collection development, services, and the importance of music materials. Also, the proposed research relies on a survey, in which responses may or may not reflect actual usage and experiences.

Literature review

The existing scholarly research on the information needs and preferences of university music students includes very few studies. Lai and Chan (2010) survey students and faculty of the Hong Kong Baptist University Music Department about their information needs, the frequency of their use of library music resources, their satisfaction with the current collection, and their collection development preferences. Users express the need for music scores, multimedia materials, books, and journals, as well as improvements in multimedia facilities and services (p. 68). Clark (2013) surveys performing arts students at Kent State University about their format preferences for library materials. Participants prefer print books and music scores, electronic access to journals and audio materials, and a mix of physical and virtual reference and video materials (p. 305). While results of these studies are useful to the universities at which they occurred, a larger sample is needed to produce generalizable findings.

Dougan (2012) surveys music students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to discover the frequency with which they seek music scores and recordings, what tools they use, how they learned about these tools, and frustration levels (p. 560).

Findings show that recordings are used more frequently than scores, and that music students use a range of library and non-library tools to search and access music resources. The author also finds that area and year of study play a role in information seeking behavior. The results of this study are limited by the low response rate and small sample size. The author specifically calls for a more widespread survey "to understand any wider patterns of music student behaviors" (p. 558).

Much of the scholarly literature on information needs of music students cites the difficulty involved in using library search tools as a factor in student use of music library resources. Lai (2013) finds that students do not find library materials convenient or easy to access (p. 204). Dougan (2014) suggests that library music collections are often ignored due to issues of "visibility, usability, and accessibility" (p. 586). Teachers and librarians express concerns that music students overlook valuable quality library resources in favor of YouTube and non-library search engines due to their ease of use (Dougan 2012, p. 566). In an observational study, Dougan (2015) reports that during the search process, university music students are equally likely to choose YouTube or library resources, but rarely refer to library subscription online streaming tools (p. 66). These studies suggest that confidence levels in using search tools influence usage patterns. However, none of these studies encompass a large population across multiple universities.

Existing studies have alluded to the importance of information literacy for music students. Lai's (2013) survey links information literacy with usage patterns. She argues that only with an "understanding of the library's collection and the learning of effective search strategies, library users will find the optimal balance while making selections between paid content resources acquired by the library and the publicly contributed

materials disseminated on the Internet" (p. 213). Dougan (2012) finds a correlation between information literacy instruction and lower frustration levels (p. 566). Abromeit and Vaughan (2002) report student satisfaction with an information literacy program (p. 650). Findings, however, are limited by small sample sizes. These studies do not yield generalizable evidence showing that information literacy instruction affects music students' use of and satisfaction with library music resources.

A review of the literature on the information needs and behaviors of university music students reveals a gap. There have been no widespread studies on information needs and usage from a user perspective that encompass music students from multiple universities. Although several researchers have studied user preferences for materials, formats, and search tools, none of them have produced generalizable findings. No research has yet studied which music resources are most frequently used by the general population of music students, which are considered the most important, and which formats are preferred from a user-based perspective. Additionally, no previous research has provided generalizable evidence that links student characteristics to their information needs and preferences. The proposed research will fill a gap in the existing literature.

The proposed study is motivated by Lai and Chan (2010), Clark (2013), and Dougan (2012), who use surveys to capture university students' collection preferences, usage patterns, and perceptions of their music libraries. A survey instrument will also be used in this study. The role of the search process and information literacy, which are addressed in studies by Lai (2013), Dougan (2012; 2014; 2015), and Abromeit and Vaughan (2002), will be incorporated for a broader scope of understanding. This

study moves beyond the existing literature by examining the interplay between these variables, and attempting to draw general conclusions by studying a wider population.

