Interviewer

Well, first of all, thank you very much for agreeing to do this. It’s really wonderful.

So I have several questions I shall go through. If you have any questions anytime, just ask. So how did you learn how to teach undergraduates with primary sources?

Respondent

Oh, gosh, well, I'm, I'm a documentary historian. So I work with primary sources all the time, every day, and I can't I couldn't imagine teaching without them. I was taught myself to do what I do via postgraduate study with primary sources and so it's just a part... So in research-led teaching, it's unavoidable in the area that I work in. So I didn't receive any particular training beyond my disciplinary training as a documentary historian who was taught in/to use primary sources as part of my Masters and PhD.

Interviewer

So, did you have/did you receive any support or instruction from anyone else in learning to teach with primary sources? Or was it you mentioned? It was you'd done it was part of your postgraduate?

Yeah, yeah.

Respondent

No, no, I'm only in that it's general practice in my field to work with primary sources and all of us use a lot of illustrations. Partially because a lot of the music students know a lot of music from the past, but it was communicated in forms very different from what they know today. So it's really, really important for them to understand how the modern additions that they see arrive at the texts that they convey, because there's a huge bit of translation that goes on between obsolete forms of notation, and what they see today. And they have to understand that there are choices involved. They may not agree with the choices that editors have made, they can go back to primary sources and figure that out. They don't have to sit around and wait for somebody else to edit the source for them to get new repertoire, they can go to the source themselves. But to do that, they have to understand how those forms of notation and how those forms of conveying music existed in past centuries, so it's just... it's not something that anybody in my field can really avoid, you've got to talk about this to talk about music history! So nobody knows, so no specific training but it's, it's just out there in the field.

Interviewer

Okay, brilliant. Thank you. Do you make any of your own ideas or collection of sources available to others for in their teaching?

Respondent

Oh, yeah, well, the all of the primary sources that we have for 18th century domestic music, which is my current book project, we've digitised it as part of this project that I was doing with X (person name) and which will carry on now that they’re no longer in the digitization unit. And so those are being used all around the world and teaching and they're being used in a MOOC that we run on Jane Austen. So we've got a whole module around people going and looking at those digitised domestic music sources and trying to figure out how they work and in making music from them and posting it to a virtual drawing room and all kinds of stuff. Yeah...

Interviewer

Fantastic.

Respondent

And I know of lots of other people who were using our digitisations in their pedagogy as well.

Interviewer

Okay, so to do with a specific course that you're doing, you mentioned your ...

Respondent

Y (Module name)

Interviewer

Exactly, exactly.

Respondent

That one's particularly source heavy. I do use primary sources in my other classes, but that one's particularly primary source heavy.

Interviewer

Brilliant. So tell me a little bit about that course. And why you developed it, how it evolved. Talk us through the module.

Respondent

Okay. Well, it's a way of taking into undergraduate teachings of a research project of my own, which is, well, I've done quite a lot of work on Z (name of author) and domestic music, and I've done some work around her as an author, but that's only a little subset of a bigger project around domestic music in Georgian Britain. That's my next monograph project. And it's just a way of making some of this stuff that I'm doing as a scholar, but also with museums, because I've been doing exhibitions with these materials. And so I have loads of, you know, nicely visual, and film and recorded music that I've done for exhibitions that are just great teaching materials. They're very vivid. And then we have all the primary sources themselves. We have the 18th century books, we have digitisations, but I can also take the students to handle actual books. And we have actual 18th century instruments that we've bought from my research. We have an 18th century keyboard in the keyboard room. It's a 1795 ?, Broadway piano in playing condition. So I can take the students there. It's a different kind of primary source than you think about in libraries, but it is one, it's a it's a material object and then So the students can do that, you know, material learning, tactile learning, that kind of thing in the keyboard room, and we do some dancing as well. So they're doing a lot of really experiential kinds of learning. And this particular topic lends itself well to that because over the years because of my research on the museum work, I've amassed a bunch of stuff to teach with, and the students really like it better than sitting in a room just with no stuff!

