

Appraising the Enduring Value of Archival Music Materials
Vincent J. Novara and John Bewley, PhD

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INTRODUCTION:

In this paper, I will discuss the benefits of appraising for enduring value when evaluating notated music materials. I will review the various facets of enduring value, and will focus on examples from my own repository, Special Collections in Performing Arts (SCPA) at the University of Maryland,¹ as I can best speak to the qualities of our collections. I am indebted to my co-author, Dr. John Bewley, for his section on appraisal in our *Archival Description of Notated Music* supplement. Let’s begin with a quote from John’s work:

“Determining and clearly appraising the enduring value of an archival collection provides the foundation for all of the decisions needed to identify the best means of describing notated music within an archival collection.”ⁱⁱ

This audience can appreciate that not all collections are created equal. The informational and historical value of those documents do differ from collection to collection, and, in this instance, from score to score. Those value assessments should dictate the level of description we apply to music materials, no different than any other archival collection. Those values should also inform when or if we even take descriptive action beyond the most basic.

Furthermore...

“Decisions regarding the archival arrangement and description of the materials evolve from the initial and ongoing process of appraisal, so it is important to have a firm understanding of what archival appraisal entails.”ⁱⁱⁱ

We are recommending that, no different than any archival materials, appraisal is central to working with notated music materials. But of highest importance, is appraising these materials for their enduring value. As defined by SAA, enduring value, or its synonym “continuing value,” is the “enduring usefulness or significance of records, based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information they contain, justifying their ongoing preservation.”^{iv}

Does notated music ever cease being useful? You can always play or learn from notated music. The significance, however, has the greatest variance. Popularity of composers, genres, performers, and instrumentation or settings rise and fall, and can rise again. How do you judge significance in the face of such oscillations? Further complicating this consideration is that institutional missions also alter over time. For years, music education was one of the top priorities of the School of Music at the University of Maryland, and for a period of time that status changed. Yet, Special Collections in Performing Arts includes extensive holdings of notated music materials in support of studying the history of music education.^v Should we have

contemplated reappraising and perhaps deaccessioning those materials when the university placed its priorities elsewhere?

Furthermore, archivists cannot predict every way a collection may be used. We rely on training and experience, including our assessment data of existing holdings and how patrons have used them, to gauge the potential enduring value of a collection. In order to evaluate collections containing notated music, we must consider how the materials may be used, which includes:

- Study of history and criticism
- Preparation of a critical or published edition
- Preparation for performance of neglected, hidden, or obscure repertoire
- Study of performance practice
- Study of music notation
- Study of compositional genesis
- Seeking musical materials to arrange or re-purpose
- Music publishing and recording histories
- Music theoretical analyses^{vi}

Remember, our intended audience for this supplement includes archivists who are less initiated with notated music materials, as well as music librarians with less archival training than their archivist peers. As such, we go to great length to explain and illustrate what we mean by “enduring value” in the appraisal sense in our supplement. We also remind our music librarian readers that “much of archival practice and its terminology was developed for use with records management rather than personal or organizational papers,” and that can necessitate some transposition of concepts within archival appraisal.^{vii}

LITERATURE

The literature on archival appraisal is quite robust. The works of Frank Boles on the topic remain highly relevant and useful, and I’m a big fan of Laura Uglean Jackson’s work in this area. The popular journals of our profession frequently feature recent perspectives and case studies on the topic. However, for notated music materials it is almost silent, though occasionally addressed within case studies on working with music materials.

