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Music and Dance Reference [Review]

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“Music & Dance Reference.” <http://lib.byu.edu/sites/musdanceref/> (accessed 8/1/11).

The Music & Dance Reference website is a compilation of several different features that are meant to accommodate needs of researchers in the performing arts. The site’s five components are in various stages of development and each uses a separate tool or platform to deliver content and to engage users with the project and with one another. An online bibliography—the crux of the undertaking and the most mature part of the site—is hosted through Brigham Young University’s (BYU) instance of CONTENTdm, along with many other digital collections created at BYU. In addition, the project employs a wiki, a blog, and a social networking group to “build and maintain a network of librarians and researchers interested in music and dance bibliography and reference” (<http://lib.byu.edu/sites/musdanceref/our-facebook-network/>). Despite the incorporation of these arguably emerged technologies, the site’s primary function is as a meta bibliography, a listing of music and dance bibliography and reference sources.

A blog serves as the homepage for the entire project. Along with the most recent feed entry, the homepage solicits both review copies and research assistance from the music and dance community. There are also links to relevant external sites and to saved searches in the bibliography that list free music e-journals, music reference e-books, digital collections, composer websites, and Internet portals. The site’s wiki component encourages users to submit unpublished bibliographic and reference works, teaching resources, and articles related to music and dance. The landing page is sparsely populated by contributions from BYU affiliates, and only two of the six links in the navigation bar lead to pages with any content at all. It appears that one who is interested in submitting content to the wiki must e-mail the site coordinator; perhaps the wiki would be more active if contribution guidelines were clearly posted and users could create an account on their own. The site also includes a list of unpublished bibliographies—current topics include composers, musical styles, and musical forms—by different authors with BYU ties.

The online bibliography puts a modern spin on Duckles’s *Music Reference and Research Materials* (New York: Schirmer, 1997), whose 5th edition was published fourteen years ago and included 3,500 titles. For that edition, one noted goal of editor Ida Reed was to make the resource selective as opposed to comprehensive. While the online bibliography does not declare a mission of citing all music and dance resources in existence, it does have technological, social, and cost-conscious advantages that were not available in the mid-1990s. A comparison of the online bibliography to Duckles’s work is natural to the user and purposeful for the site administrator; indeed, a paper about the BYU project was given by BYU staff as part of session titled “The Bibliography of Music Bibliography and Reference: Beyond Duckles” at the 2008 conference of the International Association of Music Libraries in Naples.

Originally, the content of the online bibliography was based on the print and electronic reference holdings of the Music & Dance Library at Brigham Young University. The scope of the bibliography covers bibliographies, thematic catalogs, and indexes of various foci, as well as dictionaries, encyclopedias, discographies, and chronologies. There are currently 6,500 items in the bibliography—nearly twice the amount as what appears in Duckles, 5th ed.—and one-fourth of the listed sources has some sort of annotation. Data for the online bibliography has been culled from OCLC and individual library catalogs and modified to provide some uniformity by

local standards. Like Duckles, many records in the online bibliography offer detailed annotations, evaluations, or miniature reviews of print and online resources, while other entries cite reviews of the resource that were published elsewhere. All the annotations and descriptions included in the bibliography are original and adhere to a thorough set of guidelines that require critiques of a resource to cover six different points: a complete Turabian citation and call number, the resource's intended use or purpose, its coverage and criteria, its organizational structure, pros/cons, and an overall review of the resource.

The online bibliography offers three search options: simple, advanced, and browse. The simple search offers a single search box that indexes standard fields (keyword, subject, author, etc.), and users can limit the simple search results by category and publication type. The advanced search allows one to search two standard fields at a time and includes a date range filter. The browse search accommodates browsing by category or publication type. One may also enter part of a known call number. The browse search offers an extended list of approximately 150 categories and subcategories that appear to be adapted from Library of Congress subject headings. For all three search types there is a helpful limiter to show only records that have annotations. Browsing by publication type reveals four scores, 246 "journals" (these records show bibliographies, discographies, indexes, and catalogues that were published as articles), about twenty theses and dissertations, nearly 800 websites, and almost 6,000 books, 160 of which are available online through the Internet Archive, Google Books, and the National Library of France's Gallica digital library.

Though the decision to use CONTENTdm for the bibliography is wholly justifiable based on convenience alone, the system offers some useful features along with some drawbacks. Aside from URLs that direct the user to external websites, there are no hyperlinked terms in the records. Even though the search and browse options seem to index every field, there is something to be said for the convenience and—at the very least—serendipity of clicking on "French" in a record's language field and being instantly shown all the items that are in French. Commenting is enabled and likely moderated. Though it's not clear whether any records have comments at present, this Duckles 2.0 element is such the norm on news sites, blogs, and social networking sites that the option does not look out of place in a scholarly bibliography. Site administrators recognize inherent limitations to CONTENTdm by providing succinct yet helpful searching tips and a customized searching and browsing interface. In addition, using CONTENTdm for the bibliography keeps all the citations conveniently in one place, offers database managers an established and robust structure, and gives users a familiar interface, but users do not have at their disposal options to save, export, easily cite, or otherwise manipulate the data.

When one includes websites—especially those overseen by a financially unstable agency, a subject enthusiast with a GoDaddy account, or perhaps even an avid file sharer—in one's bibliography, one must question the permanence of these resources. Should an online bibliography serve as a sort of historical record of electronic resources regardless of their activity? Should it just list current and live sites? The online bibliography of the Music and Dance Reference site has addressed this issue by assigning three different publication types for websites: Website, Website (Defunct), and Website (Archived). The designation "defunct" seems to refer to sites that are no longer with us, yet Musopen—which at the time of this review

is marked as defunct but whose URL actually leads to an active site—may have just been playing dead at some point. Records for archived websites contain the original link to the site, plus a second link that leads to the Wayback Machine’s most current capture of that site. Though the volume of websites marked defunct (9) and archived (26) is no larger than that of a standard online music subject guide or pathfinder, efforts to keep this aggregation current need to be incorporated into regular workflows in order for the bibliography to maintain credibility and relevancy.

The added value of the Music and Dance Reference site lies as much in the richness of its metadata as in its role as an authoritative aggregator. The ability to search and browse such a high volume of meticulously indexed records is a great convenience to the music library community, and I’m sure many would join me in expressing gratitude to the site administrators for their efforts.

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