

# Publishing Student Work on the Web: The *Living Music Project* and the Imperatives of the New Literacy

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Teaching music history without technology is all but inconceivable today. In 1878, just a year after inventing the phonograph, Thomas Alva Edison included “educational purposes” such as “preserving explanations made by a teacher” and repeating “spelling or other lessons” as well as the “reproduction of music” among its uses.<sup>1</sup> Traditional teaching tools from pen and paper to chalkboards (even language itself) are all, in fact, technologies. Yet the common usage of the word implies novelty—“technology” signals something new, innovative, cutting edge (or, conversely, threatening, distracting, and gimmicky). But novelty is a trap and a false basis for sustained learning. The critical issue for technology in the classroom is efficacy — does learning technology, in fact, improve learning?

As musicology instructors we seek learning tools and strategies that target our instructional goals. When a technology loses its novelty—to quote Clay Shirky, when it becomes “global, social, ubiquitous, and cheap”—it also becomes ripe as an instructional tool.<sup>2</sup> Thus, technology becomes instructionally interesting when it becomes technologically boring. YouTube, blogs, and streaming audio are technologically boring and ready for instructional harvest. Boring tech serves as a tool—something that potentially amplifies and extends human techniques, talents, and insights. Yet as a tool, technology should not be confused with human techniques, talents, and insights. In terms of the classroom, technology should not be confused with learning goals.

Before deciding whether or not to apply a new technology to your classroom, a goal must be articulated. Without a goal, teaching technology is

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1. Thomas Alva Edison, “The Perfected Phonograph,” *North American Review* 146 (June 1878): 641–50.

2. Clay Shirky, “How Social Media Can Make History,” TED 2009, [http://www.ted.com/talks/clay\\_shirky\\_how\\_cellphones\\_twitter\\_facebook\\_can\\_make\\_history.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cellphones_twitter_facebook_can_make_history.html). See also Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: How Technology Makes Consumers into Collaborators* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010).

simply entertainment and its best result is collateral learning, most likely limited to the technology itself. Motivated by a learning goal, however, technology can solve learning problems and catalyze student growth. The other papers in this conference session and resulting special online issue offer immediate examples of learning goals addressed by technology. In “Rethinking Technology outside the Classroom,” José Bowen’s provocative notion of “teaching naked” discards the electronic trappings of in-class technology (PowerPoint, for example) to (re)connect teachers and students in conversation. By shifting classroom lecture and drill activities to the Web as homework in the forms of videos and learning games, Bowen uses technology to meet the goal of preserving class time for face-to-face discussion and collaborative learning activities. Jocelyn Neal’s article, “The Online Challenge: Why Not Teach Music History Unconventionally?” describes her experiences using online instruction to extend the reach of North Carolina’s higher education system to students who would not otherwise have access. Even the very appearance of these essays offers an example. The *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* leverages technology in the form of Web publishing to broadcast ideas about teaching.

The *LivingMusic* project began as an attempt to share the excitement of original research and to teach research skills within a music history survey course. By asking students to work “professionally” as musicologists even in a carefully proscribed initiative, I hoped to teach students what it meant to be a music researcher. In *LivingMusic* students interview cultural informants, transcribe their conversation, and publish these research results on the Web. In sum, the project is a database of music related oral histories. I wanted students to learn about their interview subjects certainly, but also to experience the challenges of representing their subjects, not only accurately, but also in a way that was meaningful. In doing so, I hoped they would discover the creative, problem-solving aspects of research that go beyond any tautological recipe of reading and regurgitation. I wanted them to understand both the art and rigor of musicology and thus to appreciate the potential for subjectivity and bias in ostensibly objective historical writing. This, in turn, would urge them to become more informed users of history. What I discovered through this process was that (1) publishing student work on the Web can be highly rewarding for both the student and the instructor and (2) that Web-based discourse is not simply cool and hip, but an essential skill of twenty-first century literacy.

My own teaching career grew alongside computer-based learning technology. As a graduate student instructor at the University of Chicago in the mid-1990s, I created an e-mail group for my class, which at the time was pretty exciting stuff! As an early adopter, I have experimented with many new technologies as they became available for the classroom. I learned to write HTML to create custom websites and used an infrared classroom polling system to

more deeply engage students in lectures. I created a listening blog that linked streaming audio examples to descriptive web pages while inviting students to post their reactions to music. Commenting on the listening observations of their peers and reading reactions to their own posts demonstrated the power of the web as an effective teaching tool. This use—as an invitation to students to create content, to share their work and insights, to leverage peer-to-peer coaching, to motivate not through grades but through social service and reward—interests me most as a means of improving teaching, especially as the Web transforms student expectations for interactive learning. Web work makes class work into “world wide work.” In doing so, class work becomes more vital, more real, and student learning is inspired by solving real problems and communicating solutions effectively.

