A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF SUBJECT INDEXING AND ABSTRACTING IN INTERNATIONAL INDEX TO MUSIC PERIODICALS, RILM ABSTRACTS OF MUSIC LITERATURE, AND THE MUSIC INDEX ONLINE

By Martin D. Jenkins

There are now three major online databases dedicated to current indexing of the literature of music: The Music Index (hereafter MI); RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (RILM); and International Index to Music Periodicals (IIMP).1 The online version of MI provides citations, but not abstracts, for periodical literature in music going back to 1979, and is available both on CD-ROM and via the Internet. It is produced by Harmonie Park Press, which has published the print version of MI since 1949. The Web version was used in the present study. Chadwyck-Healey, after briefly marketing an earlier CD-ROM version of MI, launched its own music database, IIMP, in 1996. Now owned by Bell & Howell Information and Learning, IIMP provides indexing and abstracts for music periodical literature since 1996 and is steadily adding citations (without abstracts) for pre-1996 literature. IIMP is available on CD-ROM and in two Web versions: a basic product with traditional citations and abstracts, and IIMP Full Text, which adds access to the full text of articles from over forty journals. Trial access to IIMP Full Text was used for the present study, though no use was made of the full-text options.

RILM is a joint project of the International Musicological Society and the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centers. Since 1967, it has published abstracts of the whole range of scholarly literature in music, going beyond journal articles to include books, dissertations, catalogs, Festschriften, conference proceedings, and other formats. RILM exists in two electronic versions: it is available on CD-ROM and via the Web from National Information Services Corporation (NISC USA), and Web access is also provided through OCLC FirstSearch. The OCLC product was the primary means of access.

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for the present study, though trial access to the NISC product was arranged for comparison of a few points.

These three databases differ greatly in the ways in which they index the literature. The present study identifies a group of articles that have been treated by all three databases and compares those treatments in both quantitative and qualitative terms.\(^2\)

The quantitative section involved randomly selecting a large group of articles and comparing the number of subjects assigned, total words in the subjects, and unique words in the subjects in each of the three databases, and the number of words in the abstracts in *RILM* and *IIMP*. The qualitative aspect required looking more closely at a smaller number of items to compare the appropriateness of subjects chosen for indexing, the content and style of abstracts (for *IIMP* and *RILM*), and the accessibility of vocabulary in both.

A search of the library literature found no studies comparing both indexing and abstracting of the same articles by different databases. Though many articles can be found comparing various utilities’ coverage of particular topics or journals, very few actually examine subject access at the individual record level. MaryEllen C. Sievert and Alison F. Verbeck\(^3\) come closest with a document-level comparison of subject indexing of the literature of online searching in *Library and Information Science Abstracts* and the education database *ERIC*, but their study did not include comparison of abstracts.

**QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

In order to carry out the comparisons envisioned for this study, it was necessary to generate a group of articles for which full treatment could be found in all three databases. This study was meant to be descriptive rather than predictive, and care was taken to make the sample generation process as objective as possible. The sample was limited to articles from 1996 in order to eliminate pre-1996 citation-only records in *IIMP* and post-1996 brief records added to *RILM* as part of its current citations project. A list was created of ninety-eight journals which each of the three databases claimed to index comprehensively.\(^4\) Twenty-nine titles

\(^2\) Concurrent with this project, other investigators compared these three databases for comprehensiveness of journal coverage (Leslie Troutman); currency of indexing, language coverage, and subject area coverage (Alan Green); and functionality of subject searching (Jerry McBride). Troutman and Green presented their findings at the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Documentation Centers conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, August 2000, and all three will be reporting their results in other publications.


\(^4\) This list was developed by Alan Green as part of the preparation for his paper mentioned in n. 2.
for which 1996 coverage could not be found in at least one of the three databases were dropped from this list, and the remaining sixty-nine journals were then divided into four classes: musicology; performance; theory/composition; and music education. In order to examine specific trends in the treatment of non-English material, non-English journals were isolated into a separate class.5

Using only titles from each database’s comprehensive list resulted in very small groups for performance and music education. Therefore, seventeen journals that are covered comprehensively by MI and IIMP and selectively by RILM were added to these classes.6 The final list consisted of eighty-six journals: thirty-nine in the musicology class; eight in theory/composition; ten in performance; seven in music education; and twenty-seven in the non-English class.

