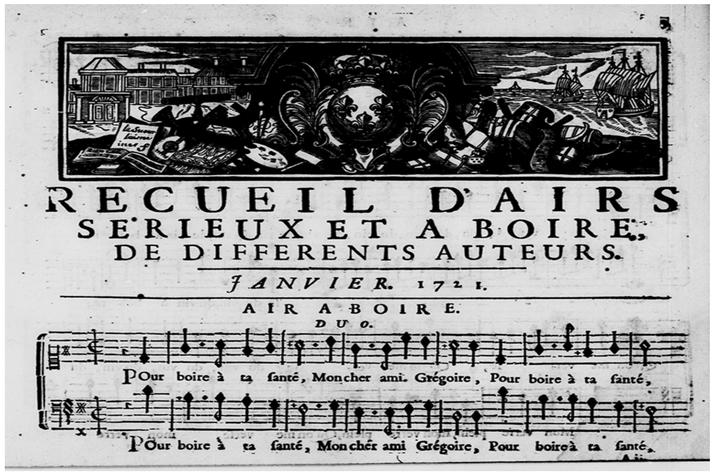
"Recueil D'airs" Jacquet de la Guerre, Elizabeth-Claude

Abstract

Representation is one of the most powerful impacts that archives can make on communities. Ensuring that all people's works, lives, and information is being preserved in an archive is what fuels a 21st-century archivist. However, establishing an equal representation of minorities is not enough to create a more inclusive world, archivists must also create ways for people to access that information. The creation of digital libraries and other online resources allows for more people to use the resources collected, see themselves and their work represented, and gain an understanding of the artists who have come before them. The Ars Femina Archive (AFA) is housed at Indiana University Southeast. The AFA is a collection of music written by women from before the 1800s. This archive preserves and celebrates the impact that women in history have had on music. Women are largely underrepresented in the arts and especially in music, the AFA allows people from around the world to research and access musical compositions created by women. This poster will focus on the AFA itself, and why creating diverse digital collections will lead to a more inclusive future.

Research Questions

- R1: What is the mission of the collection, and how is its mission furthered through digitization?
- R2: What is contained in the collection, and how is it organized?
- R3: What are the possible outcomes of making this collection available digitally?
- R4: What are the benefits of preserving works by women and other underrepresented groups?
- R5: How does programing further the mission of the collection?

Background

The Ars Femina Ensemble was founded in 1985 by Susan Reigler, William Bauer, and Jim Oxyer, in Louisville Kentucky (Mayer, 1991). The chamber group performed, and recorded music written by women composers who lived from the 1500s to the 1800s.

The Ars Femina Archive was created by the Ars Femina Ensemble to house their personal collection of music composed by women who lived between the 1500s and 1800s (Mayer, 1991). In 2000, a large portion of the archival collection was donated to IU Southeast, and the collection will eventually include nearly 3,000 scores in print, microfilm, and microfiche form. The print, microfilm, and microfiche musical scores housed at IU Southeast were digitized between 2004 and 2010 through a grant written by IU Southeast librarian Melanie Hughes (2002). Since 2010 though, the digital objects have been largely unused, due to technological and technical challenges of hosting the images online.

Representing Women Composers through Digital Archives

Veronica Palensky
University of Southern Mississippi, Student
Indiana University Southeast, Archival Intern

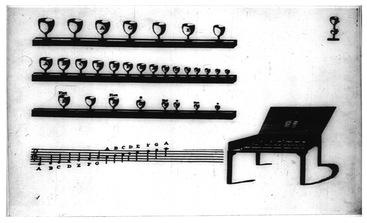
Results

R1: Mission

- The main mission of the collection is to further the performance of music written by women composers who lived between 1500 to 1800.
- The collection serves both musical and historical studies centered around women composers, but also offers research and scholarship prospects and musical and artistic prospects, including performance and score study for musicians.
- The mission of this collection is furthered through digitization to make the underrepresented composer's music accessible to researchers, musicians, and teachers, interested in learning more about women composers.