### Online Publishing—Making Musicology Real

One of my pedagogical concerns is that the way we teach music history can be too distant from the way we, as professionals, do musicology. If musicology primarily concerned multiple choice decision-making and memorization, the work of the stereotypical introduction to music course would be worth rehearsing in our coursework. A rich understanding of music’s past is essential to excellence,<sup>3</sup> but original research with its sense of adventure and the pioneering creative insight that result—i.e., that which motivates scholars of music history to do what they do—is too often far removed from students’ experience in our musicology courses. (At least this was true of my own training.) As professional academics we enjoy musicology and find it intellectually exciting. Our fundamental goal as pedagogues then might be to inspire future musical thinkers—be they academics, musicians, or audience members—to see history not as fully determined but as undetermined—as a set of possibilities, of questions needing to be asked and answered. We could endeavor to share our joys of discovery with our disciplinary mentees, and certainly there are already ways in which we do this. We build exams around philosophical questions of historiography and lecture about disciplinary controversies, but I find that one sure-fire method of sharing the fun of musicology with even first-semester students is to ask them to do focused, original research and to share the results of their work with the world.

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3. Creating a rich neural network that places musicians, compositions, and events within the warp and weft of time and place is certainly vital to the work of a music historian. In my own teaching, I find James Zull’s book *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2002) to be particularly helpful to myself and my students in understanding memory and the process of remembering history.

Fortunately, the distributed authoring power of the Web 2.0 invites just this sort of participation.<sup>4</sup>

Begun in the fall of 2003 in my first term of teaching at the University of Michigan, *Living Music* (<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/livingmusic>) is an oral history database of more than 1,000 interviews created by students in my courses (see **Figure 1**; links to representative interviews are in Appendix A). All interview subjects are involved with music in one way or another, but they range widely from the well-known to the unknown and from professionals to amateurs and even avid listeners or fans. Most of these subjects would normally slip through the net of history, and thus a student's interview represents an important if not unique source describing the activities, motivations, and thoughtfulness of an otherwise undocumented musical life. By publishing such research, including an interview transcript, biographical details about the subject, and the researcher's own reaction and analysis, students perform the real work of musicologists, investigating previously unknown musical phenomenon, placing it in context, offering an interpretation, and publishing

**Figure 1:** *Living Music* Public Portal.<sup>5</sup>

The screenshot shows the Living Music Public Portal. At the top left is the logo "LIVING MUSIC" with a stylized sun icon. To the right of the logo, it says "University of Michigan School of Music American Music Institute". Below the header, there is a navigation sidebar on the left with links: Home, Browse Interviews, Search Interviews, View by Scene, View by Role, Nominations, Corrections, and Sponsors. The main content area has a "Welcome!" heading followed by a paragraph about the project's mission. Below that is another paragraph about the current stage of the project. On the right side, there is a "Featured Interview..." section with a photo of William Bolcom and Joan Morris, and a caption identifying them as "Pianist and Composer William Bolcom with vocalist Joan Morris".

4. The term "Web 2.0" was coined in Darcy DiNucci, "Fragmented Future," *Print* 53, no. 4 (1999): 32.

5. <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/livingmusic>.

their results. The student researcher thus gains first-hand experience in the field and shares in the sense of adventure, uncertainty, discovery, insight, and excitement of publication that characterizes academic research.

It is essential from a pedagogic viewpoint that the guidelines for *Living Music* leave precise details about how to represent the interview undetermined. Myriad details from the orthography representing different speakers and their voice inflection, punctuation issues, and possible editing are left open. Thus the student researcher must make critical decisions and, in the process, confronts often-surprising questions critical to the writing of history, notably the subjective components of objectivity and the interpretive basis of fact. Most typical of these conundrums is that the banter of spoken language must be *translated*, not just transcribed, to become text. Written language reads differently than spoken language is heard and therefore a one-to-one correspondence of spoken language to written text is necessarily distorted. For example, the ubiquitous presence of “ahhs” and “umms,” so common as to be unnoticed in verbal exchange, is distracting at best and potentially prejudicial when represented in prose. Thus, it is not always the best decision to indicate every spoken syllable as text, but as a result the sheer number of interpretive decisions to be made can escalate rapidly, leaving the dedicated transcriber with a confusing set of choices and probing questions about meaning.

The student researcher quickly comes to realize the power of representation to make the interview subject seem the genius or the fool. Simply cleaning up the false starts and verbal ticks of spoken language can solve some problems of verbatim transcription, but this too can misrepresent. “Umms” and “ahhs” may signal care in stalling for time to consider a provocative question more deeply. Sentences begun and then stopped or voided may give clues to a musician’s thought process and suggest unanticipated connections between ideas and events. Furthermore interviews are rarely completely linear processes: topics may reappear, lines of reasoning are interrupted by cell phones or the arrival of another cup of coffee at a café. Can the student historian re-order discussion topics to provide a more satisfying or clear introduction to the subject’s thinking? Does such editorial intervention make the subject look more schematic or precise in the researcher’s thinking or does it make answers seem canned or rehearsed instead? Does such editing falsify the transcript as a historical document? Ultimately, the student/would-be historians must make a decision—essentially an interpretation—based on their knowledge of the interview subject and the interview experience to present the interview subject most faithfully.