Each journal title was searched for articles dated 1996 in RILM (using OCLC FirstSearch), yielding lists of 391 articles in the musicology class, 110 in theory/composition, 172 in performance, 119 in music education, and 399 in the non-English class. Articles were chosen randomly from these lists until thirty in each class were found for which there was coverage in all three databases.7

For each database record, the number of subjects and the total number of words in the subjects were counted.8 Also, as a way of approximating how many distinct concepts were conveyed by the subjects, the number of unique words in the subjects was counted. For records from RILM and IIMP, the number of words in the abstract was counted by cutting and pasting each abstract into a word-processing program and using the word count feature. (MI does not include abstracts.)

RESULTS

Patterns of strength and weakness emerged for each of the three databases as illustrated in table 1. Among the three, IIMP tended to have the

5. Bilingual journals were placed in both the non-English class and the appropriate subject class, with individual articles being placed according to language at the time populations were generated.


7. Because the goal was to identify articles covered by all three databases, the eighty-six journal title searches were not repeated in MI and IIMP. Any articles found there but not in RILM would have been discarded anyway. Similarly, articles randomly chosen from the RILM list for which coverage was not found in one of the other databases were also withdrawn from the sample.

8. In MI there are multiple records for some articles. For the present study, subjects from all relevant records were counted. McBride found that “the presence of duplicate citations [in MI] appears to have been the result of the conversion from print to the electronic index. In the print index, the same citation appears under every applicable subject heading. Most of the subject headings for each citation were merged on to a single record in the online index, but some still survive in the database as separate records with a single subject heading.” Jerry L. McBride, “Comparison of Searching in Three Online Indexes of Literature on Music” (unpublished draft, November 2000), 8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Class</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Unique Words</th>
<th>Words in Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musicology</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>28.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RILM</td>
<td>16.57</td>
<td>13.07</td>
<td>70.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RILM</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>11.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>23.27</td>
<td>25.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>10.70</td>
<td>10.93</td>
<td>51.57</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>13.83</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>55.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>RILM</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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<td>22.67</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>16.50</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
most subjects per entry in all classes except music education, where \( MI \) had the highest average. Looking at the number of unique words in the subject fields, \( RILM \) had the highest averages in all classes except music education, which was again led by \( MI \). The music education class showed the widest spread in the average number of subjects, with \( MI \) averaging 6.83 per entry and \( RILM \) only 2.63. The widest spread in the number of unique words came in the performance class, from \( RILM \)'s 14.60 words per entry to 8.17 words per entry in \( MI \).

Comparing length of abstracts, \( RILM \) devoted significantly greater length to articles in the musicology class than \( IIMP \). On the other hand, while articles in the performance class had the shortest average abstract within \( IIMP \), this average was still over twice that in \( RILM \). The theory/composition and music education classes were more evenly covered, with the averages differing by just over one word between the databases.

Looking at the databases individually, \( IIMP \) (table 2) showed the most internal consistency, both across the journal classes as shown by the narrow ranges among all of the averages (just over six words in the abstract and less than three words per subject) and within the classes as reflected by the relatively small standard deviations compared to the other databases. Journals in the performance class had the highest average in each of the subject categories but the shortest average abstract. The longest average abstract was found in the music education class.

In \( RILM \) (table 3), the musicology class had the highest averages in all categories. Music education had the lowest averages in all the subject categories but the second longest average abstract. The shortest average abstract was found in the performance class. The large standard deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Class</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Unique Words</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musicology</td>
<td>avg.</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>avg.</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>11.07</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>avg.</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>12.03</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>avg.</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>12.87</td>
<td>11.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English</td>
<td>avg.</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d.</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
show that many individual entries diverged widely from the averages. Across the whole sample, abstracts ranged from as many as 180 to as few as five words. A number of cases could be found where the number of words in the subjects was greater than the number in the abstract.

The standard deviations in the MI sample (table 4) show that individual records were widely distributed across their range, which in the case of total words in the subject field ran from one to 107. Music education seemed to be MI’s strong suit, the journals in this class having the highest averages in each category by a relatively wide margin. Performance journals, on the other hand, consistently had the lowest averages, also by a wide margin.