Interviewer

I bet they do! I think you sort of answered quite a few of these questions as you've gone along. Because one of them is “Why did you decide to incorporate primary sources in the course in this way?” but you've just said that it was because it's hands-on?

Respondent

Yeah. And it's quite it's quite VARIED. It allows the students to actually DO things beyond the textual that we can bring in. We do a lot of that anyway in music because students perform the repertoire. There's a lot of multimedia work and that kind of thing involved in teaching music anyway. But this just extends it out to a whole range of different kinds of activities. And I'm particularly... the book that I'm writing is particularly interested in the domestic interior and material culture. That's how I got involved with all the museum work. And so I'm very interested in teaching with objects at the moment. I'm learning a lot from my museum colleagues about how to DO that and how to create narratives with objects and, you know, not rely on words as much and to use images and objects to convey quite sophisticated ways of thinking which museum colleagues are really good at.

Interviewer

That's really interesting! Yes. So leading off from that then, what challenges do you face when incorporating primary sources?

Respondent

Well, some of it is, you know, are the basic things that anybody would encounter when you're dealing with primary sources in their actual form. So 18th century books are fragile. 18th century music instruments are fragile. We have to go to them. I have to make arrangements to do that. I've also done some stuff with students taking students OUT to country houses, National Trust houses, doing workshops, there, it's just a lot of extra work. I mean, it takes it's more work than just sitting in a classroom. You know, you have your organise transportation, you have to organise people to FIND places you have to liaise with people to tune the piano and give you access to the keyboard room at particular hours, you have to access Special Collections library and send them list of what you want. Make sure you don't have too many students at one time, instruct them in how to work in a specials collections. So it's a big TIME investment. So that's the challenge.

Interviewer

So you mentioned earlier that you incorporate primary sources in all your in all your modules?

Respondent

Yeah, pretty much pretty much. Yeah, yeah. Even in the first year I do a sort of a survey 1500 to 1750 kind of basic music history class, but even there, I'm using facsimiles of really(??) notation. And I bring in facsimiles or early instruments for them to mess around with so I bring in some vials and a lute and a bunch of other stuff for them. There's a kind of a show and tell thing where they get to do some hands on stuff. These are facsimiles rather than actual primary sources for the first year.

Interviewer

I don't understand what you mean by a facsimile of it.

Respondent

It's a reproduction,

Interviewer

Okay.

Respondent

Of some description,

Interviewer

Of an old lute or an old...

Respondent

Yeah, yeah. Or, or, I, you know, a photographic, what we call a facsimile edition of a primary source like a music manuscript. You know, I have tonnes of those kinds of... (leans to pick up a document) This is the kind of thing that I used when I was a student myself, these kinds of collections, where you have loads of examples of old music notations, you see. So this is the kind of thing that I reproduce and I work with students. So, because, you know, they can't read that! (shows document) Or that! (shows document) Even though it looks mostly like modern notation. So, they... even in the first year, I'm already most weeks and in their course materials, like give them both sort of original notation and modern edition so they can see how people get from one thing to the other.

Interviewer

So does anyone else provide instruction on your... in this module? For example, do you have a co-instructor or... teaching assistant...?

Respondent

Not for the Y (module name), that's just me.

Interviewer

Okay.

Respondent

For that first year module that I just mentioned, that's usually co-taught. And my colleague W (person name), who's next door, who also uses quite a lot of primary sources in their teaching, although in reproduction because they work on 17th century Italian opera, and we don't have their sources here in the way that I have the British 18th century ones. They co-teach that first year module with me quite a lot of the time. And there's almost always a postgrad assistant on that one as well, because it's the whole first year.

Interviewer

Okay. And you mentioned about Special Collections about taking students to... I noticed in your module, you said you've taken them to our library?

Respondent

Yeah.

Interviewer

And museums?

Respondent

Yeah, yeah. That's different sets of students. So the students on Y (module name) there's one whole session in the library and I just put them in pairs on an 18th century music book because we have enough for a small group of, you know, 16 students or so that they can, they can share around. If I ever get enrolment way bigger than that I'll have to do it in two loads. But you know, I can get through a decent number of students and yeah, and so we take them up there. Taking them out to country houses, that's something that we do with the keyboard performance students. And I do that with my colleague V (person name), who's the head of (instrument name).