Thankfully, we have Adriana Cuervo’s 2015 article in Music Library Association’s *Notes*, “The Things We Keep: Considerations for Appraisal of Archival Materials in Music Libraries,” which addresses “archival appraisal as it applies to the evidence of music-making and the principles behind acquisition decisions as this is crucial to setting up a robust archival management program that can contribute to the healthy growth of the institution and its collections.” Her goal in this work is to “help formulate the basis for archival practices that actively expand the scope of the musical heritage that is recognized and preserved in archives throughout the world, in addition to helping us move past only documenting a subsection of history.”^{viii}

Consequently, Lisa Hooper and Donald Force’s *Keeping time: An introduction to archival best practices for music librarians* is essential for music librarians requiring a primer in this area of

the information profession. The third chapter is entirely devoted to appraisal, and succinctly reviews the topic and offers some recommended approaches.^{ix}

Additionally, Carl Van Ness's *American Archivist* article "Much Ado about Paper Clips: 'More Product, Less Process' and the Modern Manuscript Repository" makes the case for an effective appraisal program to ensure priority description and processing. Van Ness's recommendations can easily apply to any collection containing notated music materials.^x

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR DOCUMENT

When applying enduring value in appraising notated music materials, there are numerous facets to keep in mind when "evaluating the usefulness or significance of these works based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information, to justify ongoing preservation."^{xi}

Some examples for these facets include:

- For administrative purposes, it could be the scores of an ensemble, like those found in the 21st Century Consort Collection,^{xii} the records of a chamber ensemble in DC.
- For legal purposes, it could be the sketches or holographs of a composer to determine and establish intellectual property rights. Also, the scores could be the legal property of a publisher, when rights are transferred.
- For fiscal purposes, it could be the scores sold directly by a composer to performers, such as those of notable band composer Claude T. Smith.^{xiii} The scores are held in Smith's collection at SCPA, but still distributed by a small business operated by his family. Another example is the American Composers Alliance,^{xiv} who although a non-profit, keeps their print masters with SCPA, which are scanned upon request when they need to create performance editions to sell to the public. This activity generates royalties for their member composers. However, both of these instances are what I consider unorthodox and can prove complicated to manage. It is best to avoid such arrangements when acquiring new collections.
- For evidential purposes, as we focus on the origin, functions, and activities of the creator, we can look at the drafts or compositional processes of composers. Also, personal inscriptions from a composer to an individual creates evidential value establishing relationships or shedding light on the function the work might have had in their lives – like a commissioned work resulting in a debut performance.
- For historical purposes, you attempt to understand the past through the score. In this case, the place the work has in the development of a repertoire, genre, or compositional technique are at play. Or if the score was used by an ensemble for a specific occasion or notable performance. And, again, commissions apply to understanding when and why a work was created.

In our supplement we also examine and recommend other appraisal values to consider to ensure the enduring value of your holdings in notated music.

- **Informational value** is fairly obvious: what the score tells you about the style, genre, the creator, an intended performer, and other factors gleaned from the page.
- **Intrinsic value** can inform use of scores in exhibitions or as images in a textual publication. Graphically notated scores from the past 80 years, in particular, have high intrinsic value, as do illuminated music manuscripts from the Renaissance. Composer holographs – especially those that show revisions – usually elicit an emotional response from the viewer due to the presence of human activity in a creative process.
- The **permanent value** again can inform legal, fiscal, and administrative considerations discussed earlier. Though, this value is frequently avoided by archivists due to changing circumstances that render deaccessioning a reasonable outcome. Recall my earlier anecdote on Maryland’s music education program.^{xv}

To determine these values, you can perform three types of analysis on the materials:

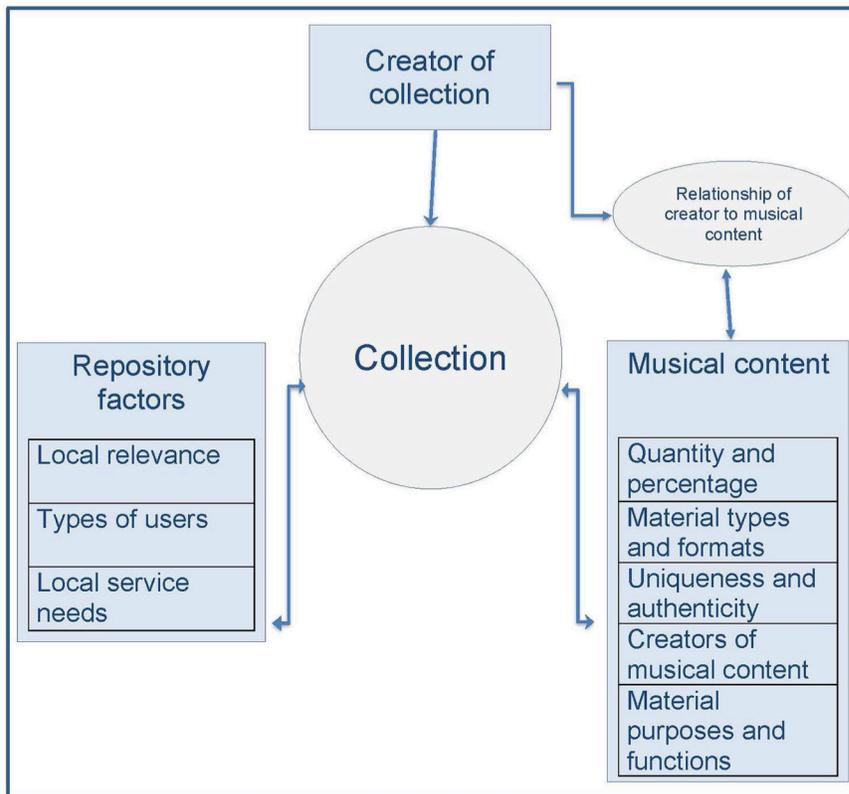
Content analysis. From the SAA Glossary, this is defined as “A methodology to appraise records by considering the significance of the information value and the quality of information contained in the records.”^{xvi} At the most extreme: you cannot learn a whole lot about a Brahms symphony from just analyzing the triangle part. In terms of appraisal, the more complete the notated music materials are, the better. For example, incomplete part sets are especially problematic when a score is no longer available. Yet, at SCPA we hold a manuscript by notable American composer Edward MacDowell that constitutes one page of a work-in-progress for a string quartet. However, MacDowell never published any string quartets, so the content of this one page has all manner of enduring value.

Context analysis. Again, from the SAA Glossary: “assessing the value of records in light of other sources of the same or similar information.”^{xvii} For published scores, the context of a clean copy acquired from a reviewer is different than a worn or marked copy of an ensemble. An illustration includes David Froom’s *Piano Suite* (1996),^{xviii} a score available from two collections at SCPA: the American Composers Alliance, whose official records include the printing master for Froom’s composition. And the 21st Century Consort Collection, which includes the official records, scores, and recordings of this chamber ensemble, which features an edition of Froom’s work marked up for performance by members of the ensemble. As we state in our supplement: “Context is everything when assessing archival value.”^{xix}

The context of the two different organizations I just mentioned are noteworthy. The American Composers Alliance is both a non-profit publisher and an invited membership organization.^{xx} The 21st Century Consort is essentially a small non-profit, but with a close association to the Smithsonian Institution.^{xxi} Both operate like small businesses, and their purposes for having notated music materials ultimately serve different, though linked, motivations: to disseminate through sale or through performance. Further still, if you compare the 21st Century Consort to an internationally renowned symphony or opera company, does that have any bearing on the context of the scores?

Use analysis. The SAA Glossary states: “A methodology to assess the worth of records based on potential for future consultation.”^{xxii} Simply put: if music is not mission critical to your repository, you might find yourself evaluating notated music materials as having a low enduring value in the absence of any other connection to the collection’s primary subject. For example, it would make perfect sense for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library to hold a copy of the score for Igor Stravinsky’s *Elegy for J.F.K.* (1964). It would make less sense for that work to appear in President Obama’s forthcoming library. A better example is that the University of Maryland School of Music long has offered a solid clarinet studio. Thus, the Score Collection of the International Clarinet Association^{xxiii} at SCPA has strong enduring value based on the high use by that studio.

In conclusion, to help illustrate these concepts, we are proposing the following visualization, created by my co-author, John:^{xxiv}



On the right you see Repository Factors. An example of Local Relevance includes the Maryland Sheet Music collection at SCPA, an artificial collection built over the last fifty years to bring together music about Maryland, created by its residents, or published in the state.^{xxv} For “Types of Users” you start with your repository’s mission, as well as your primary clientele to inform your thinking. And for Local Service Needs, again, consider UMD’s clarinet studio and SCPA’s extensive holdings of music for clarinet.