Table 3. RILM Averages and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Class</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Unique Words</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musicology</td>
<td>avg. 4.10</td>
<td>28.30</td>
<td>16.57</td>
<td>70.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 1.85</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>41.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>avg. 3.63</td>
<td>23.27</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>55.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 2.80</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td>9.07</td>
<td>45.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>avg. 2.63</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td>61.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 1.49</td>
<td>18.44</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>42.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>avg. 3.37</td>
<td>22.67</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>26.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 1.78</td>
<td>13.89</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>20.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English</td>
<td>avg. 3.70</td>
<td>29.10</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>51.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 2.04</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>33.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Music Index Averages and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Class</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Unique Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musicology</td>
<td>avg. 5.67</td>
<td>13.07</td>
<td>11.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 3.57</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>7.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>avg. 4.27</td>
<td>10.93</td>
<td>9.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 3.03</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td>7.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>avg. 6.83</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td>14.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 3.52</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>avg. 3.17</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>8.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 3.02</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>7.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English</td>
<td>avg. 2.37</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s.d. 2.06</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 shows the averages for the non-English class compared with the combined averages for the four topical classes. Looking at the three subject field categories across the databases, the patterns are similar, with IIMP having the highest average number of subjects and RILM the most total words and unique words, but the margins by which RILM led those categories was much greater in the non-English class. In the topical classes, MI had slightly higher combined averages than IIMP in total words and unique words, but in the non-English class MI had the lowest average in all three categories by a wide margin. Comparing averages for English versus non-English articles, RILM had higher averages in all the subject categories but a slightly shorter average abstract for the non-English class. This pattern was exactly reversed in IIMP, and in fact the average abstract for a non-English item in IIMP was over nine words longer than that in RILM.

Some general impressions emerge from these numbers which are worth noting before reviewing the comparison of individual records. The first regards treatment of subject access. IIMP’s high numbers of subjects but lower numbers of words suggest a highly browsable scheme with each significant concept providing a direct point of access. The patterns in MI suggest a similar approach, although generally with fewer access points than IIMP. The numbers in RILM are just the opposite, the average record having only a handful of subjects but containing many words suggesting the use of lengthy headings encompassing several concepts, less suited to browsing but highly descriptive.

Second, certain topical classes emerge as areas of relative strength for each of the three databases. As already noted, MI was particularly strong in music education. The journals in this class not only led all categories within MI, but MI also had higher averages in this class than the other two databases for number of subjects and number of unique words. As might be expected from a service begun by musicologists, RILM was strongest in musicology, leading the other databases in all data categories for this class, and this class leading all topical classes within RILM. The clearest advantage for IIMP appeared in the performance class, where it outperformed the low averages in the subject categories in MI and the short abstracts in RILM.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The second phase of the investigation was to examine closely a smaller group of records and compare the content of the abstracts and subject headings in each database. This is by nature a more subjective operation than simply counting words and headings, but maximum possible objectivity was maintained by again using a random number generator to
Table 5. Averages for English and Non-English Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Unique Words</th>
<th>Abstracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RILM</td>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>MI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
select the examples, five articles from each of the five journal classes. For purposes of space and readability, only three of those examples from each class are discussed here. It is recognized that this is far too small a sample from which to reach any predictive conclusions, but such an examination does allow one to begin to develop possible explanations for the trends seen in the statistical phase of the study.

Abstracts from RILM and IIMP were compared by extracting keywords and arranging them into parallel columns, connecting similar or identical terms, and highlighting those unique to one abstract. In the examples below, the abstracts as published will be presented in parallel columns, with connections and divergences pointed out in the commentary.

Subjects were similarly arrayed into three parallel columns for comparison, and were then reordered to reflect representation of similar concepts. Because subjects in IIMP and MI display in alphabetical order, the relevance-based order of subjects in RILM was used as the basis for the reordering in the examples. Because the focus is on distinct concepts, subdivisions that are repeated in RILM are not repeated in the tables that follow. Subdivisions are indented below main entries.

Before beginning the individual comparisons, it is appropriate to note some general observations about each database’s abstracting and subject indexing practices. The RILM and MI Web sites advertise the use of a thesaurus to guide their subject indexing. IIMP makes no similar claim on its Web page, but editor Sarah Brechner referred to the use of a thesaurus in her response to an e-mail query. Subjects in IIMP and MI are mostly one or two words and generally employ common language. IIMP subjects are not subdivided. MI uses a few standard subdivisions, such as “study and teaching” and “general works.” RILM subjects are single words or brief phrases in scholarly language, and each can have several subdivisions. Subjects are frequently repeated in rotated form so important concepts contained in subdivisions also become main entries. For personal names used in subjects, both IIMP and RILM establish forms similar to those in common use, though neither agrees completely with the Library of Congress Name Authority File. MI consistently establishes the fullest possible form for each name, even if the form is not com-

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9. All IIMP abstracts ©Bell & Howell Information and Learning; all RILM abstracts ©RILM International. All abstracts reprinted with permission.
11. E-mail correspondence from Sarah Brechner, associate editor, Humanities Department, Bell & Howell Information and Learning, dated 28 June 2000.
mony used, for example, “Mozart, Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Amadeus.”