A twist that periodically intrudes upon this work of historian with text is the subject’s self-image. As part of the permissions process, a draft of the interview and biography is shared with the subject for review. In some cases, the interview subject may request especially intrusive revisions to the transcript that go beyond correction to amplify, clarify, revise or simply

change what was said. Should the researcher permit such changes? Is it always false to revise past statements or is it more false to fail to correct statements that the speakers feel misrepresent their views? In one case I can recall during the history of *LivingMusic*, the student interviewer felt that the heavily edited version of the transcript that satisfied the subject was so untrue to the event—so different than what was said during the interview—that the researcher withdrew her project from publication.

In confronting these ontological issues of history, veracity and integrity, student researchers gain experience with the always-and-necessarily interpretive role of the historian. Further, students gain the knowledge that all history, whether another interview say in *The New York Times* or in a book about contemporary composers, or even a precise “fact” rehearsed in a music history textbook, is similarly influenced by problem sources, interpretation, potential bias, and ideological distortion and thus requires the critical engagement of the reader. By putting the process of writing and publication under scrutiny, *LivingMusic* aims to teach its contributors to ask questions about the nature of history and indeed everything that they read.

Leaving open to the student researcher the choice of when to transcribe the interview verbatim, when to silently correct, or when to make the reader aware of a change results in both problems and success. Student choices create inconsistencies in the database. Researchers are encouraged to make their own decisions; no single approach governs the site as a whole. The resulting inconsistency is vital, however, as it gives the researcher’s decisions real impact. Forced to make decisions that typically represent a compromise rather than an ideal or clear truth, students learn that history is contingent on choice—both what to include and how to represent it.


*LivingMusic* can be adapted to work in almost any of my courses, as interview subjects can be limited to those connected with a specific type of music, say classical, folk, or jazz, and questions can focus on a course-related theme, say gender or identity. Finding an interview subject is often a learning experience in itself, prompting students to tap their personal network or take a risk in contacting someone they don’t know at all. In my core musicology survey of American music, many students interview a former teacher or some other personal contact such as a relative or family friend. I encourage students who plan a career in music to approach someone who is living their dream—maybe a member of a full-time professional symphony. Surprisingly, many musicians, even those in major orchestras, are rarely interviewed and are often flattered by a student’s interest. Particularly ambitious, savvy, and/or lucky students can interview known figures, such as a pair of undergraduate seniors who worked for our student newspaper and had the inspiration to contact the office of Detroit city councilwoman (and former Motown artist) Martha Reeves. Yet, interviews with more typical and not-so-famous subjects can potentially be as interesting. Interviews with K–12 music teachers, record

collectors, music store owners, audience members, and home audiophiles are included in the *LivingMusic* site. Such interviews offer rare insights, which as a result of the project are now publically available on the Web to future researchers interested in how everyday people use music.

### The Interview Assignment

The *LivingMusic* assignment typically involves eleven discrete steps: **analytical essay, proposal, draft questions, interview training, permissions form, interview, transcript, online post, revision, publication**, and finally a **thank you note**.<sup>6</sup> Although a bit complex, the multi-stage process helps students prepare for a good interview experience and keeps them on schedule. All materials for the assignment are posted on the *LivingMusic* contributor's portal (**Figure 2**). I begin by asking future contributors for a brief **analytical essay** examining a set of three interviews already in the database. (Lacking

**Figure 2:** *LivingMusic* Contributor Portal.<sup>7</sup>

		University of Michigan School of Music American Music Institute
<p><b>Home</b></p> <p><a href="#">Analysis Assignment</a></p> <p><a href="#">Find Subjects</a></p> <p><a href="#">Create Record</a></p> <p><a href="#">Edit Interview</a></p> <p><a href="#">Manage Info</a></p> <p><a href="#">Preview</a></p> <p><a href="#">View Permissions</a></p> <p><a href="#">Instructor Feedback</a></p> <p><a href="#">Suggest Subjects</a></p> <p><a href="#">Evaluate Project</a></p> <p><a href="#">Help</a></p>	<h2 style="color: blue;">Contributor's Pages</h2> <p>Welcome to <b>LIVING MUSIC</b>'s contributor area. Here you will find all the information you need to complete a successful interview and publish it on the <b>LIVING MUSIC</b> site. The links at the left will direct you to project work areas and are listed in order from top to bottom. Click below for more general instructions, class handouts, advice, and forms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Living Music Project Introduction (pdf)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Interview Proposal Form</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Permissions Form</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Uploading Instructions</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Basic Formatting Codes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">More Advice &amp; Help</a></li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Edit...</a></p>	
<p><b>Contact Information:</b>          Professor Mark Clague          E-mail: <a href="mailto:claguem@umich.edu">claguem@umich.edu</a>          Phone: 734/647-9416</p>		<p>  <a href="#">American Music Institute</a>   <a href="#">School of Music</a>   <a href="#">FACULTY</a>   <a href="#">ADMIN</a>  </p> <hr/> <p> <a href="#">UM.SiteMaker Home</a>                <a href="#">Configure this Site</a>                <a href="#">Upload/Manage Files for this Site</a> </p>

