IN THEIR OWN WORDS
Using text analysis to identify musicologists’ attitudes towards technology

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“Aim”
- much development of computer technology for musicology
- study the use and non-use of technology by musicologists
- discover their attitudes towards technology
- develop musicology-centred design practice

“Aims”
- online questionnaire (n=621)
- quantitative data
- open questions about experiences and values
- text analysis based on Hirsch index (h-index)
- h-point: term rank = term frequency in responses
- lower threshold for important thematic words

“Objectives”
- Participants: solo or employed; range of disciplines; varying levels of digital skills; tend to overestimate themselves; signs of insecurity
- Practices: need context-dependent access; physical and digital artefacts; use software when it contributes to workflow; digital methodologies not yet well integrated in mainstream practice; access information about music, rather than music
- Values and attitudes: positive and negative views often held simultaneously; excited about increased access; superficiality of digital research may undermine discipline; importance of completeness, accuracy, reliability, serendipity, materiality

“Motivation”
- more development of computer technology for musicology
- addressed transformative potential of this technology
- mismatch between development and use: uptake is low
- technophobia or other reasons?
- towards a sounder approach to system development

Method
- online questionnaire (n=621)
- quantitative data
- open questions about experiences and values
- text analysis based on Hirsch index (h-index)
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Comparison of digital skills by age group

- “Life was so much easier in the old days when I just typed up my paper and used handtranscribed notes” (326)
- “It is clumsy, idiotic, and miserable to use. Inserting images (such as musical examples) is a nightmare” (613)
- “...the more advanced transcription software... produces fluff instead of a sound musical example” (222)

- “I can’t stand the quirks and glitches of the mainstream software” (532)
- “Any interaction with Finale/Sibelius [sic] is a frustrating experience” (298)
- “Every time I come back to it, it feels like I have to learn it all over again. I wish they were more intuitive to use” (163)

- “Those who do benefit because they have a university job, and those who have much less benefit because they are independent” (117)
- “Digital material can never be posted anywhere” (492)
- “...the sheer amount of bits one gets for a topic can be daunting” (253)
- “Browsing in the digital realm is a far less productive activity than browsing in library stacks” (68)
- “do not always capture the creative process, or locations of materials” (426)

- “The vast majority of resources have not been digitized” (65)
- “Technology can help us to answer research questions more easily and efficiently. It is not possible to devote new research questions. But it cannot replace the grumpy staff in the back rooms” (680)
- “musicology will be Too superficial and lose authority as a serious contribution to society” (680)

- “It is helpful to have access to my research almost wherever I am” (991)
- “I cannot think what I would be able to do without this software!” (600)
- “the ability to consult manuscripts and prints located around the world is remarkably helpful” (600)
- “I borrowed my own music project: I happily use Litypond for the transcription of Ottoman music with whose special requirements (specific accidentals, rhythmic periods of up to 8 bars) most commercial typesetting programs don’t easily cope. Litypond also allows for lots of tricks, annotations etc.” (610)

- “All Digital material can never be posted anywhere” (492)
- “...the sheer amount of bits one gets for a topic can be daunting” (253)
- “Browsing in the digital realm is a far less productive activity than browsing in library stacks” (68)
- “do not always capture the creative process, or locations of materials” (426)

- “Potential to formulate research questions which might be unfeasible” (603)
- “I can often have them immediately” (199)
- “...many things can be easily ‘counted’, not the gratifying feeling that musicologists in the past had” (689)
- “people, music, documents, can be accessed around the world” (136)

- “Searching for Cantus Firmus lines in 16th-century masses is now trivial” (586)
- “Quantitative work is a wonderful complement to the usual focus on the unique and individual” (583)

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“Until analytical tools and services are more sophisticated, robust, transparent, and easy to use for the motivated humanities researcher, it will be difficult to attract a broad base of interest within the humanities community.”
Christine Borgman, 2009

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“I think they [the benefits] are astronomical. I can read about Handel and his Messiah creation until I am blue in the face and tell students how magnificient the work is...but I truly feel that until I show them the digitized copy from the British Library and page through it with them virtually, the facts and the marvel of it all simply don’t sink into their minds... Technology makes it possible to open up a world of knowledge at their fingertips. Suddenly they aren’t in backwater Oklahoma any longer, they’re sitting on a magic carpet of technology whisking themselves away to London or Cairo or St. Petersburg to see history happen with an immediacy that is life changing if they have the sense to see it.”