A fundamental difference in philosophy between IIMP and RILM is found when examining the abstracts. Abstracts in IIMP are indicative, using active voice sentences that tend to begin with a verb (implying a subject of “the author” or “the article”) to describe the topic of the article. These abstracts are written by in-house staff, though abstracts published with an article may be used as the basis for the IIMP abstract with “sentences in the published abstract . . . modified by IIMP’s editors to conform to IIMP’s stylistic and length guidelines.”

Authors of abstracts for RILM, on the other hand, are instructed to attempt to summarize the conclusions of the article in a declarative style rather than simply convey the topic. Abstracts appearing with articles are edited for style and published with attribution. In the United States, RILM actively encourages authors to contribute abstracts for their own publications; when author-contributed abstracts are not available, abstracts are written by volunteers who are themselves music scholars or librarians. In France and Germany, most abstracts are written by RILM office staff in each country.

Another difference between the two services appears in their treatment of some documentary and generic publications. IIMP provides a full abstract for each record, regardless of the nature of the article. RILM provides only brief descriptions for most documentary publications such as bibliographies and catalogs, and also for generic pieces such as obituaries. Examples of both will be seen below. IIMP abstracts often include sentences describing special features of the article, such as the presence of music examples or illustrations. RILM includes such information in a separate field.

**MUSICOLOGY CLASS**

The first group of records for in-depth comparison was drawn from the musicology class, beginning with “Thomas de Hartmann: A Life,” which was published in *Notes* (ex. 1). The abstracts created for this article illustrate the difference between the summary approach of RILM and the descriptive philosophy of IIMP. The IIMP abstract summarizes events

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12. IIMP policy quoted in e-mail correspondence from Sarah Brechner dated 13 October 2000. Another email message from Brechner dated the same day states that policy in place in 1996 allowed editors to use published abstracts as written with attribution, but all abstracts found in this investigation conformed to the current policy.


14. The author is a volunteer contributor of abstracts to RILM.

15. See “How to Write a RILM Abstract,” section 3.
in Hartmann’s life reported in the article, and mentions a particular work, *La fleurette rouge*, not mentioned by *RILM*. But while the *IIMP* abstract mentions connections with Kandinsky and Gurdjieff, it is the *RILM* abstract that more clearly conveys the influence these affiliations had on Hartmann’s career. These connections are further amplified by *RILM*’s subjects, which include the entries “Kandinsky, Wassily—aesthetics—relation to Hartmann,” “Gurdjieff, Georges Ivanovitch—aesthetics—influence on Hartmann,” and “Sakharoff, Alexandre—works, choreography—collaborations with Hartmann.” *MI* includes subject entries for Gurdjieff and Kandinsky, but includes no subdivisions to point out the connections. *IIMP* ignores these other persons in the subject entries, providing only the broad terms “biographies,” “composers,” and “Russian music” in addition to the entry for Hartmann.
The three different treatments of Hartmann’s name are worth noting. As a point of comparison, the Library of Congress Name Authority File has established his name as “Hartmann, Thomas de.” *RILM* has established a form without the “de,” while *IIMP* not only includes “de” but has made the questionable decision to treat it as the initial element of the surname. As mentioned in the general observations above, *MI* has used the fullest possible form of the name, including a variant name in parentheses. It should be noted that there were three records in *MI* for this article, two with Hartmann as the only subject, and the third having entries only for Gurdjieff and Kandinsky.

Example 2 shows the abstracts and subjects for an experimental article from the *Journal of Band Research*, as well as the abstract that was published with the article. Both *RILM* and *IIMP* condense the original abstract to some degree, but *RILM* retains more information about the design of the experiment. *RILM* also retains more of the language and syntax of the original abstract, while *IIMP* adapts these to conform to its chosen indicative style. Even the one sentence taken nearly verbatim by *IIMP* from the journal’s abstract has the phrase “Concludes that . . .” appended to its beginning.