6. For especially large courses or for courses in which I desire an interview project but cannot afford to dedicate so much effort and class time to the full *LivingMusic* project, I assign an interview project for which the final submission is simply a summary paper and no analytical essay, transcript, or online publication is required.

7. <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/livingmusic.contributor/home>.

earlier contributions to the project, an instructor can assign any set of interview examples.) Students select and read three interviews that concern a particular role in the music industry (composer, musician, musicologist, music therapist) or a theme—e.g., three music professionals who earn their livings in music in different ways (a musician who plays for an orchestra, one who gigs in a big city, and one who teaches lessons in a small town). I have students create a table that compares each interview subject along specific dimensions, such as primary musical activity, how they earn a living, training, artistic freedom, etc. Then each researcher writes up a three-page analysis of their findings, drawing conclusions from the table amplified by at least three quotes from the interviews.<sup>8</sup> The project thus makes a point to writers and thinkers about connecting interpretation to evidence. Further, exploring the interviews (and students often have to read more than three to make their selection) familiarizes future contributors with the database and gives them an idea of what constitutes a successful interview and online publication. If they are frustrated or impressed by certain interviews, this knowledge can be used to shape their own posting.

Student contributors then turn in a one-page **proposal** form in which they identify two interview prospects and list their contact information (primarily to demonstrate that they have located this information). I encourage students to list one “longshot” choice (usually some more famous personage) and a back-up choice from whom they are pretty likely to secure a positive response. Potential subjects can be any figure related to the musical world, which I describe in the broadest possible terms under the influence of sociologist Howard Becker’s conception of “Art World.”<sup>9</sup> Other subject requirements are course specific, but I always include two general caveats: the subject (1) cannot already appear in the database and (2) cannot be another student, roommate, or a personal friend of the interviewer. I entertain exceptions to these rules on a case-by-case basis, but discourage them. I approve each proposal form, adding comments about good sources for further background information and may suggest a few potential questions. When I reject ideas, I try to offer my own suggestions of better alternatives. Once their proposals are approved, students are encouraged to contact their subject to invite their participation and to schedule an interview. For student safety and to encourage a comfortable dynamic, I recommend meeting at a nearby coffee shop or other (relatively quiet) public venue. Interviews can also be recorded over the phone when a face-to-face meeting is impossible, but only if

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8. Because the editing process is never perfect, I offer extra credit to students who discover typos or other errors in the transcripts they read online. This both reminds students of the need to carefully proof their own work and helps scrub the database of errors that have escaped editorial control.

9. Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th anniversary ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).



the subject is made fully aware that a recording is being made.<sup>10</sup> For some students, the simple idea of reaching out to a musical figure for an interview is intimidating, and I try to be positive and encouraging while asking the class for informal status reports, checking individually with students who seem to be struggling.

Students next submit a list of ten **draft questions** for review; these questions are workshopped in class, with students sharing their questions with a partner. We then discuss what makes a good question as a group. Generally, this discussion leads smoothly into the next project step—interview training.

In **interview training**, we spend part of a class discussion on the topic of what makes for a superior interview. I emphasize the need to establish a comfortable rapport with the subject and to ask thoughtful, informed, but open-ended questions. Both goals are aided when the interviewer does solid research about the interview subject in advance and by interview training and preparation. Role-playing or an example interview video—most often, an episode of *Da Ali G Show* featuring the spoof “hip-hop journalist” played by Sasha Baron Cohen interviewing an unwitting public figure—reinforces these points. As I explain amid the laughter, the comedic twists of Cohen’s interviews depend on preliminary research to bring out the best in his subject. He often has a list of questions on his lap, but only glances at them periodically. At all times Cohen remains engaged in the interview as a conversation.

Students must inform their subject of the nature of the *LivingMusic* project and their desire to publish an interview transcript online in advance. Most are comfortable with this arrangement, knowing that they will have the opportunity to preview the transcript before publication. The student contributor must get a signed **permission form** from the interview subject (using a project-wide Institutional Review Board-approved form that I provide, see Appendix C). Under no circumstances is a recording of the interview to be made secretly or without the subject’s knowledge and permission. The form allows subjects to take part in the project while refusing to have the interview published online. The submission of the form is graded, but assigned points based on completion, not on the willingness of the subjects to have their words posted. Students disappointed by a subject’s refusal may approach an alternate.