R2: Organization and Collection

- 371 pieces between 179 composers
- Genres of music, include oratorios, ballets, sonatas, operas, and symphonies.
- Composers represent England, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and a handful of other countries.
- Dates of pieces range from 1618 to 1866, but there are some pieces with unknown dates.
- The pieces are organized first by composer's last name, then composition or work title, and movements within those works.



"Instructions on Musical Glasses" Ford, Ann

R3: Digitization

- Improves the ability to research materials for the subjects of women and gender studies, music and music history, cultural backgrounds, and other subjects.
- Access to musical works benefits a wider number of musicians than if the pieces were either not digitized or not open access.
- Previous research with related digitization efforts and outcomes: Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins at Columbus State University in Columbus Georgia (Grimsley, 2006).

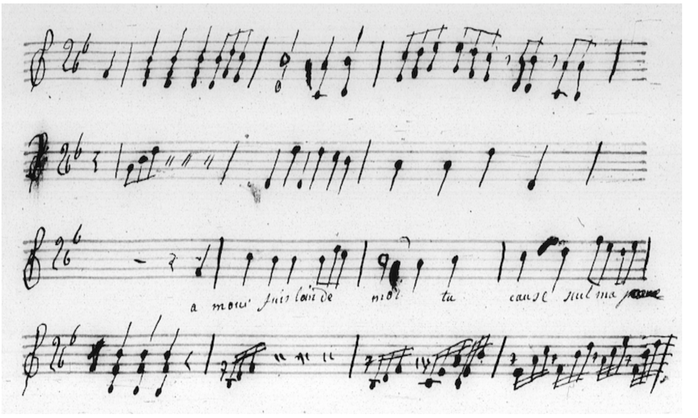
R4: Preservation of works by women and other underrepresented groups

- Access to the materials in this collection will help to diversify the pool of musical pieces available for various purposes.
- The preservation of music by homogenous groups, typically white and male, do not accurately preserve or document musical trends or culture.
- Helps create diversity among archives, more accurate cultural pictures of music history, and the ability for more people to see themselves represented in archives.
- Similar collections: Gallica Digital Library and the International Music Score Library Project

R5: Programing

- Programming and facilitating concerts to perform the music from the collection furthers the mission of featuring music composed by women.
- If the music is not performed, the possibility for the composers to remain mostly unknown is greater.
- The organization of a concert of music from the IU Southeast Special collections, prominently featuring the Ars Femina Archive's collection greatly furthers its mission.

Methodology

1. Organizing archival files
2. Collecting informational resources relating to the archive
3. Synthesizing information about the archive and related themes
4. Making digital objects and other findings assessable online
5. Facilitate programing related to the archival collection

"Song in the Autograph of Marie Antoinette"

Conclusion

The processing and organizing of digital files for this collection will aid in the Ars Femina Archive's mission of promoting the music of women composers from 1500 to 1800. The now accessible collection, furthered by the creation of materials including an electronic finding aid, and an Ars Femina LibGuide (libguides.ius.edu/arsfemina), will allow for more in-depth research and musical performance of this collection, and possibly other underrepresented composers. Overall, the organization, collection, creation of access, and accompanying materials have helped to further the collection's mission through digitization and will help to preserve and promote the collection and the creation of collections of underrepresented groups.

Further research on the Ars Femina Archive, would benefit from the collection of more material relating to the archive and its subjects, and other analyses of the collection. Additional materials might include the creation of bibliographies on women composers from the time-period, the publishing of articles where a similar methodology is used on similar collections, and more interviews with the Ars Femina Ensemble members. Additional research could also relate to discerning certain information relating to the composers themselves, such as which lived as nuns in convents, where they had more access to composition, musical analysis of many of the pieces, and other collection-based scores or biographical research on the collection's contents.

References

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Grimsley, R. L. (2006). Discovering "Blind" Tom Wiggins: Creating Digital Access to Original Sheet Music at the Columbus State University Archives. *Music Reference Services Quarterly, 10(2), 1–11.* https://doi-org.lynx.lib.usm.edu/10.1300/J116v10n02-01

Hughes, M. (2002). Ars Femina Digital Library. *Proposal for the Ameritech Fellows Program.*