Through the use of subdivisions, the two subjects each in *MI* and *RILM* convey a better idea about the content of the article than the six subject terms in *IIMP*. The latter’s “band music” and “high school students” do correspond closely with subject elements in the other two databases, but the interaction between those concepts is not elucidated. Of the other terms in the *IIMP* record, two are near-synonyms for the type of group performing the excerpts, and the others (“emotions” and “music appreciation”) are broad terms that include concepts studied in the article but that are better described by *RILM*’s narrower terms. *MI*’s “students–attitudes” and “wind band music–evaluation” give a somewhat better idea of the nature of the investigation, though the age group information (“high school”) provided by *RILM* and *IIMP* is lacking. But it is clearly the subjects with multiple subdivisions in *RILM* that best describe what the article is about and how the concepts are interrelated.

The final item in the musicology class is an example of a documentary publication, specifically a bibliography (ex. 3). *RILM* simply makes a connection to previous entries in the series, noting the dates of material covered by the new installment. *IIMP* on the other hand gives a full description of the content of the bibliography, listing all of the categories of material included. Similarly, *IIMP*’s subject treatment includes useful related terms in addition to “chants,” with only the term “research” seeming overly broad. *MI* includes headings not only for topics in the bibliography (“hymns,” “neumes,” “oral tradition”) but also for

**IIMP abstract**

Compares affective responses of high school band and nonband students to eight wind band excerpts that varied in familiarity and stimulative or sedative characteristics. Concludes that band students rated excerpts as more familiar, more likable, more interesting, and better in quality than did nonband students. Energy and familiarity of excerpts produced differences in responding.

**RILM abstract (based on journal’s abstract)**

High school students enrolled in band (n=115) and nonband (n=64) classes listened to eight excerpts; four were believed to be familiar to most band students, and the other four unfamiliar. In addition, each excerpt was categorized as reflecting either high energy (stimulative) or low energy (sedative) characteristics. Generally, band students rated the excerpts as more familiar, more likable, more interesting, and better in quality than did nonband students. Groups differed in responses to high energy and low energy excerpts and to familiar and unfamiliar excerpts.

**IIMP subjects**

- band music
- bands (performing ensembles)
- wind ensembles
- high school students
- emotions
- music appreciation

**RILM subjects**

- band music
- reception
- high school students
- preferences
- perception
- influenced by familiarity

**MI subjects**

- wind band music
- evaluation
- students
- attitudes

Abstract published in the journal

The purpose of this study was to compare band and nonband students’ reactions to eight wind band excerpts. The study asked students to rate (a) their familiarity with the excerpts, (b) their liking of the excerpts, (c) how interesting they found the excerpts, and (d) their views on how “good” the excerpts were. Also, students were asked to indicate the aspects of the music on which they focused most while listening to each excerpt.

Subjects for the study were 179 high school students enrolled in band (n = 115) and nonband (n = 64) classes. Four excerpts were selected because they were believed to be familiar to most band students. The other four excerpts were selected because they were believed to be unfamiliar to most students. In addition, each “unfamiliar” and “familiar” piece was categorized as reflecting either high energy (stimulative) or low energy (sedative) characteristics.

Generally, band students rated the excerpts as more familiar, more likable, more interesting, and “better in quality” than did nonband students. Groups differed in responses to high energy and low energy excerpts and to familiar and unfamiliar excerpts.
formats of material cataloged ("facsimile editions," "Festschriften").
*RILM* focuses more narrowly on "Christian chant," and is the only one of
the three databases to note the range of publication dates of the material
cataloged.

**THEORY/COMPOSITION CLASS**

The first item from this class illustrates that interviews are another
genre of article for which *RILM* provides only minimal treatment (ex. 4). In
fact, in this case even *MI* provides as much information as *RILM*, since
the former includes a note field stating the same data as the *RILM* ab-
stract. *IIMP* on the other hand, provides a lengthy abstract that lists the
concepts Xenakis touches on in the interview, though without indicating
what he says about them. The subject treatment is similarly more com-
plete in *IIMP*, adding four topical terms (plus the broad "composers") to
the name entry found in all three databases.
Example 5 is the treatment of “Articulating Microtime,” which appeared in *Computer Music Journal*. The abstracts are almost exactly the same length, and the first half of the *IIMP* abstract is nearly identical to the last sentence of the *RILM* abstract. But even though the *RILM* abstract was contributed by the author of the article, it is the *IIMP* abstract that conveys more detail by listing specific areas of sound processing affected by the introduction of computers. There is a difference in emphasis in the subject treatment as well. Although both abstracts refer to the field of “sound processing,” *RILM*’s subjects are focused on composition, while *IIMP* includes both “compositional techniques” and “sound processing” as subjects. *MI*’s headings place the emphasis somewhere between the two, but seem to lean toward the centrality of composition as a topic for the article. While neither *RILM* nor *MI* includes an entry for any temporal concept, *IIMP* includes an entry for “microtime.” This is not at all a common term, and in fact as of this writing the present example is the only article assigned this subject term in *IIMP*. Application of a broader temporal concept would have made the article more retrievable.

