Hello! My name is Kerry Masteller, and with my colleague Liz Berndt-Morris, I work in research services at Harvard University’s Loeb Music Library. Today we’re excited to share with you a few of the ways we’ve found to continue working with music-related classes, even in the midst of this semester’s uncertainty.

Like many other institutions, Harvard University moved its classes online for the 2020/21 academic year. For librarians this shift poses new challenges, particularly in reaching students who are new to the university or to music research. I don’t want to understate the additional stress involved in teaching - and in learning - this year, whether it’s caused by worry about health, added caretaking responsibilities, or financial, institutional, or societal inequities.

However, adapting courses for virtual instruction has also encouraged many faculty and librarians to reassess their pedagogical goals, and to experiment with different ways of building their students’ research skills. Whenever possible, we reused or modified existing tutorials, and we’ve been pleased to find that many of our classroom sessions were already well-positioned to make the shift to the virtual environment. Today we’ll talk about what we did, and some ideas you might consider if you find yourself in a similar situation.
In this presentation, we will share successful outreach and instruction strategies that we employed in three music classes: a General Education course on the Golden Record, an undergraduate course on gender and music, and an Introduction to Musicology seminar for new graduate students. We will discuss the role that collaborative design played in the development of both synchronous and asynchronous research modules, and share ideas for increasing student familiarity with library services and resources.
Our first example comes from a class in Harvard’s General Education program on the Voyager Mission’s Golden Record: a recording of natural sounds, spoken greetings, and musical selections sent into space in 1977. In the class, students study the content of the Golden Record and the science of the search for extraterrestrial life, discuss the record’s meaning as an aesthetic and philosophical object, and create a variety of podcasts and multimedia assignments, culminating in a class-curated Golden Record (not actually golden) to be hidden on Harvard’s campus.

General Education courses are open to all undergraduates and assume no prior disciplinary knowledge, and students are required to take one course in each of four broad areas. This class has over 100 students registered, and they can attend lectures synchronously, or watch recordings on their own schedule; about 60% of the class tends to attend the live sessions. That means that when the professor approached us to design and teach a research tutorial for his class, we had a few starting constraints: our visit had to be engaging for the students who were present, while remaining comprehensible to students who were not. Students in the class came from all class years and subject backgrounds - while some might have had music-related research help in the past, others would be in their third week of college or familiar with other disciplines: we couldn’t make assumptions about how much they already knew about music or Harvard’s libraries.
"Tell a Story About This Piece of Music"

The assignment the students were preparing for was a podcast in which they told the story of one selection from the Golden Record: its history, cultural context, and so on. We had up to 70 minutes to spend with the class, and after discussion with the professor, we decided to address four topics:
Students Will Learn

- Search techniques for music
- Music-related research tools
- How to get materials (on-campus or off)
- How to get more help

We also didn’t want to talk for 70 minutes! In in-person classes, we frequently give students time to try their own searches, so we decided to do the same thing in our virtual session, while giving them as many opportunities as possible to contribute during our demonstration. The collaborative functions built into the Zoom platform plus the University’s G-suite gave us the tools we needed, although we were sure to check in with the teaching staff in advance to make sure that everything we planned to use would work in their usual classroom setup.

The professor requested that we introduce sources that would be helpful for research on popular music and world musics; this also gave us the opportunity for some class discussion about how genres of music that weren’t part of the Western European classical canon were represented in scholarship and library collections. During our presentation, we began with two search demos - one geared towards jazz or popular music, and one towards ethnomusicology. In each demo, we began with a simple search, and then used two polls to ask students for feedback about what to do next. We also encouraged students to share their reasoning in Zoom’s chat, or by speaking
up - and students used both means of participation.
Here’s an example: I began with a very basic search in HOLLIS, our library catalog, for a gamelan piece as it’s listed on the Golden Record. As you can see, with only 12, mostly unrelated, results, my search wasn’t satisfactory, so I asked the students for advice. I’ll give you a moment to do the same poll. [launch poll 1] Then I followed their instructions (they chose “Use the title of the piece in the original language”) and from that search introduced the concept of subject headings and the databases on our music research guide. Our next poll asked them where to look for more information, and I’ll let you take it now. [launch poll 2]. You’ll notice that none of the options are bad (and in our post-poll discussion we told students that) - we wanted to use the polls to suggest the variety of ways you could approach a research question.
“Tell a Story About This Piece of Music”

Try your search in HOLLIS. What worked and what didn’t? Figure out adjustments that will improve the quality and relevance of your search results. List what you tried, even if it didn't work, and **highlight** the changes that were most helpful.