When students do the actual **interview**, I encourage them to have their list of prepared questions placed unobtrusively nearby, but to listen attentively and to engage in the conversation. This leads to perceptive follow-up questions and a better overall interview. The purpose of using an audio (or video) recorder is to automate verbatim note taking, and thus the interviewer

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10. Phone-enabled microphones or “taps” are readily available from Radio Shack and other electronic stores. The University of Michigan has purchased several sets of phone taps for use in my courses which are made available for checkout via the library system.

can focus on the exchange. Nevertheless, keeping outline notes as the interview progresses can be useful, as it serves as a prompt for further questions during the conversation and afterwards is a handy table of contents for the interview, especially if it runs long. I typically ask undergraduate students to aim for a twenty-minute interview and in more specialized upper-level courses seek a full thirty minutes. Before ending an interview, I suggest that researchers skim their question list one last time to make certain any essential topics have been covered. They should also make certain they have covered basic biographical information, obtained a signed permission form or plans to get one via mail or fax, and have taken a still photo of their subject to illustrate their online entry.<sup>11</sup>

Experience has taught me to warn students of certain pitfalls. I encourage researchers to test their equipment in advance, especially their audio recorder. Students often borrow recorders from our school's tech lab or a friend and thus need to be fully familiar with how it operates. They are wise to bring backup batteries, backup recording media, and even a second recorder, if possible. Since some interviews are one-time opportunities, careful preparation is critical. It is also worth reminding students that audio quality is important, as a good recording makes transcription more convenient, more accurate and *faster*. I give students several weeks in the course schedule during which to schedule their interviews and will attempt to include spring vacation or other breaks in this interview period. Breaks allow students to visit contacts from their hometown face to face.

Transcribing is both slow and arduous; I warn students repeatedly that the transcription process will take longer than anticipated. Most convert their recordings to an MP3 and use the scroll bar on an electronic audio player to play, remember, type, and review. A draft **transcript** is produced using standard word processing software and two hardcopies are brought for class: one is given to the instructor as confirmation of completion and a second copy is used for an in-class peer edit. Peer-to-peer editing improves the quality of the initial **online post** of the interview record due a few days later and thus reduces the editing burden on the instructor. This initial posting is not viewable by the public, but is protected behind a university login and only the author and instructor can view it. The draft transcript and bio are also shared with the interview subject at this time (usually in an e-mail). Most subjects offer corrections and welcome the opportunity to approve the final form of the text.

*LivingMusic* records include a brief biographical sketch, photo, demographic data such as the subject's birth date, hometown, race, gender,

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11. Some interview subjects, especially professional performers, have publicity headshots that they prefer for this use. Nevertheless, I encourage students to take their own pictures when possible as it avoids any question of copyright permission. In U.S. law, photographers typically own the copyright to any images they make.

and a description of musical activities. Researchers identify themselves, give the course number, date of interview, and also provide a brief analysis of the interview, making explicit their observations about the most compelling parts of the interview and its connection to the themes of the course. This information along with a copy of the transcript is uploaded to a web form that archives the information in an online database built using GVC.Sitemaker.<sup>12</sup> Many schools have subscriptions to this or a similar website construction packages, and any Wiki tool could be adapted to the purpose. The key is using a tool with a database function. I found that asking students to create custom websites to publish their interviews was ineffective. Instead, students login to a Sitemaker contributor's portal to create an initial interview record, filling in blanks on a web form much like any e-commerce site. No HTML authoring skills are needed, although I offer a guide to simple formatting codes (boldface, italics, colored text) that can jazz up or add clarity to a transcript. The student's interview is polished and completed and then edited by the instructor.


Typically one or two rounds of revision are needed to bring the quality of the submission to publication standard. Here I use grades to motivate revisions, with poor initial marks steadily improving as missing information is provided, the interview format is improved, and typos are corrected. A few exceptional entries are approved from the outset. Instructor comments, grades, and permissions status are tracked as part of the interview record, but are never made public. An instructor portal facilitates grading and contains project-wide grading rubrics and guidelines that are particularly helpful for larger classes involving co-teachers or graduate assistants.

Once the record has been deemed "publishable" by the instructor and permissions have been registered, the instructor flips a final virtual approval switch that makes the public portions of the record visible to the Web and **publication** has occurred. The completed interview including an attractive photo and sometimes an audio sample is a source of pride for both interviewer and subject. The record becomes a permanent part of the database, searchable by Google and other commercial search engines (**Figures 3a and b**; links to other representative interviews are in Appendix A). I then suggest that each researcher send a direct link to the entry to their subject via e-mail and mail a hand-written **thank you note** expressing their gratitude for their collaborator's time and attention. Not infrequently, student and subject maintain contact, and in some cases the interview subject becomes a mentor and advisor to the student interviewer.