Interviewer

And how do you find going to the library, the Special Collections and arranging that?

Respondent

Oh, it's very smooth. I mean, it's, you know, it's not the... The only problem is is just getting the hours in the little room over on the side and making sure that I that I get to it in enough time and get Special Collection person A and Special Collection person B the list in enough time, then it's fine. They've been really, really helpful.

Interviewer

So, do you communicate? So? Do Special Collection person A and Special Collection person B do any of the teaching at all? Or are they just getting the stuff out for you?

Respondent

Not really except that I've asked them to, you know, introduce Special Collections and say, "Here's the kind of things that we do, this is how you turn the page, this is how you hold it, here's how it sits... So I asked them to do the bit about handling. And I tend to do that in any case when you're in a museum setting or any, any kind of rare books, you know, obviously, whoever's the curator, you let THEM do that. So, yeah, but not the actual content of the actual teaching. They usually leave me to it.

Interviewer

Right, moving on to finding primary sources. So, how do you....You sort of answered this already, but how do you FIND the prime resources?

Respondent

Well, it's really part of the research and my discipline, you know, we don't... So there are finding aids. There's an international...it's called RISM. The title's in French, it's (tries to remember French meaning of acronym) something like that (Repertoire International des Sources Musicales) and it's a 50 year project, which is still ongoing and has chapters in all the different countries about documenting primary sources of musical scores. Now the other kinds of primary sources, because I also use things like lithographs and drawings and poetry, manuscripts and complex(??) books and scrapbooks and all kinds of other nonsense. There are sorts of things that I come across as part of just reading literature around... which is sometimes in material culture rather than in music. You just kind of come across it that way, but also a lot of it... I'm going to big grant right now and I spent a lot of time just going to collections and calling up stuff. You see, I'm going to the works or record office, for example, this week, and there's going to be three or four manuscript music collections that have a really interesting catalogue description in the online catalogue, and I'll just call them up and we'll see what they are.

Interviewer

Do you keep a collection of digital or physical sources that you use for teaching? Do you sort of keep your own personal box of stuff or files of stuff?

Respondent

Well, I have my research files and I will show you the scariness of the grant project that we have currently. So I've got a big Dropbox thing if I if I show you how ginormous that one is so so this is the....(shows interviewer their laptop) these are all the collections we have photographs for currently. And for some of those we have several thousand photographs in one of those folders. I had a month at Harvard so that that folder (points to folder) it's just gigantic it's enormous! I'm drowning in them actually! It's more like "How do you choose between all of them?" is the issue you know. What are the best ones to teach with?

Interviewer

And that ties in with "What challenges do you face in FINDING the appropriate sources?"

Respondent

None whatsoever! (laughs) No, no, that's not an issue. There's SO much good stuff online now currently. I mean the V&A's got everything online. You know, if you're looking for VISUAL material to go with this stuff... the British Museum, everything's free and online now. There's, if you know what you're looking for, and you have key words you can just find all sorts of stuff in the major collections.

Interviewer

So how do your students find and access prime resources? Do you specify the sources which students should go and see? Or do you expect them to locate and select some for themselves for any of their assignments or...?

Respondent

Well I.... No but I do give them sort of large online collections to look at and then give them tools to find things within that. I don't expect them just to go and just search from scratch if you see but I mean. I generally get them part of the way for...Sometimes it's ALL of the way, so if it's something we're doing in class, then then I will basically supply it. If it's something for an assignment, I will give them the tools to do it and tell them how to look and where to look at what they're looking for and then offer backup tutorials for you know, people to come in. Then we... a lot of time just sit here and go through it together, because a lot of the vocabulary is unfamiliar and, you know, the, the learning curve is quite steep because mostly they've only ever worked with editions of things.

Interviewer

Do you face any challenges relating to the students abilities to find or select?

