

Review Essay: Music Library and Research Guides

Pauline Shaw Bayne. *A Guide to Library Research in Music*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008. 290 pages. \$75.00.
ISBN 978-0-8108-6148-0
Paper (\$45.00) ISBN 978-0-8108-6211-1

Jane Gottlieb. *Music Library and Research Skills*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009. 384 pages. \$70.20.
ISBN 978-0-1315-8434-1

Laurie J. Sampsel. *Music Research: A Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 352 pages. \$49.95.
ISBN 978-0-1951-7119-8

Richard J. Wingell and Silvia Herzog. *Introduction to Research in Music*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2000. 283 pages. \$102.20.
ISBN 978-0-1301-4332-7

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The past few years have seen the publication of several textbooks designed for courses in music research—courses that have long been a staple of the curriculum for music graduate students. The four volumes reviewed here represent the long years of experience in teaching such courses by three librarians and two musicologists, who draw on their extensive knowledge of reference sources and music scholarship. All four contain excellent music reference materials, but they differ in their selection of sources, level of detail, and, to a lesser extent, overall approach. Examination of the four textbooks and their pedagogical approaches together inevitably leads to questions surrounding the central purpose and methods of music research classes. Is their primary aim simply to expose students to library resources? How can beginning scholars become familiar with the research process? And what are the core skills that students in music research classes should acquire?

To produce music research textbooks in these times perhaps requires a certain level of bravery, as electronic media have completely transformed both research and scholarship, as well as the world of the students taking such classes. While any textbook stands in danger of becoming outdated, works about research resources are particularly vulnerable in this regard. Indeed, the books considered here, some only three or four years old, all recommend websites that no longer exist or have since been radically transformed—through no fault of the textbook authors. In *A Guide to Library Research in Music*, Pauline Shaw Bayne heralds “metasearching” as forthcoming, but it is now a standard feature of many library websites. The oldest of the four books, Richard Wingell and Silvia Herzog’s *Introduction to Research in Music*, was published over a decade ago, and thus contains no mention of resources that have now become central to research: *Grove Music Online* or *JSTOR*, for example. Its discussion of the amount of RAM needed for online research will seem to twenty-first century students as antiquated as a medieval manuscript, though it would be unfortunate if this were to distract its readers from taking its otherwise valuable contents seriously.

Such unavoidable inaccuracies aside, most forms of electronic sources (beyond the basic subscription indexes to music periodicals) remain the elephant in the room in these books. Ironically, despite being the oldest of the textbooks, Wingell and Herzog’s volume divides research sources into “print” and “electronic,” the latter in a well-organized chapter of basic websites, many of which are still extant. Sampsel’s comparable chapter, though much less strictly music-oriented, is more up-to-date. Sampsel’s book also refers the reader to a complementary website (via oup.com) that contains some updates and additional sources, but centers more on live links for websites included in the hardcopy book; its “update” appears to be from 2008. Other than a brief mention of Wikipedia’s lack of traditional editorship and review processes, the organization of Bayne’s book relegates web resources to half a chapter (“Other Discovery Methods: Experts and the Internet”). Jane Gottlieb’s *Music Library and Research Skills* also seems oriented primarily toward hard copy materials, although web-based sources do appear in her lists. This is not to suggest that such an emphasis is misplaced, as music students should certainly be aware that peer-reviewed scholarship in music is still published in monographs and other venues often unavailable (at least until next week) on their Kindles. What the texts lack is a full explanation, in student-friendly language, of how scholarly processes of the discipline may or may not coincide with what researchers can most easily access on their phones and *why* they should engage with library stacks and hardcover books. The contemporary student will need more convincing that the fine reference tools and searching suggestions offered by these texts are relevant. Unfortunately, the textbooks are most often written as if students already understand the context

for producing music scholarship and as if all they need is a list of reliable locations in which to search.

In addition to the elephantine internet, there are ghosts that linger in these books—in particular, those of Vincent Duckles and Ida Reed, editors of the magnificent music bibliography, *Music Reference and Research Materials*, which has served as the primary text for many music research courses for decades.¹ Such courses are typically known not as “research” courses but as music “bibliography” courses, conceived as a survey of basic reference tools and secondary scholarship to be mastered. Rather than produce original research papers, students in these classes often create annotated bibliographies. The concept behind this sort of survey is that there exists a “core literature” with which all students should become familiar.

Three of the textbooks show evidence of this style of teaching. Gottlieb’s and Sampsel’s books are largely organized by types of sources; chapter headings cover bibliographies of literature and music, dictionaries and encyclopedias, discographies, thematic catalogs, and so forth. Bayne’s book opens with reference sources and a discussion of the writing process, followed by details of searching techniques, then an overview of music literature that focuses heavily on the breakdown of the Library of Congress Classification system. In these three books, large portions of the text consist, in fact, of bibliographic citations. Most of the books provide citations within chapters (with varying degrees of annotation), while Bayne lists all sources in a bibliography in the back of the book. In all four textbooks, some sections consist of prose to be read, while other sections contain bibliographies to be consulted, but the problems come when the authors switch rapidly from one to the other. Thus, the prose in both Bayne’s and Gottlieb’s texts frequently breaks down into lists that are not reader-friendly.

