

FROM SCHOLAR TO USER: HYBRID EDITIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF LIBRARY RESOURCES (ROUNDTABLE)

**Eleanor Selfridge-
Field**

CCARH, Stanford
University
esfield@stan-
ford.edu

Second author

**Retain these fake authors in sub-
mission to preserve the formatting**

Third author

Affiliation3
author3@xyz.edu

ABSTRACT

The value of the Music Encoding Initiative (MEI) is ultimately linked to the preparation of current and future critical editions of music. This roundtable investigated the cautious response of library users upon the initial appearance of the new hybrid format in which critical notes are hyperlinked to sources, the whole constituting a companion to a full-scale paper score. What exactly provoked the objections of some? More broadly, how and why do the perspectives of editors, librarians, and technical experts—long accustomed to pursuing common goals—differ? How are librarians' views related to their institutional circumstances?

1. INTRODUCTION

MEI occupies an intermediate position in a long chain of activities that begins and ends with a notated musical work. Those seeking to create a new critical edition will customarily identify all the necessary sources, collect images of them (if possible), study underlying texts of vocal or operatic pieces, and assemble a best reading for later publication. To ward off future objections concerning their editorial choices, they will also prepare a critical report containing comments on the sources, variants in both text and music, a list of editorial interventions, and notes on any other details required by a reader eager to reconstruct in his mind a virtual image of an underlying source. Some works present very few issues, while other generate a cacophonous corpus of disparate sources. In large measure, critical reports are invisible to the average user. Traditionally they have appeared in a separately bound book. Subscription rates lag printed-score purchases by the ratio (when last sampled) of 1:12.

The close relationship between scholars, technologists, and publishing houses is not accidental: the German government has a long tradition of generous funding for every phase of the editing process—the evaluation of sources, the collection of images, the preparation of scores and

commentaries, and, finally, the publication of the “best version” of the work and the commentaries. Professional performing organizations provide some of the revenue for these editions when they rent parts for performance. The ability to produce parts efficiently is therefore an essential part of the publication process.

Although a cultural template exists for similar financial support in other European countries, it is largely absent in North America for two reasons. (1) No serious effort to publish new critical editions is visible apart from the efforts of A-R Editions, Inc., which has a different kind of refined relationship to technology. (2) Little support is available for the time required to explore sources, draft and edition, or compile a critical report. Here the C.P.E. Bach edition might be cited as the outstanding exception: preparation costs and editorial time are compensated by the Packard Humanities Institute (a charitable foundation), which produces and distributes the works (at minimal cost) in hardbound editions. In both cases, parts are available on demand. For further background information see [1].

2. THE HYBRID EDITION MODEL

A satirical opera from 1786, Antonio Salieri's *Prima la musica, poi la parola*, was the first work to be published in a fully hybridized edition. It was published by Bärenreiter Verlag on the strengths of its merits and, in particular, because of the complex ontology of the work. It is also a model for the series of hybrid opera editions called *OPERA: Spectrum of European Music Theatre in Separate Editions* [*Spektrum des europäischen Musiktheaters in Einzeleditionen*].¹ Similarly it is in publishing terms a test case for runs of complete critical editions of the works of several other composers including Gluck and Carl Maria von Weber.

The immediate reception of the new edition (issued late in 2013) was dichotomous. In Germany it was proclaimed to be an extraordinary model of both scholarship and of new ways of presenting it (see [2, 3]). In contrast, on the

¹ The 21 compositions in the series variously spring from French, Italian, German, English, Scandinavian, and Slavic traditions. They span a range of genres (for some of which no models of editorial practice exist)

including ballet, theater music, melodrama, and operetta. Those interested in the titles will find them at <https://www.baerenreiter.com/en/program/complete-editions/opera/list-of-volumes/>.

mailing list of the [US] Music Library Association (MLA) it was scorned for the inscrutable nature of the physical product containing the critical commentary. (This is described in Bärenreiter’s announcements as “a data carrier containing the libretto, the sources and the complete score [among which] the multiple connections create a new working basis for scholarship and operatic praxis”).

The main points of initial dissent concerned (1) the copy restrictions, which prohibited loading the critical report onto a network or allowing it to be viewed by multiple users at the same time; (2) the danger of losing the physical medium containing digital content once it was separated from the associated score; and (3) the possibility that users unable to view the digital medium would ask to have the critical report printed by the library. In broad summary, the fundamental notion of a hybrid edition serving libraries adequately was challenged. This roundtable explored several other dimensions of opera publishing in digital and quasi-digital environments.

