

## Web Archives for Music Research

A European national library has set a strategic goal to make more of its cultural heritage materials accessible and engaging for researchers by 2024. In this paper, we present findings from an advocacy initiative targeted at researchers at national universities in music-related fields.

Danish universities engage in a wide range of music-related research, spanning from musicology and composition to music psychology and music technology. Researchers explore everything from musical perception and the cultural significance of music to the development of new digital tools for music production. Additionally, there is a focus on the role of music in society, including its influence on identity and social interaction. Collaborations between disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and arts contribute to a deeper understanding of music's complex nature and its significance in people's lives. Music collections and the Web archive at the national library are documenting the roles music plays in historic and contemporary societies (Royal Danish Library, n.d.-a; Royal Danish Library, n.d.-b).

The national web archive provides primary sources and contextual information relevant to music researchers as they engage with our music collections. However, there is room for improvement in the connection between these collections and our understanding of user needs. Ethnomusicology researchers argue that archivists and archives should play a more proactive role: not only can existing collections be better utilised, and usefully and meaningfully disseminated, but the way that archiving is done can also be transformed better to meet the needs of the cultural lives of those communities who find existing collections of particular value (Landau & Topp Fargion, 2012). Digital humanities supported by larger amounts of available data challenges the music related fields to reflect on their data analysis and use of computational methods (Egan, 2021).

Reports by Healy et al. (2022) and Healy & Byrne (2023) explore the challenges researchers face when using web archives, highlighting the ongoing need to examine the skills, tools, and methods associated with web archiving. Collaborations between those who create the data and those who want to use the data is proving to be a proactive solution for increasing scholarly engagement with web archives (Healy & Byrne, 2023 p. vii). Additionally, the sounds of the web—from MIDI to streaming—are an integral part of its history, yet this aspect is often overlooked by tools like the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (Morris, 2019).

Through semi-structured interviews with curators, librarians, and music researchers at universities, we identify key barriers to access and user requirements for improved utilization of web archival resources. Web archiving is often suffused in technical details of maintaining the archival process of running and planning web crawls that produce the Web archive. Recent political economical prioritizations have minimized the structural framework that support advisory meetings between curators, researchers, and the commercial sectors. As a result, curators, who are preoccupied with technical tasks, receive less input from researchers. This lack of communication leaves little time for curators to stay updated on the evolving needs and desires of various research fields that could benefit from library collections. Our advocacy initiative also allows us to summarize current research trends as feedback for the web curators. In conclusion, we describe how the web curators processed our findings into suggestions for updates and refinements to web crawling strategies and the built-in tools in the SolrWayBack installation.

## References

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