Method

Research design

The proposed study will use a survey designed to ascertain information needs, usage, and preferences of university music students. The survey will include 13 questions regarding the frequency of use and importance of library music resources, preferences for formats and search tools, and levels of information literacy instruction, confidence and satisfaction. Demographic information will also be collected. Responses will help to answer the research questions. The instrument will be based on surveys created by Lai & Chan (2010) and Dougan (2012). However, this methodology innovatively incorporates the role of the search process and information literacy experience. A short introduction will inform participants of the purpose of the study and request consent. All responses will be anonymous, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. (Appendix A)

The assumption of the survey is that participants behave the way they say they do. Results will not be able to account for the possibility that users may say one thing and do another. The proposed research will therefore be limited to studying the qualitative attitudes and perceptions of academic music library users, rather than providing a quantitative measure of actual usage. A longitudinal study of the circulation of library physical resources and electronic databases, covering a large sample of universities, would produce generalizable information about usage patterns. Although this type of study would give quantitative evidence concerning the information behavior of music library patrons, it would not explain the reasons why patrons seek one type of resource

rather than another, whether they are satisfied, and the ease with which they are able to access these resources. An observational study of music library patrons would provide a rich view of information-seeking behaviors. However, the controlled environment required for this type of study may not be entirely natural, and may not replicate real life behaviors. Also, the small samples required by observational studies would render results that are not generalizable. Therefore, a survey is deemed the most appropriate method for obtaining generalizable findings about how music library patrons understand and experience using music resources.

A study examining the information needs and behaviors of university library students from the perspective of music teachers or librarians would be valuable. However, teachers and librarians may make assumptions about their students and patrons that may not necessarily be true. Also, this type of study could not explain the attitudes and preferences of the students. Therefore, this research will address these issues only from a student perspective. The assumption of this survey methodology is that students are good judges of their information needs. This study is consequently limited by the lack of experience and restricted frame of reference of music students.

Research designs employing unstructured interviews and focus groups uncover insights into how music library users think about their information needs and behaviors that are deeper than survey responses. However, this type of research necessarily involves a small sample. Although previous research using interviews and focus groups has pinpointed key issues, generalizable findings have not been produced. This study proposes to test these findings on a larger population by administering a survey among a wide range of university music students.

The most effective research design for achieving generalizable findings regarding the information needs and preferences of music students entails a widespread survey examining user experiences and attitudes. The final product will be presented in the form of a scholarly article. Components of the article will include an abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, limitations, findings, discussion, recommendations, and conclusion. The article will contain charts, graphs, tables, and figures to illustrate and summarize findings, as well as an appendix with the survey instrument.

Sample size and characteristics

The target population of the proposed study is all university music students in the United States. A variety of techniques will be used in order to obtain a sample that represents this population. As a starting point, the proposed study will use Sugimoto's (2008) sample selection. The universities selected for Sugimoto's research on reference transactions in academic music libraries include music libraries that are separate from the main library and have at least one full-time music librarian. Since the proposed study is interested in student views regarding music library resources and the role of information literacy instruction, the attributes of students who are enrolled in the universities selected by Sugimoto make them uniquely suitable for the present study. The lack of a separate music library or a music librarian could affect measures of usage, preferences and attitudes. The role of information literacy would be inappropriate in libraries without a music librarian on staff. To avoid skewed results it is necessary to exclude these variables. Sugimoto's sample, therefore, provides an ideal foundation for the present research.

Sugimoto consults the membership list of the Association for Research Libraries to identify the major academic music libraries in the United States. The Music

Association Membership Handbook and the listserv of the Music Library Association reveal additional academic music libraries. The websites of these libraries are then analyzed to isolate those that mention a music collection within an arts library or housed separately, and have a music librarian on staff. The final list comprises a total of 128 US academic music libraries that are separate from the main library and have at least one full-time music librarian. (pp. 11-12)

The proposed study will draw a representative sample from the 128 US academic music libraries identified by Sugimoto (2008). A combination of stratified and cluster sampling will be used to obtain a viable subset to analyze. The National Center for Education Statistics website will be consulted to categorize the 128 music libraries by size and financial status. Several geographic regions containing universities of varying size and financial status will then be identified. The choice of different geographical areas will address the issue of regional bias. The sample will include all universities from the selected geographical regions. This sample will be representative of all university music students in the nation, and findings of the proposed study will be generalizable to the entire population. However, there will be no guarantee of participation by all students at the selected universities, which may lead to biased results.

