**Introduction**

The digital world is a marvel. Everywhere one looks, the landscape of music has changed. Digital music libraries are, by this point, a familiar concept; one need only look at the history of Napster to see the relationship between music and the online world. Navigating this increasingly huge universe of archives, sound clips, and musical scores can seem daunting. Fortunately, many librarians and archivists have embraced the challenge of wrangling a seemingly neverending collection. This paper seeks to highlight a few of these resources and to evaluate their effectiveness in providing digital alternatives.

**DIAMM (the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music)**

The Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music (established in 1998) seeks to preserve internationally studied copies of medieval music, primarily sheet music and other musical documentation. According to their site, “The remit of the project is to photograph and archive images of: all fragments of English polyphonic music written before 1550;

all complete sources of English polyphonic music before 1500, and as many as practically possible 1500-1550; all fragments of European polyphony 1300-1450; as many complete manuscripts of European polyphony 1300-1450, and beyond as is possible and practicable.”

This work overlaps with the historical preservation of manuscripts and early musical prints. The physical collection is reported to be almost entirely in parchment as opposed to paper due to the age of these manuscripts. Given the age of many of these manuscripts, it is surprising that the collection is of such high quality and so extensive. Because this is an international archive, there is also more opportunity for shared responsibility and preservation among various schools and organizations. Upon closer examination of the archive, many items in the collection contained no images. In that sense, it’s just a digital list of physical items that may or may not be available online, which is frustrating for those working remotely who may have wanted to see the collection in greater detail. The Project Description section states: “DIAMM is currently the most comprehensive site for a complete list of polyphonic music manuscripts up to c. 1600.” Given that information, the age of the documents likely plays a factor in whether or not the item could be preserved enough to image for the digital collection. In any case, I did not find this collection to be particularly user-friendly.
 Those interested in medieval studies would surely enjoy this archive, although admittedly it seems like it would be better viewed (carefully) in person, due to the age of the manuscripts.

**University of Wisconsin-Madison: Mills Library Digital Music Collection**

This allows easy access to the “Ask a Librarian” feature at the top right. UWM reports: “Most of our digitized collections are hosted by University of Wisconsin Digital Collections under the name Mills Music Library Digital Collections. There, you can search the collections globally or individually.” There are many examples of Americana in this collection, including the history of German influence on music in Wisconsin. Some of the items in this collection include sound clips of 78-RPM records that were commercially produced in the first half of the 20th century. Another notable part of this collection is the Fiddler’s Contest Scrapbook, which contains records from 1927-28 newspaper articles describing and advertising various fiddling contests for that year in Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and South Dakota. My experience with this archive was that the sound clips were high quality, the database was easy to navigate, and it was relatively simple to find information regarding the project and the surrounding archive. Students, Wisconsin natives, and lovers of Americana alike could benefit from this collection equally.

**International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP): Petrucci Music Library**

This library system was easy to navigate, and I could find items with the top menu bar alone. These were categorized by commercial as well as non-commercial musical works. The archive is user-friendly as it is very much like Wikipedia; everything is alphabetized, categorized in list format, and offers consistent breadcrumbs to navigate from one point to another. As of the 21st of June, 234,000 works have scores or parts in the Petrucci Music Library. New scores and recordings were conveniently located on the front page below this information. According to the “About” page, this library doesn’t appear to have any particular genre of music attached and simply states that some works are in the public domain and some are not. Based on what I have heard about this archive, I imagine it contains something useful for everyone.

**Conclusion**

While these digital libraries differ wildly in ease of use and offer dissimilar musical artifacts and documents, it is still apparent that much needs to be done to perfect and streamline digital music archives. While open access (OA) music can be relatively simple to locate, much digging is still required to weed through unnecessary information and easily find the things one needs.

<https://www.library.wisc.edu/music/home/collections/digital-collections/>

<https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page>

<https://www.diamm.ac.uk/>