Bayne helpfully provides asterisks for those reference sources she finds exceptionally useful, while possibly leading the reader to assume that the remainder are somehow less significant. Gottlieb’s text shows particular emphasis on “famous” historical sources, including such notable tomes as Johann Tinctoris’s *Diffinitorium musices*, Charles Burney’s *A General History of Music*, or François-Joseph Fétis’s *Biographie universelle*. Thus, there are often strange bedfellows in Gottlieb’s book; for example, Michael Praetorius’s seventeenth-century *Syntagma Musicum* turns up alongside the *New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*. Unknowing students may not have the critical framework to recognize the important differences between historical sources and contemporary scholarship, nor may they develop fundamental concepts about

1. Vincent H. Duckles and Ida Reed, *Music Reference and Research Materials: An Annotated Bibliography*, 5th ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997).

reference tools when bibliographies and indexes are mixed with secondary sources such as books and articles, as in the bibliographic section of Wingell and Herzog's book.

Sampsel's representative bibliographic resources are well balanced and not overly extensive, and they are accompanied by boxed checklists for evaluating the various types of tools. There are many helpful illustrations of library catalogs, databases, search engines, and webpages in the book, and the author's annotations are consistently readable and useful. But the basis for the selection of sources is not always clear: why, for example, would music majors engaging in research need citations of several music appreciation books intended for nonmusicians? Here, the idea of a core body of sources that all students "should know," including pedagogical ones, seemingly trumps the research skills to find materials related to an individual student's interests. Teachers in search of a book that is primarily a bibliography of reference sources and secondary scholarship might also consider Phillip D. Crabtree and Donald H. Foster's *Sourcebook for Research in Music* (2005, updated in a second edition by Allen Scott). This book, while containing excellent glossaries of publishing, research, and foreign language terms (as well as the Library of Congress and Dewey classification schemes), does not aspire to be anything more than a basic bibliography.²

Ultimately the books reviewed here, or at least large sections of them, are more about sources and bibliography than about research skills. They sometimes seem more like miniaturized, updated versions of Duckles and Reed than pedagogical texts—in short, a sort of "Duckles light." The notable exceptions are the central section of Bayne's textbook, which covers subject headings and keyword searching, and Wingell and Herzog's *Introduction to Research in Music*, less than half of which is source-oriented. The second half of Wingell and Herzog centers entirely on the writing process: establishing a thesis, outlining, and proper citation procedures, concluding with a sample scholarly article and a commentary on its organization and tone. Thus much of *Introduction to Research in Music* is primarily a writing and style guide. However, the textbook is the most expensive of the four reviewed, and instructors concerned about their students' pocketbooks could select Sampsel's *Music Research* and a good writing book, such as *The Craft of Research* or *The Elements of Style*, or even Jonathan Bellman's pricier *A Short Guide to Writing about Music*, and their students might easily pay far less for their course materials.³

2. Phillip D. Crabtree, Donald H. Foster, and D. Allen Scott, *Sourcebook for Research in Music*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

3. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory C. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); William Strunk and E. B. White, *The*

In the past few decades, the explosion of topics beyond the classical canon has correspondingly expanded the potential research interests of students. One cannot help but question the notion that there is a large, central body of tools (beyond a mere handful such as *Grove Music Online* and periodical databases) with which all graduate students in music should familiarize themselves. While the textbooks reviewed here will be entirely appropriate for many students, all four books display a distinct bias toward the Western European classical canon; Sampsel even lists the twenty-three composers (all European except for Charles Ives) she uses as examples in an appendix. One can readily imagine that students who want to research hip hop or the music in Bollywood films will find the books' resources far less helpful than those interested in Bach or Mozart. These texts are not without non-Western music or popular music sources, but because they occur less frequently, such works seem to be an anomaly, as when a discography for the Pet Shop Boys jarringly turns up between those for the New York Philharmonic and Sergei Rachmaninoff. There is little suggestion that students might engage in any kind of scholarship that does not center largely on published sources, such as interviewing living composers or analyzing YouTube videos; "music research" and "music library research" are synonymous here.