Images: [Diagnose Your Search Problems](#)

After our demo, we gave students the chance to try searching on their own. We split the class into 10 breakout rooms, and shared a Google folder with breakout room instructions and a document for them to copy and work through, in which we asked them to document their search process. It was important to have these available for reference throughout the session - if you’re anything like me, you’ve probably had the experience of losing focus in a virtual meeting for just long enough to miss spoken instructions! (We’ll share all our handouts with you, too.) These documents were visible to the entire class and to us, and will remain accessible throughout the semester, so students can refer back to them as they work. We were available to give advice to the groups, and after about 20 minutes we reconvened the entire group to discuss what they’d found, and what questions they still had. Based on their worksheets and the questions they asked, we realized that we needed to explain more about how to widen a search, but they also raised questions about topics ranging from date limits to how to search using non-Roman scripts.

With this structure, we set an expectation early in the session that students would be an active part of the class. By building opportunities for participation that began simply and became increasingly complex - from clicking an answer to a poll, to contributing ideas out loud and in the chat, to working on their own projects - we hoped that more students would feel comfortable joining in as the class progressed. The polls and shared documents also allowed us to keep an eye on how many people were
participating and where they might be running into confusion. Responses were high, indicating engagement from students, and we could see on the Google documents how well the students understood the search strategies.

We didn’t forget about those watching the lecture recording, either. In addition to the lecture recording (edited to remove the time when students were in breakout rooms), we made sure to include a written intro, instructions for the research handout, and links to research guides and tutorials on the class Canvas site. After the session, the professor even received feedback from one of the students who’d watched the video, thanking us for the intro to library tools, which suggests that our goal of making the tutorial accessible to everyone was a success.
Our next examples come from an undergraduate seminar in the Music Department on women creators (broadly construed) in music: as described by the professor, “female and non-binary musicians who have composed, improvised, or collaboratively created music.” This is a much smaller class, meeting synchronously, and we’ve worked frequently with the professor on research tutorials and assignment design.
I audited the first offering of the class in 2019; one of our first reading assignments was to compare Grove’s 2001 and 2018 articles on Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel. While I read, I drew networks of the people mentioned in each article, which I shared with the rest of the class.
You can see at a glance the enormous difference in how her life and work is represented in the two articles. The professor loved them, and decided to make drawing networks or concept maps of the two articles a response paper for this semester’s offering of the class. We considered using visualization software, but decided that for this assignment it made more sense to keep the focus of the lesson on the content, instead of the tool. Each student created a very different visualization - nothing like mine! - and used it to discuss changes in the perception of women’s roles and musical abilities over time.

Also for this class we created a guided assignment around Amy Beach. Amy Beach, for those who might be unfamiliar, was a composer and pianist from the Boston area who performed in the early 20th century. Along with the professor, we discussed the ultimate goal of teaching students how to search for contemporaneous documents using library resources, and how those documents can lead to further inquiries. By creating this as a Google document, we could easily draft the assignment for Professor Shreffler to make comments. We made sure to have clear expectations for student outcomes, including how many documents they should find, how many questions they should answer, and what tools they will have at their disposal for sharing their findings.

We again asked students to consider the question, “What kinds of stories or histories
can we write with different sources?” We provided clear instructions on how to perform a search in a particular database, followed by a few questions for consideration. For example, we asked them to consider how Amy Beach’s name would have been written in newspapers during her lifetime. Is she referred to as Amy, Mrs. H.H.A Beach, or any other variations. This provides an opportunity for students to think about the terms they use and how they relate to the documents and databases they search.
This is an example of our first document type, a concert review of a piano recital from the Boston Daily Globe in 1909. I’ve highlighted a few sentences from the review that might prompt the reader to ask further questions. They read:

“[Mrs. H. H. A. Beach is]...one whose skill as interpreter and ability as composer have made her prominent among musicians, men or women.”

“Besides her larger works...she has written more than 50 compositions for piano...and has proved that women have a creative musical faculty.”