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The final example from the theory/composition class provides a telling comparison between the descriptive abstract style of IIMP and the summary style of RILM (ex. 6). IIMP’s first two sentences, though quite lengthy, really only tell us that Webern’s row for this concerto is regarded as highly ingenious, and that it is somehow related to a Latin palindrome. The abstractor for RILM tells us more in fewer words by stating directly what Webern was attempting to accomplish. Similarly, considering the issue of the sketches, the IIMP abstract says only that “The author intends to . . . put [them] in chronological order.” The RILM abstract states that the author actually has put the sketches in chronological order and what that information means to the researcher. So although the IIMP abstract is longer by nineteen words, it is the RILM abstract that more directly conveys the author’s viewpoint.17

Similarly, comparable numbers of subject terms among the three databases do not translate into comparable quality of subject access. Webern’s name is the only subject term shared by all three, and of these only RILM adds a subdivision for the particular work under consideration. MI and RILM both include subjects dealing with serialism (though MI’s term is “twelve-tone scale”), symmetry (though only as a subdivision in RILM) and the sketches (RILM: “source studies”; MI: “autographs”).

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17. The IIMP abstract includes a statement about the presence of examples and tables, which was included in the word count.

**IMP abstract**
Exhaustive analysis of the first movement of Anton Webern’s Concerto for nine instruments, Op. 24 of 1931–1934 states the premise that the twelve-tone row selected by the composer as its basis has long been regarded as one of the most ingenious in this compositional genre and continues the directions taken in his Symphony, Op. 21 of 1921. Notes the influence of a Latin palindrome which also inspired the tone row. The author intends to present the many sketches for this movement and put them in chronological order. Numerous musical examples and tables are given for illustration.

**RILM abstract (abstractor Pier Paolo Polzonetti)**
In the first movement of op. 24, Webern tried to establish a perfect symmetry between the structure of the row and the Latin acrostic sator arepo tenet opera rotas. Once the sketches to this work are set in chronological order, Webern’s process of composition can be followed. The sketches clearly show his struggles to balance structural coherence and expression, identity, and variety. They portray Webern as a human and realistic artist, as more than a mere machine.

**IMP subjects**
Webern, Anton

**RILM subjects**
Webern, Anton
works
Concertos, op. 24
first movt.
symmetry
serialism
source studies
creative process

**MI subjects**
Webern, Anton von
works
symmetry in music
twelve-tone scale
autographs

**Analysis**

**Composers**

**Compositional techniques**

**Harmony**

**Musicology**

**IMP**, which had readily used the term “microtime” in example 5 above, amazingly does not use any subject term for the much more common concept of “serialism,” providing only the broader terms “compositional techniques” and “harmony.” The remaining **IMP** subject terms, “composers,” “analysis” (also used by **MI**), and “musicology,” are so broad as to offer little insight into the nature of the article.

**MUSIC EDUCATION CLASS**

The first example in this class comes from an issue of the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* devoted to papers from a conference on qualitative methodology in music education research (ex. 7).
Each of the three databases deals with the conference aspect differently. IIMP actually includes it in the article record twice, including a separate "publication note" field as well as giving the full conference title in the body of the abstract. MI provides access to the conference by including it at the beginning of the article title field. RILM creates a separate record for the full conference proceedings, with references to the records for the individual papers; however, there is no reciprocal reference from the individual paper to the collective record and no mention of the conference anywhere in the record.
There is remarkably little overlap in terminology between the IIMP abstract and the author-contributed abstract in RILM. “Children” and “sound therapy” are the only significant words that appear in both abstracts, along with the concept of “learning disabilities,” expressed in more clinical language in RILM. Neither abstract really explains what “layered analysis” or “sound therapy” is, but the RILM abstract does state what it attempts to do, making it more useful to the curious researcher.