3. ROUNDTABLE OVERVIEW

The roundtable was organized to explore this difference of opinions with a view towards smoothing the path towards wide acceptance for future editions incorporating the commentaries based on MEI. Although negative reactions in the US came mainly from librarians, the source material on which critical editions is based normally resides in libraries. The hybrid model of publication separates filters editorial input through technologists who manage the digital details including the development and maintenance of the enabling software. Meanwhile the publishers are also in the unfamiliar situation of needing to communicate through the same technologists with the editors whose work is being featured. It seemed important to represent as many of these views as possible on the panel.

Six panelists, led by Norbert Dubowy, participated. Dubowy, a scholar of Italian opera, had just completed three years working with OPERA (he has since moved to the Mozarteum) and was an experienced user of MEI and TEI as well as a scholar familiar with *Prima la musica* and the editorial problems it presents. (The primary editor of the Salieri work and the general editor of the OPERA series is Thomas Betzwieser, who was not available for the 2014 roundtable but did present the project in the IAML/IMS meeting in New York in June 2015. See also [2, 3].) The panel was designed to present an array of professional perspectives to the issues and to balance comment between Europe and North America. The other participants were Mauro Calcagno (University of Pennsylvania), speaking on behalf of the Marenzio [online] edition; Douglas Woodfull-Harris, a senior editor at Bärenreiter, who answered questions but did not make a presentation;

Philip Ponella, head of the William and Gayle Cook Music Library at Indiana University; Daniel Boomhower, head of reader services in the music division of the Library of Congress; and Federica Riva, librarian of the Florence Conservatory and head of the Italian branch of the International Association of Music Libraries (IAML). The convener and moderator was Eleanor Selfridge-Field.

The panel was roughly divided to consider, first, the perspectives of “providers:”—originators of content and designers of delivery systems—and then to discuss the perspectives of “consumers”—institutions providing access to paper and digital resources.

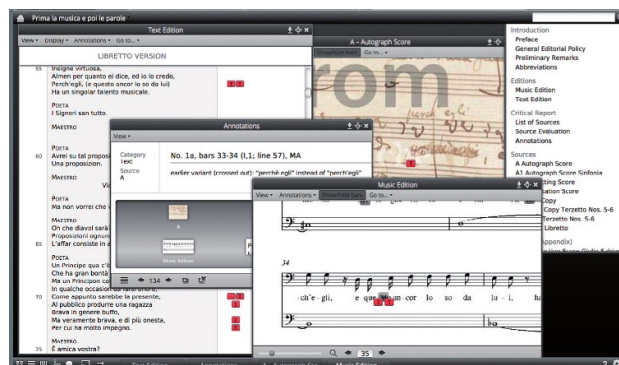


Figure 1. Selection of sources with critical markup in Edirom viewer. Materials shown pertain to the OPERA edition of Salieri’s *Prima la musica e poi la parola*.

4. PROVIDERS’ PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Norbert Dubowy: The Making of a Critical Edition

The core presentation was provided by Norbert Dubowy, a member of the OPERA team from 2011 to 2014. He has been involved in the use of the Edirom to coordinate sources, view them simultaneously, toggle between the libretto and the score, and various other operations necessary in the making of authoritative editions. See Figure 1. (For a more detailed account with and illustrations see [4].

Dubowy began with talk with eloquent observations on the pervasiveness of digital images in modern life. To illustrate his point that a hybrid digital edition (HDE) was a “bound book with a bonus CD”, he showed the score of *Prima la musica* and the plastic card (with USB connector) containing the critical report.¹ They were intended to be used together with access to images, texts, and commentary on a screen by someone consulting the score.

He termed the commitment of the OPERA series to the DHE model as a “response to initiatives in textual criticism.” In this particular series textual sources are of significant importance. The Edirom, originally designed for

¹ Other presentations made clear that it was the lack of explanation of this object, rather than the details of its content, that caused much of the uproar.

instrumental music and its sources, has been adapted by the Detmold-Paderborn team to better accommodate the needs of opera. The OPERA series aims to illustrate sources with a tangential relationship to an autograph manuscript. OPERA aims to research each work thoroughly from multiple perspectives. In some works (including *Prima la musica*) remnants of pre-existing works may be included in the final result. In this expanded definition of the purview of sources pertinent to a new critical edition, Dubowy mentioned in the passing the new possibilities the DHE might someday offer for the critical study of film traditions.

