[*Music Research Data Management: A Guide for Librarians*](#). **By Amy S. Jackson and Sean Luyk**. Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions Inc., 2020. 142 pp. ISBN: 9780895798909.

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Amy S. Jackson and Sean Luyk carve out new territory for music librarianship in the transitional spaces between scientific research data management (RDM) and scholarship in music and dance in *Music Research Data Management: A Guide for Librarians*. The authors argue that the inputs and outputs of research in the performing arts are data and are deserving of long-term preservation. They see the music librarian as occupying a place within a nexus of experts who together contribute to the work of collecting, organizing, describing, and preserving data to ensure its discoverability and reusability. Performing arts researchers—with the exception of those engaged in technical sub-specialties such as music information retrieval, music encoding, and digital signal processing—are reluctant to use the word "data" to describe their sources. The authors successfully build a case for raising awareness of RDM practices within performing arts disciplines for the purpose of seeding future cross-disciplinary research. They contend that arts and humanities librarians have an important interpretive role to perform at the interface of scientific and cultural research domains.

After a short introduction and a chapter on music data that grapples with definitions and standards, Jackson and Luyk organize their chapters by musical discipline, a sensible choice given their emphasis on the social aspects of research cultures. In each of the chapters on musicology and music theory, ethnomusicology, composition, music education, music performance, and dance performance (chapters 3–8), the authors first describe what is characteristic about that discipline's research process, as seen from a research data management perspective, then discuss how data is found and shared by scholars of the discipline. This latter discussion delves into the history of the discipline as it relates to researchers' sources, methods, and products. To give an example, the authors describe how intricately the discipline of ethnomusicology is tied to the history of recorded

sound and the eventual ability to make one's own field recordings. The field recordings are the data in this case, as are the annotations, notes, images, spreadsheets, and whatever else supports the researcher's inquiry. This "data abundance" (p. 61) is a source of some concern since it is often kept on personal hard drives and not preserved. Of course, the study of sound recordings is not unique to ethnomusicology, and the authors' organization of the book by discipline does result in the occasional redundancy, as there is some overlap in terms of the media and platforms used in each. With that said, *Music Research Data Management* may easily be read selectively for the areas of greatest interest to the reader.

The sections on sharing data, found in each disciplinary chapter, may arguably be more aspirational for now. Despite the existence of some well-known repositories and platforms, such as IMSLP and YouTube, ethical, legal, technical, and social barriers abound in all musical fields. There is some cause for hope, however, and the authors tend to frame their recommendations in terms of least to greatest effort, all while flagging the trade-offs involved with each. For example, chapter 2 includes an extremely helpful table (p. 40) that assesses the current terrain of openly available online platforms for their strengths and weaknesses in terms of streaming support, metadata, intellectual property policies, and their suitability (or lack thereof) for long-term archiving. The authors generally present a range of recommendations suitable for institutions with varying levels of resources to commit to research data management. Emerging as we are from the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that libraries are all feeling overstretched. The "good for now" solutions may be the only actionable steps in the near term. Of course, Jackson and Luyk submitted their book manuscript and copy edits before the pandemic. While neoliberal austerity was certainly a factor beforehand, the authors had no way to foresee the extra turn of the knife COVID-19 would bring to library budgets and staffing. Nonetheless, reading their book in this particular moment may make their recommendations appear a bit rosy or optimistic, with too great a responsibility placed on the shoulders of individual librarians.

Additionally, as a consequence of making a case for research data management in *all* fields of music study, Jackson and Luyk blur the distinctions between two separate curatorial fields: research data management and digital preservation. The study of music is often constructed into binaries, such as the theoretical (music theory, musicology, ethnomusicology) and the practical (e.g., performance and composition). The authors seem to suggest that treating the outputs of these fields as separate obscures the very real data management needs in all of them. After all, performers do research just as musicologists do; only the outputs differ. While their point is well taken, there are conceptual and concrete differences in the data of these disciplines. For example, performers produce websites, social media posts, concert programs and flyers, while composers may have versions of their works saved in open or proprietary music notation file formats; these are dissimilar to the typical musicology outputs.[1] By glossing over these distinctions of kind, the authors may disguise

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[1] For an eye-opening discussion of what it takes to preserve the output of a composer active in the 1990s, see Doug Reside, "'Last Modified January 1996': The Digital History of *RENT*," *Theatre Survey* 52, no. 2 (2011): 35-40.

the complexity of the role they encourage librarians to adopt. Experts in digital preservation and data management may use similar tools, but they tend to pursue separate professional tracks. Scientific research data managers don't often encounter the plethora of media, formats, and mediums that are commonplace in the performing arts, and for which digital preservationists are better prepared. Underplaying the boundaries of these two specializations with only glancing acknowledgement of the complexity involved adds to the perceived burden of constructions like "libraries should" and "libraries are well positioned" and "librarians can help," even though the authors undoubtedly intend to convey a hopeful message about a new growth area.

The authors augment their claims wherever possible with references to existing guidelines, policies, and statements of professional organizations in addition to scholarly citations. It is of immense help to the reader to examine how some institutions have developed policies and practices oriented towards their specific communities of music researchers and performers. The authors do not enter into discussions of collections management or cost-benefit analysis, although they do reference personal digital archiving as a possibility in cases where the institution cannot or will not intervene. This omission is probably deliberate, as there will be a number of local factors influencing a librarian's decision-making in this space. At a basic level, however, it is important to acknowledge that some kind of selection process or prioritization needs to occur. As Trevor Owens states in *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, we need to "accept and embrace the archival sliver," since saving everything is not an option and never was.[2]

One of the authors' best and strongest points is that music librarians can exercise a critical advocacy and awareness-building role, even without being experts in all aspects of the data preservation pipeline, without specialized colleagues or an institutional repository to lean on, and most importantly without managing the data *themselves*. Jackson and Luyk's recommendations in such cases might be described as concierge services that point researchers to resources both in the college or university and beyond.[3] In other words, music librarians can guide researchers and performers to make more informed choices about how to organize their research materials, where to share their work, what to be mindful of before they start to capture their data, and where to go to find more information. Despite (and also because of) our current lean times, librarians need to be future-minded about their work, and at this point it seems inarguable that the demands of data-centric research will only continue to grow.

Co-authors Amy Jackson and Sean Luyk bring a wide range of expertise to this volume. Jackson has a research background in data curation in the arts, music librarianship, metadata and discovery, and music performance. Luyk has published on the topics of collecting local music, digital curation, and governance in Canadian academic libraries. *Music Research Data Management* is an excellent

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[2] Trevor Owens, *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 8.
[3] Chris Bourg, "The Library Concierge Project at Stanford University," *The Journal of Creative Library Practice*, June 6, 2013, https://creativelibrarypractice.org/2013/06/06/the-library-concierge-project-at-stanford-university/.

introduction to research data management for the musical domain, a topic that is currently under-researched and under-resourced but that will likely grow in importance as funder mandates and open access policies become more stringent. This volume will be of interest to anyone who wishes to develop their knowledge of music data curation, music librarians and archivists perhaps foremost, but also music researchers, performers, and data librarians in the sciences and social sciences.