The music departments of the selected universities will be contacted in order to obtain informed consent and to solicit cooperation. They will receive a letter describing the purpose and benefits of the study. They will be requested to endorse the study and to encourage participation by offering incentives, such as earlier access to grades. A copy of the survey instrument will be provided.

Data collection and analysis

Data will be collected from an online survey based on those created by Lai & Chan (2010) and Dougan (2012). In order to produce valid findings, the survey will be designed to answer the research questions. Reliability issues will be addressed by asking questions that do not depend on mood or situation, asking multiple questions targeting the same concept, and collecting demographic measures to determine whether the answers are representative of certain subsets of the population. Responses will be closed-ended to avoid unclear or neutral results. Participants will be asked about their preferences, needs, use frequency, satisfaction, and confidence with regard to music library resources and search tools. Information literacy instruction will also be addressed. Frequency, importance, and satisfaction responses will be rated on a scale. Responses to questions concerning demographics and preferences for materials, formats and search tools will be selected from a list. The 13-question survey will be short, clear, and concise to encourage participation and produce unambiguous results. A pre-test will be conducted to ensure reliability and validity. Revisions will then be considered.

Data collection and analysis will take place through the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher will store the data on a laptop computer and on a hard drive for a period of 7 years. Analysis of survey results will be based on procedures utilized by Lai & Chan (2010). Quantitative demographic results, collection development preferences, and levels of information literacy instruction will be illustrated in tables. The use frequency and format preferences of different types of music materials and search tools will then be analyzed. Findings that indicate a significant percentage of positive or negative responses will be presented in tables. Comparisons of confidence, satisfaction, and information literacy levels will be shown in a bar chart.

The data will then be analyzed and interpreted to discover correlations between the variables. Regression analyses will be used to determine associations between satisfaction, confidence, and information literacy levels. The study will also seek to uncover relationships between information literacy and search tools used. Year and area of study will be examined for any links to format, resource, or search tool preference. Significant findings derived from the data will be summarized verbally, and illustrated in graphs.

The research questions will be addressed by interpreting the survey results. The preferences, satisfaction levels and behaviors reported by participants will indicate whether academic music libraries are meeting the needs of their patrons. Data will indicate whether information literacy instruction is related to satisfaction, confidence, and choice of search tools. The relationship of demographic characteristics to certain preferences and behaviors will provide a deeper understanding of this population. Logical conclusions will be drawn from the evidence and implications for the larger population of academic music libraries will be discussed. Conclusions founded on evidence of the proposed study will provide a basis for collection and service development in all academic music libraries. For example, if findings indicate that format preferences are related to confidence with search tools and information literacy instruction, an appropriate response might involve developing better search tools and providing additional instruction. The data may also pinpoint a year or area of study where a lack confidence with accessing library resources could be addressed by providing additional library workshops. This research will provide a critical foundation on which to base

decisions regarding the future of academic music libraries. Conclusions would also be relevant to the broader range of public, conservatory, and orchestral music libraries.

Request for funding

Funds are requested to finance the proposed research. Requirements for this study include an online survey tool. The cost of a one-year subscription to IBM's SPSS Standard product is \$2,610. The staffing for this study consists of one professional consultant, valued at \$200 per hour. According to the research timeline (Appendix B), the cost of the professional consultant required for this research is estimated to be \$9,600. (The lapse of time between the administration of the survey and the receipt of responses is included in the timeline, but will not incur any costs.) Based on the cost of staffing and the necessary software, your agency is requested to fund the proposed project for **\$12,210**.

Summary

The proposed project will attempt to answer critical questions regarding how patrons use and experience academic music libraries. Based on themes suggested by the findings of previous studies, this research goes a step further by examining a representative sample of all university music students. Conclusions will provide a foundation for developing relevant collections, creating user-friendly search and navigation tools, and providing information literacy instruction tailored to suit the individual characteristics of music library patrons. Findings will benefit all libraries housing music collections. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the music information environment and the lack of research on this subset of library users, the proposed study is essential for gaining an understanding of the current situation regarding music resources.