Turning his attention to the cost structures underlying the preparation of any critical edition, he noted the centrality of funding channeled from German taxation to support both research and labor costs. He noted at the outset of this topic that the price charged by publishers does not reimburse either of these revenue streams. In the process of acquiring copies of all the relevant sources, considerable expense is incurred by image acquisition, by fees (charged by libraries) for the use of these images, and sometimes by costs of travel to view images for which reproduction is not permitted. These expenses vary considerably from one work to the next. Some libraries charge for the use of photographs taken by editors or their student representatives. Total costs, when higher than originally estimated, cannot be renegotiated. While teaching at a Midwest (US) university several years ago Dubowy noticed that students had no appreciation of critical editions. To him the value of a DHE is that the clarity and easy availability of the underlying physical materials conveys an understanding of the “richness of the musical traditions” that a single work represents.

As for the work itself, four sources are of fundamental importance. *Prima la musica* has intertextual relationships with other works of the same era, chief among which is Giuseppe Sarti’s *Giulio Sabino*. In Figure 2 (1) shows Sarti’s cavatina “Pensieri funesti, ah no, non tornate” for the castrato Luigi Marchese a year before Salieri’s paraphrase in *Prima la musica*, as shown in a Czech source; (2) the transcription of the same piece in a manuscript with a Strasbourg watermark.



Figure 2. Two incipits for “Pensieri funesti” as shown in the RISM OPAC.

Other musical differences for this one piece, which was widely circulated, occur with respect to clef and key.

4.2 Mauro Calcagno: *Desiderata of an electronic mu*

Mauro Calcagno (University of Pennsylvania) and Giuseppe Gerbino (Columbia University) co-direct the [Marenzio Online Digital Edition \(MODE\)](#). MODE facilitates direct comparison of variants of printed works by the sixteenth-century composer. It relies on Aruspix software developed by Laurent Pugin [Figure 3]. Aruspix is an optical-recognition program optimized for music printed in mensural notation in the sixteenth century.¹ While acknowledging that musical textures were not as complex as those of later times, Calcagno praised the convenience of having online access to scores “rendered natively in a browser” in scalable vectors graphics. *Marenzio Online* aims to operate entirely within a digital environment. This will enable adjustment of attributions as new information becomes available. Variants can be collated prior to printing, if that pathway later proves desirable.

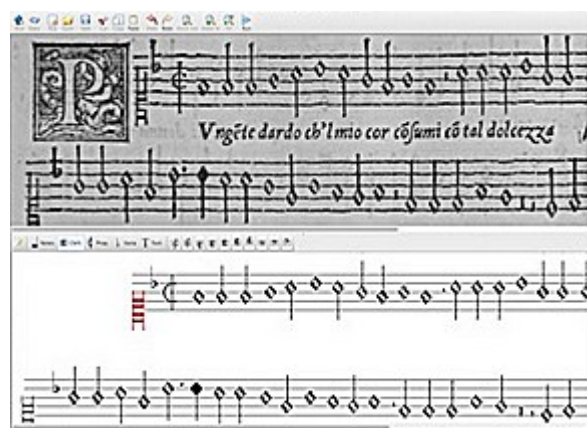


Figure 3. Aruspix’s pre- and post-recognition views of the same passage from a Renaissance partbook.

4.3 Woodfull-Harris: Access, Rights, and Permissions

Douglas Woodfull-Harris, a senior editor at Bärenreiter Verlag, did not give a formal presentation but illuminated some of the issues raised in the discussion on the basis of his own contributions to critical editions, particularly referring to the works of Debussy. In elaboration of a topic introduced by Dubowy, who praised the beauty of Bärenreiter editions of music, Woodfull-Harris ask who would published such editions if Bärenreiter ceased to provide them. He projected that research institutions would have to produce their own if publishers withdrew from the market. He pointed out that the OPERA series would take 10-15 years to produce and then noted that over a period of this length storage media would undoubtedly change.