Sometimes it seems that the reviewed volumes suffer from a lack of clarity about who their readership is meant to be. For example, large portions of Gottlieb's *Music Library and Research Skills* are more appropriate for a future music librarian than the average music graduate student, with frequent forays paying homage to the careers of important music bibliographers. Gottlieb sometimes provides helpful definitions of terms, but her choices can be problematic. She defines "bibliography," which students might well know, but not "classified," which they may believe is a term that refers to secret government documents. In several of the volumes, unfamiliar terms (such as "Festschrift") are used numerous times before they are explained. Perhaps the most helpful portions of Gottlieb's book are the "real life scenarios" set off from the text in boxes, which thoughtfully and reliably answer typical student questions about how to find an individual item or how to deal with a research issue or problem. But on other occasions, the realities of average students are forgotten. Gottlieb's wide-reaching opening chapter launches headfirst into the entire world of libraries, including the internet, Worldcat, a list of major research collections worldwide (with bibliographies of writings about them in various languages), indications of how RISM C can help locate manuscripts, and basic cataloging practices (such as subject heading and uniform titles)—not to

Elements of Style, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999); and Jonathan Bellman, *A Short Guide to Writing About Music*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).

mention a section on citation style and writing guides. This sweeping overview is clearly intended to open a student's eyes to a larger research world, but it has the potential to be completely overwhelming for first semester master's students, perhaps with limited foreign language skills, who need to locate appropriate sources for a term paper in a music library that is larger than the college library at their undergraduate institution. Attuned only to Google-based searching, many students still need to learn the basic skills of library catalog use, rather than to read articles in German on the history of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Wingell and Herzog's book shows some sensitivity to the worlds of real students, detailing many examples of what students typically do wrong in their search processes and writing. But their framework for research is primarily musicological, as evidenced by the long, aptly illustrated chapter on "The History of Notation, Publishing, and Printing," which separates the bibliographical and writing halves of the volume. (Gottlieb's volume likewise covers music printing.) The chapter concentrates on pre-Baroque sources and may not be of interest to instructors who do not include this material in their courses. A later section on archival research begins with the example of the holdings of the Berlin Singakademie retrieved from their relocation to the Ukraine and now available for research—a fine thing for a musicologist with a travel grant, but perhaps not the most comprehensible example for the beginning researcher majoring in saxophone. Wingell's and Herzog's explanation of how performers, composers and music educators (not just musicologists), have contributed to music scholarship is full of admirable examples, but it may appear a little condescending to some students.

In spite of good intentions and excellent content, the texts reviewed often become mired in their source-based methodology. Instead of merely teaching a list of tools, a course in research should also endeavor to teach students the necessary skills to use them. In just one example, students may be befuddled by the huge number of abbreviations and acronyms used in reference tools; they may have to be taught to look for the list of explanations of them—something not emphasized in any of the four volumes. Although these texts are excellent bibliographic tools in and of themselves, none of them does a particularly outstanding job in explaining the overall research process to the uninitiated student. Their authors would have done well to have taken into account the approach (if not the specific content) of John Druesedow's now almost archaic *Library Research Guide to Music: Illustrated Search Strategy and Sources*, which traces an actual student project throughout the book, and thus is as much about the research process itself as it is about "The

Literature.”⁴ Bayne’s emphasis on library cataloging results in good explanations of how subject headings, uniform titles, and keyword searching work; her book includes helpful charts to guide students in constructing Boolean searches. Sampsel also includes “Search tips,” but her Boolean diagrams and information about truncation are buried in an appendix at the end of the book, not highlighted in the text where students are more likely to find them.

An alternative for instructors who wish to teach students search skills is Thomas Mann’s *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*, which is organized by type of search strategy, not type of reference tool, and explains in great detail how and why each type of approach is useful.⁵ But this book, too, has become dated, and as it is not devoted specifically to music, students may not be immediately convinced of its relevance. Nonetheless, at less than half the price of the cheapest of the four music texts here, it is worth consideration.

Given these volumes’ bibliographic focus, the ultimate goal of research—the production of new knowledge or, for less mature students, the synthesis of available ideas—sometimes becomes completely overshadowed. All four books dutifully include information on making citations and list styles and writing guides, but just as they deal more with the “what” than the “how” of research, Bayne, Gottlieb, and Sampsel seem less interested in its outcomes. Of the four textbooks, Wingell and Herzog’s most effectively stresses the creative nature of research and the need to produce ideas. Bayne’s book does tackle the nature of student projects and the difficulties of creating original research, but her sample student assignments, such as program notes, unfortunately do not serve as admirable role models. Such samples need to look like actual student assignments, presenting achievable models for beginning scholars; however, when the examples need a good edit, it is difficult to convey best practices. Finally, none of the four volumes consider that the results of student research might take the form of anything other than a conventional term paper, such as a Powerpoint presentation or a website.

All four texts will certainly inform students about the wealth of resources available to them in their local music library, and Wingell and Herzog’s book will best assist them in thinking about the construction of term papers. All four can be successfully adopted for music research courses. But none of these books will convey to students how intellectually engaging and—dare we admit it?—how *fun* research in music can be. Nowhere does any of the prose sparkle with the kind of excitement that researchers traversing the stacks—or glued to their laptops, or opening the archival box for the first time—

4. John E. Druesedow, *Library Research Guide to Music: Illustrated Search Strategy and Sources* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Pierian Press, 1982).

5. Thomas Mann, *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

genuinely feel. Instructors who adopt these books will need to model the joys of exploration and discovery in their classroom, designing assignments that challenge students to learn about the disciplinary construction of knowledge and the great value of the meanings transmitted through research.