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12. <http://www.gvcsitemaker.com/marketing/home>.

**Figure 3a:** Sample interview page—Denise Tryon (French horn player).<sup>13</sup>



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<b>Scene(s)</b>	Orchestra, Education
<b>Role(s)</b>	Performing, Teaching
<b>Informant Name</b>	Denise Tryon
<b>Position</b>	Professional Horn Player
<b>Institution</b>	Philadelphia Orchestra, Peabody Institute
<b>Image</b>	 <p>Photo by Cynthia Dell Conte</p>
<b>Biographical Notes</b>	Denise Tryon joined the Philadelphia Orchestra in October of 2009 as fourth horn. She was previously the fourth horn of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Grading online publication projects presents certain challenges. As a major project, *Living Music* typically counts for 20% of a final grade in my course. I assign points to the important intermediate steps, usually weighted as: analytical essay 5%, proposal 1%, draft questions 1%, draft transcript 2%, permissions form 1%, final online publication 10%. Because all completed projects must meet a minimum professional standard for publication, most interview records in their final form receive a final mark in the B+ to A range. This grade is based on the quality of the interview, effort, completeness, and

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13. Link to [Denise Tryon](#).

**Figure 3b:** Sample interview page—Al Abrams (Motown Records publicist).<sup>14</sup>



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<b>Scene(s)</b>	Crossover, Commercial, Popular
<b>Role(s)</b>	Publishing, Other
<b>Informant Name</b>	Alan E. (Al) Abrams
<b>Position</b>	Former Press Agent and Public Relations Consultant
<b>Institution</b>	Motown Record Corporation
<b>Image</b>	
<b>Biographical Notes</b>	Al Abrams was born in Detroit and graduated from Central High School at the age of 15. In 1959, he became the first employee of what was to become Berry Gordy, Jr.'s Motown Record Corporation. Working originally as National

quality of the interviewer's observations. Thus about half the overall project grade is supported by instructor editing and should be high. Missing and late components further distribute the grades, but students should receive a high mark if their efforts are sincere.

*Living Music* is one of the most memorable projects that students undertake in my courses. When I ask alumni what they remember about my classes, even years later, *Living Music* is often the first thing that springs to mind. Its flexibility and range of learning goals, including reinforcing the course topic, developing comfort and elegance in approaching experts with questions, gaining research experience, stimulating critical reading skills, and learning some of the finer points of writing through editing and revision for publication, make it a powerful and multifaceted learning tool. That the final result is made publicly available online deepens the learning process and taps

14. Link to [Al Abrams](#).

into levels of student motivation beyond grades. *LivingMusic* contributors should develop a sense of responsibility to their subject and to the project and thus do the best work they can. Such motivation can be novel for both the student who questions traditional grading and for one accustomed to receiving high marks. Inspiration comes in part from the act of contributing to knowledge.

### Other Online Publication Platforms

*LivingMusic* is just one of many online publication platforms. YouTube, Flickr, Wikis of all sorts, and other web-based html authoring tools can give educational work the added value and impact of publication and thus inspire students to take their work to a higher level. I frequently make online publication an option for final projects and papers in my courses. The multimedia opportunities these formats invite can inspire unusually compelling work that combines sound, imagery, original research, and astute analytical insight. YouTube projects for my courses are published to my channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/AmericanMusicTeam> (examples are listed in Appendix B).

### Conclusions—Technology and Teaching Goals

Every teacher need not and should use every new technology. To be effective, instructional tools must complement teaching style, educational philosophy, campus culture, and, most important, course-specific learning goals. In my experience, the best applications of technology to address learning goals have five fundamental characteristics:

1. They energize the student's fundamental love of learning
2. They rehearse knowledge and skills at the core of course goals
3. They provide regular and prompt feedback assessing the quality of learning
4. They fuel the instructor's creativity, energy and passion for teaching
5. They are efficient, fun, valuable, and valued

Learning to use a technology successfully in an educational environment requires considerable instructor effort and institutional support. Yet, particularly in projects like *LivingMusic*, the effort involved can pay dividends in rich learning experiences that can be leveraged in a variety of courses and instructional environments.

Most provocative, however, is the possibility that technology itself reconfigures our instructional goals. Beyond the excitement of new teaching

and classroom experiences, the shifting dynamics of technology place new requirements on our graduates to develop new skills to function successfully in today's world. If education serves to prepare students to contribute to society—say as artists or physicians, musicians or engineers—they must be able to communicate their critical insights and ideas with others. Technology has altered the conduits of communication. Everyone who wishes to share their arts or ideas needs to understand the structure of twenty-first century communication. Such a skill requires not only that students gain practical experience with new tools, but also that they explore the rhetorics, biases, and social implications of shifting communication conduits. Only by assessing how people use and perceive ideas in new formats can they use these communications pathways effectively. Thus the motivation for the instructor expands beyond the needs of a particular subject and course to include familiarizing students with new forms of literacy.

