Using fieldwork data in publications: musicology

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Role of fieldwork data in (ethno)musicology

- "The fact that musical phenomena are constantly changing challenges the ethnomusicologist to provide continuing interpretations of the world's various musics."
  (Hunter College Music Department, 2005)
Summary

- Role of fieldwork data in (ethno) musicology in relation to communities and other (sub)disciplines
- Citation and quotation: issues for ethnomusicological publications
- The future?
Music researchers in relation to community

- Part of the contract of engagement with community collaborators
- Model of ‘alternating disequilibrium’ (Redmond)
- Mutual obligation - consultants support our research, just as we support theirs
- Fundamental is agreement on shared terrain, and its boundaries
Preservation ethics and the research contract

Frequently the role of the ethnomusicologist as preserver of tradition is acknowledged or even desired by people within the tradition itself. ...

It strikes me that preservation is therefore not just an outgrowth of older scholarly paradigms, but ... an acknowledgment of the realities of musical change as well as part of an implicit contract between the ethnomusicologist and the tradition's native carriers.

Disciplinary issues

- Tensions between ‘anthropological’ and ‘musicological’ approaches within ethnomusicology

- In US ethnomusicology is institutionally separate from other branches of “musicology” therefore need to differentiate approaches

- In Europe and Australia ethnomusicologists tend to be housed with other musicologists
Musicology and linguistics

- Both linguistics and ethnomusicology rely on on qualitative analysis of primary data
- Validity of research outputs judged in part on accuracy of description, transcription and analytical methods based on these
- Preservation of primary data is therefore fundamental to assessment of quality of secondary outputs.
Shared ground ...

ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA
(audio, video, text, image)

Qualitative analytical methodologies

Field linguistics  Ethnomusicology  Anthropology
Other humanities disciplines

- Other disciplines (e.g. textual scholarship and fine arts) are able to quote the objects of their study directly within the research publication.

- Quotation of text is surrounded by a very well-articulated apparatus of conventions and standards for referencing authoritative or widely available editions of works.
By contrast...

- Ethnomusicologists in particular typically have to provide their own indexes and transformations of the aural object (transcriptions or diagrams) to reference it within the work
  - Transcription systems and standards more or less ad hoc (in the sense of adapted to the particular purpose at hand)
- Referenced works (field recordings) typically maintained by researcher and not generally available
- Variety of standards (including none) used for referencing field recordings
Style manuals


- Unpublished archival sources ignored!!
Citation of resource

- “held in my collection”
- “deposited at AIATSIS”
- “AIATSIS tape A17684”
Quotation: Visualising time

- In order to reference within published work, need to transform aural data into 2-dimensional representation
  - Diagrams
  - Transcriptions
Issues with transcription system

- Western musical notation is the only candidate for interoperability standard but poorly adapted to many non-Western musics
  - Diatonic (12-semitone) scale is reference point, unable to cope easily with microtonal variation, non standard scales
  - Difficulty with unmeasured music
  - Lack of timbral notation
- Accuracy vs readability (descriptive vs prescriptive)
Transcriptions are interpretations

- No one correct way to transcribe
- Automatic transcription does not work
- Many attempt to avoid the problem by publishing without attempting direct citation of the music -> words about music but with no apparatus to connect to particular instances of the phenomena
Microtonal transcription attempt - Cath Ellis

- Central Australian style group singing
- Non-diatonic scale
- Ellis theorised (controversially) that arithmetic rather than logarithmic scale
- C. Ellis, “The Pitjantjatjara Kangaroo Song from Karlga” Miscellanea Musicologica 1 (1963)
Timbral notation attempt:
Nick Vines

- Didjeridu player Nicky Djarug (Belyuen), recorded Allan Marett AT86_4, item 9
- Complex harmonic spectrum
- Variety of techniques
- Often only fundamental transcribed
Pitch transform of section of didjeridu
It’s all too hard...

- Example of my transcription of didjeridu-accompanied song
- In this case, only the fundamental pitch of didjeridu is relevant for my discussion
The future: Direct quotation of audio

- Sidecar presentation in conventional publication (inserted CDs etc)
- Direct quotation of aural object within the work allows for testing of researchers’ claims
- Avoids the question of the perfect transcription
- Situation within context of larger corpus
- Exploits fuller range of possibilities offered by corpus aggregation, multimedia potential of electronic medium, networked modes of interaction with the recordings (commenting, online indexing, etc)
- Based on sustainable repositories of research data
How to make it happen

- Infrastructure
  - Trustworthy repositories
  - Appropriate modes of research community accountability with respect to standards, uses, access, rights management ...
  - Pilot studies to prototype workflows, identify issues, etc.
- Lots of researcher commitment
Researcher input

- Securing funding, ethics approval etc
- Creating archivable recordings
- Securing commitments to sustainability from repositories
- Creating adequate metadata records and submitting work to repository
- Indexing, translating, transcribing, more fieldwork ...
Wangga “book” to be published by SUP

- Allan Marett, Linda Barwick, Lysbeth Ford - based on 20 years of fieldwork
- Hundreds of song texts in seven different languages with interlinear glosses, translations, musical and social analysis, linked to images (photos and diagrams), audio, video
- Currently in data preparation phase
Repository relationships

- Served out of Sydney eScholarship repository (archive quality originals will be secured)
- Similar model to conference volume
- Harvestable hence discoverable online (Google scholar etc)
- Variety of possible presentation formats including conventional publication, CD ... (print-on-demand)
Recent developments

- Reassessment of the role of ethnomusicological archives and transcription and analysis
  - community collaborator demand for repatriation of archival sources
  - demand for ethnomusicological input into crossdisciplinary research teams
- Obsolescence of analogue recordings - need for ethnomusicologists to participate in process of transforming our research materials and methods
- Need to interoperable with European-style and American-style research collections
Responsibility to future generations

Audio and video recordings will be the major sources for the future musicological scholarship of this century .... But the recordings available for research and enjoyment in one hundred years may be very few, and may only reflect the commercially viable and popular parts of the world's 20th century repertoire ... By not taking action to preserve their collections, ethnomusicologists are reducing the variety of musical performances available in the future.