Respondent

No, I tend to anticipate what they're going to be because I've mostly caught them in the first year and so I have a fairly good idea. I know what the A level syllabus is like. So I... they need a lot of help. But I know that so it's not really a challenge. In a sense, I already know that they that you need to start at a particular point and that you can't expect them to do certain things just yet, that that would be a Masters level or a PhD level engagement.

Interviewer

So that's your experience and your preparedness of doing it?

Respondent

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer

So how do the ways in which you teach with primary sources relate to the GOALS for the student learning in your discipline?

Respondent

Hmm. Okay, that's an interesting one.

Well I expect them to have a much more, at the end, a much more NUANCED understanding of the repertoires that we're studying and the musical cultures that we're looking at. And the primary sources offer a particular window that other kinds of things don't. And so I think it's part of achieving that, that greater understanding. I mean, I don't think I can make... that's the case for ALL of the primary sources. I mean, to go any deeper than that, I'd have to say in this specific Module, this specific source does this thing. Do you see what I mean? But overall, it's a contribution to understanding how music was DIFFERENT in the past. And that's what that's what you're after in the end.

Interviewer

Do you teach students what a primary source is? Or do you expect them to know that when they arrive?

Respondent

No I don't expect them to know that no, even at Masters level, if they haven't done it, if they haven't done a course HERE, they, you know, they may be a bit fuzzy on that (laughs).

Interviewer

And HOW do you teach them what a primary source is?

Respondent

Well, we basically, we talk about. And this week we spend a lot of time actually when I'm advising on the 3rd year research project module, because there it becomes really quite important. You know, that basically anything can be a primary source, it depends on what the object of study is. So if I'm studying, you know, modern day media then a primary source is a bunch of YouTube videos, right? And then the secondary source is what people write about the YouTube videos. And so you just get them to understand the PRINCIPLE that it's something that doesn't have the intervention of the analysis or the critique. And that that THING, that object that you're studying without that intervention is the primary source. And they're quick to figure that out. Yeah! It's not a hard concept when somebody sits down and says, This is...it!

Interviewer

To what extent is important to you that your students develop information literacy. In other words, the ability to think critically and make balanced judgments about the information that they're using and finding or their civic engagement through working with primary sources?

Respondent

Oh, gosh, well, a lot of that doesn't quite come into this discipline in the same way that may come in to say politics or economics or something like that. I mean, we'd like to like to train them to think critically about everything that they read or see whether it's a primary source or a secondary one. So in a sense, it, we don't take any particular different approach to a primary source than we would a secondary one. And that they're all things that are produced by people and they're produced in a context and there are contingent qualities to that context. So I don't think there's anything SPECIAL about primary sources in that regard.

Interviewer

Okay. And with regard to civic engagement, like the, you know, going to Special Collections or rather going out to the houses you do and that kind of...

Respondent

Not so much because most of the outreach that our students do tends to be performance related and in music therapy or Music in the Community types of context. So these, this sort of teaching doesn't really fit quite into that aspect of the course, so much.

Interviewer

Okay, and you mentioned earlier about the different formats that your students engage with primary sources you said facsimiles and whole a piano! (all laugh) And so you have print editions digital editions, images, documents in our Special Collections. Anything else anything other slightly wacky, or...?

Respondent

No, I think that's probably it. I think that's it that covers them all. Yeah.

Interviewer

Right. You mentioned that your students visit the Special Collections. Yeah, you've already answered that. Because you're the one who teaches them how to conduct research within the Special Collections and, or a museum or a country house etc. Do your students use any digital tools to examine, interact or present the sources? For example 3D images or collaborative annotation platform?

Respondent

They don't do any of those things. No, no, not currently. I suppose in the MOOC. They are this virtual drawing room thing. They are but I'm not in charge of that. B (person name) down in the faculty, you know, is running that side of things, and she's the one who...So that is a particular bit of software that allows you... so they're looking at these 18th century music books that belong to Z(name of author) and in the module I've asked them to try and pick a piece and see if they can play it or sing it, you know, on the clarinet or the saxophone or whatever they have. It doesn't need to be an 18th century instrument. And then to post the results in the virtual drawing room and that piece of software is something I don't even know what it's called, that B (person name) has put in. So you can see it's like a wall with 18 century wallpaper on and people post these either sound or video objects or texts up on up on the wall. It's called Padlet.

