



Finding Sound and Score: A Music Library Skills Module for Undergraduate Students



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ABSTRACT

Music students need library search skills to find music resources of scores and sound recordings for study, repertoire selection and performance practice. This article describes the design and evaluation of a Blackboard eLearning module, *Music Library Instruction Module* based on a music information literacy standard 2, accessing needed information effectively and efficiently. The module supported students' development of skills in catalog searching to find music resources. The learning achievements of 25 participants were evaluated using a pre-test–post-test method. Post-test results had an increase between scores of 15% and statistical significance ($t = 4.75$; $p < 0.001$) to support the hypothesis that students demonstrate higher performance in search skills after interaction with the module.

The *Music Library Instruction Module* was successful as an eLearning treatment in instructing library search skills to find music resources however additional instruction is needed when searching by major composer and subject headings. This study has practical implications in the design and assessment of music information literacy programs in the eLearning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Music students work in a unique landscape of information. They need to navigate a complex network of printed music and sound recordings as a part of their formal study of music and performance practice. In addition, they need to be able to access and select music as professional musicians and performing artists. To prepare for their musical careers, students must learn how to make the best use of relevant resources for music research and performance practice and therefore it is crucial for them to develop information literacy skills (i.e., skills in utilizing information effectively and efficiently) for successful studies.

The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) is a prominent, world-renowned training institution in performing arts at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Australia. Music disciplines and performance degree studies include classical, jazz, contemporary, music theater, composition, music technology and music education. Teaching information literacy skills to music students is challenging, as the primary objective of music studies is the practice and performance of music.

The ECU Library continually strives to find ways to instruct students, and there is a constant challenge to accommodate information literacy skills development into the curriculum.

A solution to this challenge was to incorporate information literacy skills learning into music courses with an online tutorial, *Music Library Instruction Module*. Created in the Blackboard learning management system, the module was designed in accordance with competency standards created by the Music Library Association (MLA) (Cary & Sampsel, 2006) which in turn are based on the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* by the Association of College and Research Libraries (2000). ACRL has subsequently approved a new guiding document, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (ACRL, 2015). For this project, the music information literacy outcomes were based on MLA standards (2006) with future revisions of the module to be adapted to the new framework as advised by the MLA.

As a first step in a larger initiative, the *Music Library Instruction Module* specifically focuses on search skills to locate music scores and sound recordings in the library collection. When compared to other students, using the library catalog is a different user experience for the music student because of the unique characteristics of music in a library collection (Sampsel, 2014). Search skills are but one aspect of information literacy that music students need to have for their studies and practice as musicians. Although there are many studies discussing information literacy instruction in higher education, few studies have explored

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information literacy skills specifically targeting music students delivered online by a learning management system. In this article, we examine how the online module impacts music students' searching skills specifically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MUSIC STUDENTS AS LIBRARY USERS

As library users, music students are non-traditional researchers, as their primary role is the practice and performance of music for study and repertoire development. Finding music is ongoing and the selection of music depends on the need or activity, performance requirement and individual playing technique (Thompson, 2012; Zanin-Yost & Reitz, 2014). Music students learn skills in how to find music from their peers and music teachers, and have individual experiences in searching for music resources within and outside the traditional library (Edwin, 2006; Gardinier, 2004; Inskip, MacFarlane, & Rafferty, 2008; Maple, Christensen, & Abromeit, 1996; Myers, 1995). Music students may be familiar with a genre or repertoire and the evaluation skills and criteria used to select an edition, format or sound recording may have been gained from past experiences (Dougan, 2015). Music students undertaking scholarly work will search for composers; performance students will find repertoire for their instrument or voice; music education students find music according to levels of playing difficulty; ensembles seek music arrangements by instrumentation; and music listeners search for a performer or performance (King, 2007; Myers, 1995; Thompson, 2012).

Music students need an understanding of the music information cycle between primary and secondary sources; the primary transition of notation from sound to print; the flow of music from a musician to the public from the composers' compositional idea via the performance, to the formation of secondary information sources as reviews, analysis and scholarly publications about the work (Christensen, 2004). Information literacy is different for the music student who requires conceptual and critical thinking skills to locate, disseminate and evaluate the traditional sources for music study as well as skills to work with music formats for performance practice and musical analysis. Once established, these skills are of lifelong benefit to the musician and their professional music career (Christensen, 2004; Dougan, 2012; Maple et al., 1996; Pierce, 2005).