The subject terms chosen for the concepts of music education and music therapy provide good examples of each database’s approach to subject vocabulary. IIMP uses the most common forms, likely to be the way most undergraduates would express these concepts. MI’s editors have decided that being a database of music literature, the word “music” can be safely dropped (“education–research”) or rotated out of first position (“therapy, music”) for many common concepts. RILM also drops “music” where it is not required, and its tendency toward scholarly vocabulary is seen in the use of “pedagogy” rather than “education.” In the choice of concepts to index, most remarkable is MI’s failure to include any heading pertaining to special education or learning disabilities, both of which are addressed by the two abstract services in similar terms. Apart from this omission, MI’s nine subjects describe more discrete concepts than IIMP’s ten because IIMP includes two pairs of broader and narrower terms for similar concepts (“disabilities” and “learning disabilities”; “research” and “research methods”) and the generic heading “conference proceedings.” Another IIMP subject term used here is “analysis.” In earlier examples, we have seen this term applied to articles analyzing musical works; its use here illustrates one of the drawbacks of not using a subdivided structure to clarify the relationship between terms, and also raises the question of what “analysis” means in IIMP’s subject field.

This troublesome heading appears in IIMP’s subject for the next example as well (ex. 8), where it apparently refers to the experimental subjects’ ability to “analyze . . . rubato performances.” The author, in the RILM abstract, uses the term “assessment,” and it is the element being assessed, rubato, that is the most central concept to include in the subjects. All three databases have subject elements for this term (in RILM as a subdivision) along with the more general concept of interpretation (rendered in MI as “expression”). MI and RILM both include the psychological concept “perception,” excluded by IIMP. IIMP and MI both account to some extent for the participants in the experiment (“music students” and “college students” respectively), while only RILM makes a heading for the musical work used in the experiment.

Comparison of the abstracts continues the trend we have seen in most of the previous examples, with the author-contributed RILM abstract

**IIMP abstract**
Features an analysis of a study involving rubato and its assessment by groups of musicians and nonmusicians (all either undergraduate or graduate students) in musical performances. Describes each group’s ability to analyze and interpret rubato performances by various artists, as well as including brief comments on how this ability to interpret rubato is developed through substantial education in the musical arts.

**RILM abstract (author)**
Investigates musicians’ and nonmusicians’ assessments of perceived rubato in musical performance. Musicians and nonmusicians listened to four different soloists’ performances of the development section from the first movement of Mozart’s concerto for horn, K.412. Subjects evaluated the degree of appropriateness of each soloist’s use of rubato. Results indicated musicians agreed with expert assessments, while nonmusicians’ scores appeared haphazard. Musicians were separated into two groups based on musical skill level; more proficient musicians strongly agreed with expert assessments, while less proficient musicians’ scores disagreed substantially with those of experts. Conclusions suggest that a relationship exists between musicianship and the use of rubato.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IIMP subjects</th>
<th>RILM subjects</th>
<th>MI subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>interpretation</td>
<td>interpretation</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubato</td>
<td>rubato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus works</td>
<td>influence on perceived tension</td>
<td>ruhato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perception</td>
<td>rubato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relation to musical tension</td>
<td></td>
<td>perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>college students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>music appreciation</td>
<td></td>
<td>evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>music students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performing styles</td>
<td></td>
<td>education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>musicians</td>
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<td>musicianship</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tone</td>
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</table>
providing more detail about the experiment and summarizing the findings. The only significant information unique to the **IIMP** abstract is the age group of the participants (“undergraduate or graduate students”).

Example 9 comes from a journal that **RILM** covers selectively rather than comprehensively; only articles deemed scholarly receive full treatment from **RILM**. This article is practical in nature, and so receives a very brief abstract in **RILM** compared to that in **IIMP**. The **RILM** abstract does say a bit more about possible application of the ideas in the article, but does not provide the connection to the books found in the **IIMP** abstract.

Both **MI** and **RILM** assign subjects to account not just for the emotions of teachers, but also for the influence of students on those emotions. **IIMP** on the other hand assigns only subject terms related to teachers. In some previous examples we have noted a tendency in **IIMP** toward overly broad headings. Here the opposite occurs; the term “emotional IQ” is taken from the article and applied as a subject to the exclusion of any other terms relating to psychology or emotion. As of this writing, this remains the only **IIMP** record to carry this subject term.¹⁸

**PERFORMANCE CLASS**

All of the examples in this class come from journals covered selectively by **RILM**. Example 10 is an interview with guitarist Timo Körhonen. **RILM** does a good job of explaining the reference to rally driving in the title, but the **IIMP** abstract gives a much better idea about the content of the interview. Surprisingly, it does not mention the discography which both **MI** and **RILM** note in the special features field. **MI**’s subject treatment is disappointingly minimal, lacking entries for the interviewee’s medium of performance and the principal composer discussed. **RILM** provides both of these while **IIMP** goes further by including terms relating to the performer’s nationality and his educational and musical influences, though again the relationship is less than clear because these are presented as discrete terms rather than being connected via subdivision.