Interviewer

Oh,

Respondent

And I don't know.

Interviewer

Yes, I know. Yeah, that sounds really interesting though.

Respondent

It is. They're engaging with it reasonably well, less than I had hoped. I was hoping to get some really like fabulous stuff up there. People keep posting like clips from Z (name of author) adaptations, movies and stuff! And I'm like no, I want YOU to play them! But I did, one amazing lady did a ukulele rendition of one of these pieces. That is fabulous. Just fabulous! And I'm hoping that people will look in you know, say, Oh, actually, it's okay to, you know, not do this in an 18th century way, but just to engage with music and at some level.

Interviewer

Draw some inspiration from it.

Respondent

Yeah, yeah, well just try it out, see what it sounds like. But try it out in a, in an experiential way rather than just looking at it or listening to somebody else play it, you know, try and play it if you can. So I may actually see if I can get that the next time I run the Y (module name) class, I might see if I can run a virtual drawing room with a class now that I've figured out how it works. See if I can incorporate that somehow into Blackboard. It'd be really fun.

Interviewer

Okay, that's good. Do you encounter any challenges relating to the formats and tools with which your students engage with primary sources?

Respondent

Not so far but I haven't been super brave. You know, it's mostly just been, you know, standard kind of Internet Archive interface, you know, turn the page type things and then with... Well, I mean, I have to get pianos tuned and I have to do you know, I can't take them in there and play it unless the technician has been to look at it and it's ready to go and all that kind of stuff and I have to check with the head of keyboard and things like that. So, there are certain number of just material obstacles, but not really no.

Interviewer

Okay, so how do you cite or reference primary sources? Or how do you ask your students to do that?

Respondent

I just use Chicago.

Interviewer

Okay.

Respondent

That's, you know, most of the stuff are... most of its printed or manuscript material that you can cite using a regular, you know, citation system on. For instruments, you know, there are museum standards for citing and you send them (students) to things like the MINIM database that has all the ...they're trying to have online catalogues of all the musical instrument collections in Britain. You know, it's a kind of an amalgamator. And, yeah, there's standards for doing these things. And so you just say to people, "Use Chicago or if Chicago doesn't cover it, find something that's approximately like what you're looking at, and see if you can make the citation work."

Interviewer

(Turns to interviewer 2) Do have anything to add to that because you were…

No? That's fine. Good. Okay, so what advice would you give to a colleague who's new to teaching with resources?

Respondent

Oh, gosh, I don't know. Most of my colleagues who come in as Music Historians and have been, would be doing it anyway. But I guess I would say as much as possible, that students really enjoy it, they like it and it's you know, it's an interesting way of bringing VARIETY into the learning experience and you know, giving them also the feeling that they're doing something that's not off the peg that is more tailored to the course material and to their interests. And, you know, it couldn't be found in a textbook. It's something that they get to actually do.

Interviewer

So looking towards the future, what challenges or opportunities will people encounter in teaching undergraduates with primary sources do you think?

Respondent

Well, de-funding libraries for starters! (laughs) You know, that I would say the lack of specialist staff in libraries and museums who are able, you know, they're spread SO thin at the moment, to have the capacity to actually deal with somebody like me (who) rocks up with a whole bunch of students and wants them to do extra stuff. That’s really, really difficult. It's already difficult within the National Trust. I have good colleagues there and, but I have to call in chips, you know, every time that I bring groups in to do stuff because they're just spread so thin. So, yeah, you know, having properly funded support in terms of PEOPLE not so much infrastructure, though, you know, more digitization and everything and but, you know, there's, there's just endless stuff online. That's not an issue. Getting students actually into work with real stuff. You know, I have to have somebody to look after the damn keyboard. You know, it has to be tuned and regulated regularly. It has to be kept in a climate controlled room. It has needs! All the primary sources have needs!

Interviewer

That's brilliant, thank you so much! We've finished ahead of schedule!

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