“Mrs. Beach’s audiences are so largely composed of friends that her recitals appear like social receptions where nearly all are acquainted…”

“The sincerity and earnestness of effort shown by Mrs. Beach in her playing provides both instruction and entertainment,...”

When students read this document, it might pose questions about context.
“What kinds of histories can we write with different sources?”

**Historical Concert Reviews Using Newspapers**

Consider the following questions and answer what you can:

**Identification**
What is this thing? Where does it come from? Who wrote it/curated it? When was it made? Why was it made?

**Content**
What kinds of information does the source contain, explicit as well as implicit? What additional knowledge is needed to understand it? How would you obtain this knowledge?

**Creating a historical account**
What methodology would you use in order to use this source as evidence? How reliable is it as a source of historical information? What other sources might contradict this one?

*We provided the following prompts for framing a discussion about the reviews. [click]*

**Identification**
What is this thing? Where does it come from? Who wrote it/curated it? When was it made? Why was it made?

**Content**
What kinds of information does the source contain, explicit as well as implicit? What additional knowledge is needed to understand it? How would you obtain this knowledge?

**Creating a historical account**
What methodology would you use in order to use this source as evidence? How reliable is it as a source of historical information? What other sources might contradict this one?
Identification

“Who was the reviewer and what was their musical background?”

Content

“Why was the BSO playing so many concerts in New York, and how much did regionalism affect reception?”

Creating a historical account

“What was the relationship between the press and canonization?”

A few of the questions students raised in their responses to the reviews they chose include “Who was the reviewer and what was their musical background?”

“Why was the BSO playing so many concerts in New York, and how much did regionalism affect reception?”

“What was the relationship between the press and canonization?”
Historical Concert Programs

**Repertoire/Structure:**
• How are these programs structured?
• What kinds (or genres) of repertoire are included?
• What instruments or voice types are featured?
• How have repertoire and concert formats changed over time

**People/Social Context:**
• Who is the audience for each program?
• Who are the featured performers?
• What is the relationship between the performers?
• How do these figures factor into our current histories of music?

The second material type we included in the assignment was Historical Concert programs, also containing works or performances by Amy Beach. We started by acknowledging that by “studying concert programs we gain valuable insight into changes in musical trends, tastes, and values over time.” For this assignment students searched for several programs from different years and locations. We provided a few resources for students, including the BSO, NY Phil, and Carnegie Hall digital archives. We asked students to address at least one question from each of the two categories, as shown on this screen. After the students were given this assignment, we hosted a drop-in session for the students to work on the assignment with us outside of class time, which took place on the same day as the class.
Our third and final class example is a required graduate course for all first-year PhD students in musicology, but also includes several students in the ethnomusicology and theory programs. This class meets once per week to discuss the musicology profession’s past, present, and future, with a required research paper as a final project.
Because seminars only meet once per week, class time for graduate seminars is limited. While we did speak during the class for a short information session, we wanted to provide instruction outside of the designated class time. The instructor encouraged each student to consult with us, which most did either through zoom or email. We also created an ungraded assignment for each student to provide thoughts on their final research topic with the expectation that we would provide each with individual feedback by the following class meeting.
For this assignment, you will provide us (Kerry and Liz) information about your research proposal for MUS 201. Please provide a drafted title and a few sentences on each of the following:

- What you hope to accomplish through your research;
- What you found so far and plan to engage with;
- Any search struggles and road blocks.

We will provide feedback to each of you individually using this shared document. By contributing on a document visible to all, we can minimize duplication of efforts on our parts and we can learn from each other’s questions and our responses.

These are the instructions for the assignment. We asked them to provide us with:

- What you hope to accomplish through your research
- What you found so far and plan to engage with
- Any search struggles and road blocks.

[click]

“We also mentioned they will receive individual feedback, but that contributing to the shared document will minimize duplication of efforts and encourage learning from each other.” We see this as an opportunity to learn from each other’s projects by engaging in the collaborative building of resources and strategies. We provided the document through a shared Google Drive folder the instructor created for the course. I attended the class session when the assignment was given, for a short 10 minute introduction to the document, including our expectations and how we would provide feedback.
The Title is Usually the Last Thing I Come Up With: Something Catchy About Semiotics, Film Music, and Murder (Probably)

"All this to say, I don't know if this class is the right place to pursue this project. If it isn't, I'd still like to do something with film music, but it could be more archival (maybe working with early film or jazz in film? I'm open to suggestions here)."