### Discussion

The following transcript offers the discussion of the *LivingMusic* project during the AMS Pedagogy Interest Group panel. Abbreviations of speakers in the discussion are listed in the introduction to the Roundtable on p. 40.

#### *Classtime for Interview Project*

**PI:** How much time in or out of class do you take for the interview process?

**MC:** I do a lot of it in class, so the entire student body is there and we can use peer responses. In the second week of the semester the students turn in a form that says who their interview subject is. And it gets them thinking about the project early in the semester. The form asks them to list their top choice for an interview and some backup choices. I double-check to make sure they are not in the database. If the person is not, I then give them authorization to contact the first person. With the first person I tell them to aim high, like a section leader of the Chicago Symphony—someone who might not have time for this project. But then we have a few backups of people who will probably work—like a high school piano teacher.

The next thing to do is the set of questions and I respond to those. The due date for the interview is usually right after spring break, so if they have to travel to do the interview they can do that. I've had the University of Michigan Music Library buy phone-recording equipment that allows students to record a phone interview and they can check that out in the library.

Then they transcribe the interview and I have a peer editing session of that first draft in class. That saves me a lot of time because the first edit is often very rough, often because the student underestimates the amount of time it will take to do a transcription, although I warn them about that over and over again. So sometimes the first draft is pretty sketchy. The project takes

pretty much the entire term, running in the background behind our other activities. It is one of their capstone projects for the year. For me the learning goals are significant enough that I will spend a significant amount of time on it. When these things start getting turned in it takes a fair amount of instructor time to grade and review them as well. I might grade five a night with about thirty minutes on each one. I have to track the permission forms as well.

### *Courses and Learning Goals*

**P2:** What course is this for? American Music?

**MC:** I use this in about 75% of my courses: Intro to American Music for music-majors is the most typical. I used this in a course on Motown recently for the 50th anniversary of the company and it was interesting because I largely had a white student body in the class. A lot of them interviewed their parents about what it was like to listen to Motown music in the 1960s. None of the Motown bibliography covers how every day, normal, white listeners responded to this music. Now our web site has some incredibly eloquent interviews about what it meant to a white teenager growing up in Detroit to interact with a person of color through this music.

**P3:** A follow-up to that question—for each of your courses what learning goal does this meet for you? Critical thinking and writing?

**MC:** There are certainly some goals for students that are universal across all the courses: to become better readers and users of history and to be more critical of bias in their sources. And then for specific courses I will tailor the assignment to the topic of the course. So for the Motown course they had to interview someone specifically about Motown. So, for example, some students got in touch with studio musicians who had played in the Funk Brothers. If you go to the fringes of the wind section you can find many people who played in the Motown house band and about thirty of them are still in the Detroit area. Several students, through their studio teachers, were able to find pretty interesting people to talk to. On the other hand, if I'm teaching a class on the symphony I will ask students to talk with conductors, musicians, and audience members. The owner of the local record store in Ann Arbor has been interviewed several times on various topics. I will allow interviews of the same person if the person is interesting and if the questions are tailored to cover a different area from the previous interview. I do also worry that some people will feel burdened by being constantly asked for interviews. At this point, all the obvious people in the University of Michigan School of Music have been interviewed. This has other benefits because it brings my faculty colleagues into my classroom. Our performance majors are asking their teachers how they can get an interview with a famous player, so the studio teachers are becoming involved in their students' musicological education. This helps build



rapport among my colleagues and myself. Rather than seeing me as someone who is taking the students away from their practicing—away from their goals as musicians—through *Living Music* I'm connecting them to it.

#### *Institutional Review Board Approval*

**P4:** Do the students have to go through Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval because you are working with human subjects?

**MC:** I did get IRB approval when I originally started this project, and basically at the University of Michigan, there is a blanket approval for oral history projects done on campus. So I signed on to that protocol, and I don't do individual approvals for every interview in the class. The original approval process was particularly helpful for refining the permissions form and a key feature to earn approval was the ability for interview subjects to refuse permission without penalty to the student. They can also choose to have their words published anonymously.

**P5:** But each interview needs a signed release?

**MC:** All subjects do sign releases and that does raise an important point to talk about the ethics of the project. Students have to turn in the release as part of the grade, so it's not something they can skip. Without the form, their grade is penalized and the interview cannot be published. This teaches them a bit about intellectual property and the ethics of representing informants in research.

#### *Omitted or Deleted Interviews*

**P6:** For those few whose interviews are not up on the web for whatever reason have you had anyone upset that their interview was not used?