THE PROBLEM WITH FINDING MUSIC: MUSIC IS NOT A BOOK

The inherent characteristics of printed music and sound recordings are different to a book in terms of how it is published, organized, and retrieved. Music is an "intellectual sonic conception" whereby an individual work transforms over time into different forms or instantiations: a composition, improvisation, performance or documented sound recording (Smiraglia, 2001, p. 1). A single work can be known by more than one title (e.g., generic, proper, distinctive, popular), and be published in different editions, languages, arranged for different instruments, in different keys and performance levels, printed in multiple physical formats and recorded as individual performances (Gardinier, 2004; Smiraglia, 2002). When compared to authors, composers are more prolific in their published works and collaborate with other composer/s, arrangers, recording artists, librettists and producers (King, 2007; Myers, 1995).

In a library context, music libraries need to accommodate the diverse physical formats of music as print and sound. Music is cataloged as a non-book material and the successful search and retrieval of an item depends on the bibliographic description and classification system used to identify it. In addition to physical format differences, music titles are complex and the access point of 'uniform title' is used specifically to identify a work and its manifestations (Smiraglia, 1989). For example at ECU Library, music items are cataloged using *Uniform Titles in Music*,

Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd edition (AACR2) and *Library of Congress Subject Headings* for music materials; and they are classified according to the *British Catalog of Music* (BCM).

MUSIC INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMS

As previous studies show, a common approach is to use general or subject-specific competency standards to frame information literacy instruction (Neely, 2006) and this approach has been widely documented, for example Leonard and McCaffrey (2014) and Tumbleson and Burke (2013). The music field is a discipline-specific area of information literacy and a formalized set of standards, performance indicators and outcomes for undergraduate music students has been established by the MLA (Cary & Sampsel, 2006). The literature has noted few examples of incorporating information literacy standards into the design of music programs for students (Cornwell, 2006; Scott, 2013; Zanin-Yost & Reitz, 2014), however the competency-based approach is common practice in general information literacy programs as discussed in Diller and Phelps (2008) and Emmett and Emde (2007).

In the field of music information literacy, the literature offers definitions, course design and program models, exercises and class activities and the challenges of course-integration and embedded library programs (Beutter Manus, 2009; Christensen, 2004; Cipkin, 2003; Pierce, 2005; Scott, 2013; Shaw, 2013; Vaughan & Abromeit, 2004). Research on information seeking behaviors of music students has investigated the interconnectivity between information literacy and information seeking and the benefits of effective search and evaluation skills in the early years of formal music study (Dougan, 2012). A recent study, also by Dougan (2015) examined user search behavior and user choice of a library catalog and/or use of Google and YouTube to find a specific music item. There were few instances of the design and evaluation of music information literacy programs specifically written for the online environment using a learning management system (Cipkin, 2003; Neufeldt, 2011).

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMS

There is extensive literature on the assessment and evaluation methods, approaches, tools, tests, surveys and data analysis used to measure the effectiveness and suitability of information literacy and library instruction programs (Radcliff, Jensen, Salem, Burhanna, & Gedeon, 2007). Programs and learning outcomes must be evaluated from a research based perspective and are best measured by combining formative and summative evaluation methods (Schilling & Applegate, 2012; Tancheva, Andrews, & Steinhart, 2007). There are notable examples of using the ACRL competency standards as a framework for program assessment and evaluation such as: Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills), the Information Literacy Test (ILT) developed by James Madison University (JMU) Library and web-based Augustana Student Survey Assessment of Information Literacy (Center for Assessment and Research Studies, 2015; Kent State University, 2015; University Of Alberta, 2010). As test instruments, these exams measure information literacy skills of individuals or groups against cross-institutional benchmarks, and are beneficial for strategic planning and delivery of information literacy programs.

The ECU Library's *Music Library Instruction Module* is an optional eLearning course written specifically for music students and therefore any data gathered to evaluate the module and assess the skills instructed is limited to the number of enrolled participants. With this in mind, the course design and evaluation methods used by Hufford (2010) and Emmett and Emde (2007) were most suited to this project. A relationship was established between the information literacy standard, course objectives and the module evaluated by applying a backward design method to formulate pre- and post-test questions.

In summary, the reviewed literature has established that the inherent nature of music presents challenges when in a library collection

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