-Student

"I think you'll find this Film Research Guide helpful. I would use the film databases listed, and also use several of our music article databases, which include some related publications and articles. Another take might be reception, which would require the use of reviews in magazines and newspapers. Scholarly reception would also be interesting to consider and maybe compare."

-Librarian

This is a small portion of the type of information a student gave us this semester, along with a sampling of our response. I’m going to give you just a few seconds to read this on your own. As you’re reading, you’ll notice the left side is a portion of the student question. They aren’t quite sure what direction their project will take. The right side is a portion of our response. It’s quite broad, asking them to look at several resources and pointing this new-to-Harvard student to the library options and well as some perspectives to consider investigating.
As a side note to our three course examples, we also found other ways to reach students in a remote environment. The two I will mention today are Slack and Canvas, our course management system.
[This screenshot of slack is one example of our interaction in a course. [click] You’ll see in this first circle, there is a #Library channel. Each ‘workspace’ can have a channel, designated by a hashtag and a name. We created a #Library channel in each workspace we were invited.

[click] The second circle demonstrates the use of comments and emojis in Slack. This gives us an indication that people have seen our message and sometimes an indication of their reaction to it. [click] The third circle displays all the workspaces I currently have active, which allows me to toggle between them to respond to messages.
In our course management system we were also made “course librarians” for several courses. There are several benefits to embedding ourselves in the course management system. One benefit is for students to see us appear in the course “people” section as shown here. By listing us with the instructors and students, we appear as one of the group, like we are actively taking part in the course. While that isn’t always the case, students can see our names clearly, along with the librarian role. [click]

Another benefit is the ability for students to send us messages directly through the messaging system. In Canvas, students can select an email recipient through drop downs, pre-populated with the list of people affiliated with a course. We appear in those lists, making searching for a librarian easy.
For our conclusion, we want to provide you with a few tips followed by some words of encouragement.
1. Ask a lot of questions when you plan.

2. Have clear learning goals in mind and tell the students what they are.

3. Have a co-teacher/backup teacher ready to cover who will be in the virtual classroom with you.

4. Only use the technology you need and stick to the essentials.

Tips:
1. **Ask a lot of questions when you plan.** Do people use breakout rooms? How many people usually show up for class? It’s important to know what technologies the students are accustomed to using in the course and if you need permissions to use them. For example, when we did the polls we needed to make sure one of us was made the co-host and that the polls were created ahead of time.

2. **Have clear learning goals in mind and tell the students what they are.** As with planning any learning activity, it is important to consider what you want the students to achieve by the end, and openness in sharing that information helps them understand what they are accomplishing and why.

3. **Have a co-teacher/backup teacher ready to cover who will be in the virtual classroom with you.** Having a more detailed backup plan that allows for technical glitches is even more important than pre-distance learning. An alternative to a backup teacher is to share a detailed plan with the instructor so they can support you if technical issues arise.

4. **Only use the technology you need and stick to the essentials.** Recognize that some, or many, students are overwhelmed, and you might be, too. The use of
1. a technology that does just the right thing might not be worth the time explaining it during class or the stress it creates. Be kind to yourself. Stick to what the class already uses.
1. Assume Success

2. Teaching methods outside of the classroom are just as valid as a live instruction session.

3. Have confidence in yourself, your knowledge, and your ability to create meaningful learning experiences for students.

Words of Encouragement

1. Assume success. While we all know we feel that some classes are more successful than others, keep in mind that they are all successful in many ways and give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done.

2. Teaching methods outside of the classroom are just as valid as a live instruction session. As stated in our introduction, we changed the presentation, but not the goals of the learning. Asynchronous learning activities take time, effort, and expertise to create.

3. Have confidence in yourself, your knowledge, and your ability to create meaningful learning experiences for students. If you’ve created learning experiences before, you can do it in this environment, too.
Questions?

Kerry Masteller  kmastell@fas.harvard.edu
Liz Berndt-Morris  eaberndtmorris@fas.harvard.edu

Class Handouts (please reuse!)