The Musical Content factors get into more granularity. For Quantity and Percentage, this is the difference between the papers of a composer that includes notated music materials spanning the majority of their creative output, and that of the personal papers of a local community leader containing a copy of a mass-produced Beatles songbook. When considering Material Types and Formats, it could be manuscripts or drafts of a work, versus a clean published copy. Related to that is the Uniqueness and Authenticity of the work: in this case a published copy could be rendered unique by performance markings or an autograph inscription; and a manuscript can lead to interrogation of the hand: is it the composer's, a copyist's, or even a forger's? The Creators of Musical Content again brings us to the composer, or to the conductor or performer marking up scores or parts for performance and interpretation. This is invaluable for studying performance practice of an individual or a time period. Lastly, the Material Purposes and Functions can be represented by the score collection of an ensemble, department, publisher, or organization; or those scores used by a conductor, performer, musicologist, or music theorist.

Through reviewing the various factors that inform enduring value, as well as a myriad of examples and scenarios, I hope that you have a better appreciation for the role that notated music materials has in collections beyond the performing arts, and now feel more equipped to appraise those items.

Notes

- ⁱ See <https://www.lib.umd.edu/scpa>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ⁱⁱ Music Library Association Working Group for Archival Description of Music Materials. *Archival Description of Notated Music*. Currently under review, 2018. 13.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*, 13.
- ^{iv} Pearce-Moses, Richard. "Enduring value." *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivist, 2005. Updated online May 2016. Web. 26 July 2018. <https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/e/enduring-value>.
- ^v See <https://www.lib.umd.edu/scpa/index-of-collections?#mused>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{vi} Music Library Association Working Group for Archival Description of Music Materials. *Archival Description of Notated Music*. 19.
- ^{vii} *Ibid*, 14.
- ^{viii} Cuervo, Adriana P. "The Things We Keep: Considerations for Appraisal of Archival Materials in Music Libraries." *Notes*, vol. 72 no. 2, 2015, pp. 265-275.
- ^{ix} Hooper, Lisa, and Donald Force. *Keeping time: An introduction to archival best practices for music librarians*. Middleton, WI: A-R Editions; Music Library Association, 2014.
- ^x Van Ness, Carl. "Much Ado About Paper Clips: 'More Product, Less Process' and the Modern Manuscript Repository." *The American Archivist* 73, no. 1 (2010): 129-45.
- ^{xi} Pearce-Moses, Richard. "Enduring value."
- ^{xii} 21st Century Consort collection. Special Collections in Performing Arts. University of Maryland. Finding aid: <http://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/1771>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{xiii} Claude T. Smith collection. Special Collections in Performing Arts. University of Maryland. <http://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/1221>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{xiv} American Composers Alliance official records. Special Collections in Performing Arts. University of Maryland. Finding aid: <http://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/30672>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{xv} Music Library Association Working Group for Archival Description of Music Materials. *Archival Description of Notated Music*. 16.
- ^{xvi} Pearce-Moses, Richard. "Content analysis."
- ^{xvii} Pearce-Moses, Richard. "Context analysis."
- ^{xviii} Froom, David. *Piano Suite*. New York, NY: American Composers Alliance, 1996.
- ^{xix} Music Library Association Working Group for Archival Description of Music Materials. *Archival Description of Notated Music*. 14.
- ^{xx} "About ACA." American Composers Association website. <https://composers.com/content/about-aca>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{xxi} 21st Century Consort website homepage. <http://21stcenturyconsort.org/>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{xxii} Pearce-Moses, Richard. "Use analysis."
- ^{xxiii} See <https://www.lib.umd.edu/scpa/scores/>. Last accessed 26 July 2018.
- ^{xxiv} Music Library Association Working Group for Archival Description of Music Materials. *Archival Description of Notated Music*. 18.
- ^{xxv} Maryland Sheet Music collection, c1850- c1920. Special Collections in Performing Arts. University of Maryland.