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APPENDIX A - Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take our survey. Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of this survey is to gather feedback from music students regarding their use of and satisfaction with music library collections. Your input is highly appreciated and is useful in helping us understand the information needs of university music students. All responses will be kept confidential and used anonymously for collection and service development purposes. This survey will take you less than 5 minutes.

1. **How often** do you use the following library materials for academic and performance needs?

Books on Music	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Music Scores	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Journals	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Recordings	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never

2. **How important** are the following library materials to your academic and performance needs?

Books on Music	Very important	Important	Little importance	Not important
Music Scores	Very important	Important	Little importance	Not important
Journals	Very important	Important	Little importance	Not important
Recordings	Very important	Important	Little importance	Not important

3. How often do you use the following types of library **music scores**:

Full scores, mini scores <i>(e.g. orchestral full score of a Brahms symphony)</i>	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Piano reduction scores/parts <i>(e.g. Piano accompaniment part & violin solo part of Berg's violin concerto)</i>	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Ensemble/chamber music parts <i>(e.g. instrumental parts of a string quartet)</i>	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Solo parts <i>(e.g. Mozart piano sonata, Bach cello suite)</i>	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never

4. Please indicate your **format preferences** for the following:

Books on music	Print	Electronic	No preference
Music scores	Print	Electronic	No preference
Music journals	Print	Electronic	No preference

5. Please indicate your format preferences for **recordings**:
(Check one)

- Physical CDs and DVDs**
- Library online streaming media**
- No preference**

6. Do you use the following to **find music scores or recordings**?
(Check all that apply)

- Library catalog**
- Non-library search engine** (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.)
- Amazon**
- Wikipedia**
- YouTube**
- Other**

7. How often do you use a **non-library online source** (such as Amazon) to find a score or recording, and **then use the library catalogue** to see if the library has the item?

- Frequently** (more than 50% of the time)
- Sometimes** (25% to 49% of the time)
- Rarely** (24% of the time or less)
- Never**

8. How confident are you in your **ability to access** the following types of **library resources**:

Books on music	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use
Print music scores	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use
Electronic music scores	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use
Electronic journals	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use
CDs	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use
DVDs	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use
Online streaming media	Very easy	Easy	Hard	Very hard	Never use

9. How satisfied are you with the **content coverage** of the following **library resources**:

Books on music	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use
Print music scores	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use
Electronic music scores	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use
Music journals	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use
CDs	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use
DVDs	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use
Online streaming media	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Never use

10. Which materials would you like your library to **purchase more** of? (Number in order of preference)

- Books on music**
 Music scores
 Music journals
 CDs
 DVDs
 Online streaming database subscriptions

11. Please indicate if you have attended a **library workshop**:

- Never**
 Once
 More than once
 Don't know

12. Which of the following describes your **current status** in the Music Department?

- BA, year 1 or 2**
 BA, year 3 or above
 Master
 PhD

13. Which of the following best describes your **field of study** in the Music Department?

- Music performance**
 Music education
 Music history/musicology
 Composition/theory
 Other

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APPENDIX B - Research Timeline

Week	Objective	Related tasks	Expected completion date
1	Identify study sample	Consult Music Association Membership Handbook and listserv of Library Association Compile initial list Analyze websites on list for separate music collection and music librarian on staff Categorize libraries by university size & financial status Categorize libraries by geographical region Compile final sample	Week 1
2	Communicate with music departments of universities chosen for sample	Explain purpose of study, describe survey and procedures, request consent/participation/endorsement, discuss incentives, and agree on timing of survey	Week 4
3	Create survey with SPSS	Decide on wording and order of questions Conduct pre-test Do revisions	Week 4
5	Prepare survey administration to selected sample	Communicate with music departments Ensure correct timing	Week 6
	GAP	WAIT FOR RESPONSES	
7	Analysis of data with SPSS	Create relevant tables, charts, graphs, and figures	Week 8
9	Interpretation of analyses with respect to research questions	Derive points for discussion from data Draw conclusions from evidence	Week 10
11	Preparation of final paper	Write and submit article	Week 12