Woodfull-Harris emphasized the degree to which holding libraries control access to sources and set the terms of access by editors. Large public libraries and small private ones operate in entirely different ways, which inevitably leads to different policies on access and use. As to which

OPERA could not be made available online, the manoeuvres necessary to secure rights to reproduce all the material online would undoubtedly raise the complexity of preparation and the costs quite considerably.

Among cases of reluctant owners, Woodfull-Harris cited a restriction on the use of the autograph of Debussy's "La Mer" which forbade naming the owners; an important collection of materials in the US for which queries are rarely answered; and a third instance in which it took two years to photographs of 14 pages. These obstacles and delays make the tasks of preparation unnecessarily tedious.

5. CONSUMERS' PERSPECTIVES

5.1 Philip Ponella: Digital editions in university libraries

Philip Ponella, head of the Indiana University School of Music Library, first described the user population of the library, which serves 1,600 music students, among which 40-50 are graduate students in musicology (a discipline in which Indiana University enjoys very high ratings). The library contains 120 computers. Students find it frustrating to be limited to one computer to use a specific resource which does not permit access by more than one person at a time. He cited "one-off" solutions (solutions that must be specially adapted to suit the circumstances) as imposing a significant inconvenience on both staff and potential users.

Further on the subject of the everyday texture of life in his library, he reported that his staff reduced the number of options (for the use of OPERA) to two: (a) leave at the reference desk ("which felt like 1994") or (b) make a copy of the Ediom and insert in a sleeve in the back of the score ("which invites illicit copying"). Online access would be greatly preferable to either because access would be available around the clock. Somewhat in line with Woodfull-Harris, he noted that any digital medium will be obsolete fairly quickly. Avoiding the use of ROMS of any kind offered advantages over the long term.

Ponella wished to make a clear distinction between distribution issues and content. He praised the "fantastic scholarship" that the OPERA series represented. He noted too that while students prefer online access for study, they want paper for performance. In theory hybrid editions could provide the best of both worlds. Authenticated online access would protect the publisher and serve institutions well.

5.2 Boomhower: Digital editions in public libraries

Speaking from the perspective of a large public library, Daniel Boomhower, director of reader services in the Music Division of the Library of Congress, echoed a number of concerns expressed above. He noted the inevitability of conflicts arising between commercial providers and the holders of the materials that form the foundation of their products. He cited other examples of material restricted from network access by institutional contracts. T

Boomhower observes that public libraries' roles as conservators can conflict philosophically with their responsibilities to third-party providers of material. To mark the anniversary of the start of World War I (1914-18) the Library of Congress scanned and placed online 13,000 pieces of sheet music from the era. (In all, it serves more than 200,000 digital items.) Because 99% of the material is in the public domain, it has limited need to seek permission from rights holders for this collection. Yet its archive of materials from the Alvin Ailey Dance Company (New York, US) restricts access on the wishes of the depositors. A collaborative project with the Glinka Museum (St. Petersburg, RU), which includes Rachmaninoff materials in the US, may not by the terms of the agreement be viewed other than on dedicated computers in the Music Reading Room.

Not all requests from prospective users can be honored, at least not easily. In one case the needs of a graduate student requesting photographs of all manuscripts pertinent to a planned critical edition could best be satisfied by in-house scanning, particularly when the materials are still in copyright. Charges for scanning can range from \$40 to \$80 a page. In general, the library's human resources are best protected by partnering with publishers planning such editions. A standard method for such collaboration could work to everyone's benefit but has yet to be devised.

5.3 Riva: Barriers to access in conservatory libraries

European conservatory (and private) libraries often hold materials that are of fundamental importance in the making of critical editions, but many are unable through lack of funding to acquire the fruits of researchers' labors. The Florence Conservatory offers a particularly dramatic example of institutions in this frustrating situation. The severe floods of 1966 caused the long-term closure of the library to the public. Over a period approaching a half century the purchase budget has been close to nil. To the administrators who must approve library purchases, digital materials being useless to the naked eye are deemed "invisible" and therefore worthless. While some acceptance of a single computer for accessing such "obscure" material might be recognized, it is difficult to produce consensus on the materials to which it should give access. (Italian conservatory libraries are also reluctant to make materials available to performers. In one recent instance, a string quartet was permitted to perform within the library in order to bring to life materials submitted to a competition of 1962.)