**MC:** I've never had anyone object to not being on the website. The homepage does have a note inviting anyone who has a correction or an objection to a posted interview to contact me. It gives contact information for sending in a complaint. So once in a while I will get an e-mail from someone who was interviewed who says that the interview has been posted for a few years and they would like to have it taken down. Sometimes students don't do particularly well on the assignment and, after they have matured, they come back and say that they are on the job market or applying for graduate school and would like to have the interview taken down. My policy is that if anyone objects, I remove the interview from the database.

## APPENDIX A: Sample *LivingMusic* Entries

As the URLs for *LivingMusic* interviews are quite long, the following links are embedded in the text below. These interviews can also be accessed from the *LivingMusic* website using the search feature.

[Alan Abrams, founding publicist Motown Records](#)  
[Martina Arroyo, soprano](#)  
[Michael Avsharian, owner, Shar Products](#)  
[J. Peter Burkholder, musicologist](#)  
[Aaron Dworkin, founder of the Sphinx Organization](#)  
[Richard Hawkins, clarinetist and professor](#)  
[Laura Jackson, conductor](#)  
[Libby Larsen, composer](#)  
[Martha Reeves, performer and politician/activist](#)  
[Greg Sandow, writer](#)  
[John Sinclair, music manager and activist](#)  
[Blair Tindall, oboist and writer](#)  
[Denise Tryon, horn, Philadelphia Orchestra](#)

## APPENDIX B: Examples of YouTube projects published to the AmericanMusicTeam channel

As the URLs for YouTube videos are quite long, the following links are embedded in the text below. These videos can also be accessed from the YouTube website using the search feature.

- [Grown from the Grapevine: Race, Motown, and the California Raisins](#) by Manan Desai with Michael Walle, Bradley Nordman and Robert Crozier
- [The Two-Way Street of Music Fandoms](#) by Michelle Carr
- Filk: Science Fiction Folk Music — [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#) by Jessica Getman
- [“One, Two, Three Ring”](#)—an Original Motown Tribute by Hannah Winkler, Stephanie Gooel, Kelly King, and Will Stanton

Appendix C: Approval Form for *LivingMusic* Interviews



Dear \_\_\_\_\_

You have been invited by a student at the University of Michigan School of Music for a class project to respond to questions in either written or interview form concerning contemporary musical life. We hope you can participate and thank you in advance for your time and efforts.

With your permission, we would like to incorporate your responses into an educational website made available through the American Music Institute at the University of Michigan School of Music. You can preview the site at <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/livingmusic>. This project provides a snapshot of contemporary musical life, addressing questions vital to the future of music culture, while bringing history alive for students.

If you participate, your responses would be transcribed into an online database, along with your biographical information and any supporting documents (photos or musical clips), and posted to the site. These pages and any of your comments quoted would be made available on the World Wide Web and used in student and faculty research and possibly scholarly print publications.

You can contribute to this research project at a variety of levels, simply checking one of the boxes on the back. Please return the signed form to your student researcher. Thank you for your generous participation. Your contribution is greatly appreciated by the UM School of Music and myself, but especially by our student.

Sincerely,



Mark Clague, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Musicology  
Associate Director, American Music Institute, UM School of Music  
Faculty Sponsor, Living Music Project

P.S. Feel free to direct any questions, comments, or concerns to me directly via email at [claguem@umich.edu](mailto:claguem@umich.edu). Thank you.

**American Music Institute • University of Michigan • School of Music**  
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**<http://www.umich.edu/~claguem/ami>**  
**606 Burton Memorial Tower • Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1270**

LIVING  MUSIC

*Copyright Release Form & Permission to Publish*

I grant permission to the Regents of the University of Michigan, the University of Michigan School of Music, faculty sponsor Professor Mark Clague, and the student researcher who interviewed me to publish my responses to the LIVING  MUSIC questionnaire or interview and distribute materials electronically as proscribed below. I release the University of Michigan and associated parties from any and all liability that may or could arise from the use of the materials for which I here grant permission. I realize that I have the right to review the information and interview transcript published in the LIVING  MUSIC project and that I may request changes.

YES, you may quote my responses using my name as written here:

My name as I would like it to appear is: \_\_\_\_\_

YES, YOU may quote my responses using only my professional identifier and location (e.g., Orchestral French Horn Player, Chicago Symphony, Chicago, Ill.)

YES, you may quote my responses, but only anonymously

NO, do not quote my responses online or in print, but I'm happy to participate for the purposes of an unpublished class project.

**SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS**


You may use the publicity photo I have provided. Photo credit to: \_\_\_\_\_


You may use the musical sample I have provided. Please describe:

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** please provide your interviewer with a brief bio for the LIVING  MUSIC site. You are invited to preview your interview before it is posted and you may submit additions or corrections via the corrections link on the site at any time.

Thanks so much for supporting the LIVING  MUSIC project.

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