In broader terms Riva summarizes the situation in this way: "Financial resources (state or private) available to conservatory libraries are less and less, while the cost of technical requirements grows constantly. There is no standard in improving technologies, as the process depends on the general infrastructure and the legal environment of each country. The introduction of most advanced technologies in less organized structures may have contradictory outcomes.

“In some European and Latin American countries, conservatory libraries give access to a relevant musical heritage which is part of their own history. While digital publications are usually seen as a tool to give broader access to rare documents, governing bodies of institutions which experience difficulties in organizing library services onsite may see the digital option as a shortcut to avoid broadening of library services. A digital reproduction service may earn some financial resources from the heritage itself: if the process is not balanced, the historic library tends to be similar to a supermarket of digital images.

“While digital images provide access to content, the view that they fully capture the sources they reproduce is false. The potency of a musical heritage resides in originals. Scholars will continue to seek access to them. Preserving such access should be a condition of any digital project that is truly concerned with conservation. The scholarly-music community should share the ethical responsibility for the maintenance and correct use of both originals and their digital images.”

6. DISCUSSION

The open discussion brought additional perspectives to the fore. These are grouped topically, rather than in the order in which they were presented. We begin flowing out of the OPERA description.

6.1 Maintaining quality editions (on paper)

Dubowy called attention to the differences between commercial and non-commercial operations, maintaining the Bärenreiter’s scores maintain a standard of visual excellence that parallels the importance of the musical content. It inevitably commands a price that would not be justified for amateur endeavors. He acknowledged that “expensive” editions are entirely unavailable in many libraries.

Woodfull-Harris asked who would publish the kinds of critical editions Bärenreiter provides in the company’s absence. An entire infrastructure in which many skills are combined is required. Research institutions might have to produce their own editions but they would have to acquire much additional expertise in order to do it.

6.2 Funding of critical editions

Woodfull-Harris pointed out that both the research for and the publication of [European] critical editions are usually supported by state funding. (Further discussion of this and other aspects of the infrastructure supporting critical editions, and differences between Europe and North America are discussed in fuller detail in [1].)

6.3 Paper vs online editions

The need for printed editions will not decline because of the lack of viable alternatives for performance. Is it necessary to publish on paper for academic consultation? Does an exacting description of sources matter if source images are widely reproduced?

Woodfull-Harris noted that a “vast” number of owners do not permit online reproduction of their sources. Securing all the rights for online publishing would be a far more onerous job than getting permission to issue editions in print. Dubowy cited the large Lobkovitz collection (near Prague) as an example of ownership of important materials often found to be off-limits to musicologists. (The holdings are discussed briefly at <http://www.lobkowitz.cz/en/Music-22.htm>.)

Although the assumption is sometimes made that restrictive ownership is a “European” problem, Woodfull-Harris cited the University of Texas as among the most non-responsive to requests for access and reproduction. This is particularly a problem for French music because 90% of the sources are in the U.S. Even when libraries “comply” with requests, they can spend unconscionable amounts of time doing so. One example was cited in which two years elapsed. In another instance formal permission was not forthcoming but the material underlying intended use was available online (though not for reproduction in modern publications).

Regarding the future of storage media, he also observed that there was a high likelihood that physical media used in distribution (such as today’s USB ROMs) were likely to change over the 10-15 years projected for the completion of the OPERA series. The number of flash drives manufactured equals the number of volumes printed. Dubowy pointed out that the critical apparatus of *Prima la musica* (and other works in the series) is not merely a collection of digital images but instead a constellation of documents that collectively inform the score.

6.4 Library licenses and buying consortia

Ponella pointed out that access fees paid by music libraries are modest compared to those (up to \$40,000 per annum) in the sciences. Boomhower suggested the Italian conservatories pool their resources to make consortial purchases, e.g. with 20 libraries sharing 10 licenses.

Several participants called attention to situations in which national libraries have enabled smaller libraries to allow access to their sources. The Austrian National Library and the Library of Congress were both cited as leaders in such scenarios. (For a general commentary on the tradeoffs between all-paper and all-digital publications see [5]).

On a more philosophical level there was some questioning of the relationship between a paywall and the ideal of patrimony. It was generally concluded that European library practices need to be standardized so that editors and publishers can follow set agendas without significant obstacles or delays and without having to decode each situation from scratch. According to Riva, public use is too little valued. Permissions for the use of often consulted works could be handled adequately with standardized (common) agreements.

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