Example 11 is a tribute to violinist Josef Gingold. **RILM** treats this as an obituary and provides no abstract. An eight-page article would seem to qualify as more than a mere obituary, and thus warrants the full abstract in **IIMP**. **IIMP**’s subject terms also seem appropriate, although the absence of “violinists” is surprising. **RILM** addresses this gap, but perhaps a heading for “pedagogy” might have been added alongside “pedagogues,” especially given the presence of music examples noted in the special features field. Again **MI** disappoints with only a heading for the subject of the tribute.

¹⁸. Based on a search for “emotional IQ” in **IIMP** on 2 November 2000.

**IIMP abstract**
Offers a brief guide to assessing one’s own emotional IQ, with some suggestions to modify behaviors which reflect low emotional IQ and therefore to raise one’s emotional intelligence. Refers to “Emotional Intelligence” by Daniel Goleman (Bantam Press, 1995) and “Fundamental Questions about Emotions,” edited by Paul Ekman and Richard Davidson (Oxford University Press, 1994).

**RILM abstract (uncredited)**
Discusses emotional temperament and its influence on music students. Because emotional literacy is essential to success in life, it is a subject worth learning and passing on to students.

**IIMP subjects**  
- pedagogy  
- methodology  
- influenced by student  
- temperament  
- psychology  
- emotions  
- temperament  
- relation to pedagogy  
- music teachers  
- teacher education

**RILM subjects**  
- teacher-student relationship  
- influences  
- emotion  
- emotion

**MI subjects**  
- teachers  
- educators  
- attitudes

Ex. 10. Abstracts and subjects for Colin Cooper, “Rally Driving and Villa-Lobos: Timo Korhonen Talks with Colin Cooper,” *Classical Guitar* 14, no. 6 (1996): 11–12, 14

**IIMP abstract**
Provides an interview with Finnish classical guitarist Timo Korhonen, who discusses his early music education and influences in Finland, his attitude toward contemporary guitar music, his recording of the entire Villa-Lobos guitar works, the role of classical guitar music, and his teaching at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki.

**RILM abstract (uncredited)**
Timo Korhonen wanted to be a rally driver before he turned his attention to guitar. He has an affinity for Latin American guitar music, particularly Villa-Lobos.

**IIMP subjects**  
- Korhonen, Timo  
- classical musicians  
- guitarists  
- educational influences  
- Finland  
- music attitudes  
- music recording  
- musical influences

**RILM subjects**  
- interviews  
- Villa-Lobos, Heitor  
- guitar music viewed by Korhonen  
- performers  
- guitar

**MI subjects**  
- Korhonen, Timo  
- Korhonen, Timo
Michael Kennedy’s *Opera* article on Britten receives abstracts of comparable length but slightly different emphasis (ex. 12). *IIMP* notes that the article discusses the popularity of Britten’s works since his death, whereas *RILM* states that the public response “has intensified” in that time. The *IIMP* abstract focuses on the reviews of a number of opera performances, while *RILM* highlights two particular works that have been “revalued and rehabilitated” since 1976, and only *RILM* mentions Britten’s influence on later composers. With the exception of the concept of Britten’s influence, subject terms in both *RILM* and *IIMP* are mostly parallel. The major difference in vocabulary is *IIMP*’s use of “popularity” while *RILM* uses the more scholarly (and less weighted) “reception.” Once again *MI*’s only subject entry is the composer’s name, subdivided for “works – operas.”

**NON-ENGLISH CLASS**

All of the examples in the non-English journal class happen to be in German, reflecting the preponderance of German articles in the larger sample. The first is a two-page item on ways computers can be used in music (ex. 13). The primary uses noted in the brief *RILM* summary, “storing and synthesizing music” and “writing scores,” are not much ex-

**IIMP abstract**

Extensive discussion of Britten’s operas and the popularity of his works since his death 20 years ago. Includes reviews of performances of “Billy Budd,” “Peter Grimes,” “Albert Herring,” and “Paul Bunyan,” as well as other works and their presentations since his death.

**RILM abstract (abstractor Elizabeth L. Wollman)**

In England, the public response to Britten has intensified since his death. His operas and his influence on later composers are discussed. Focus is placed on Gloriana and Paul Bunyan, two Britten operas that failed in his lifetime and have been revalued and rehabilitated since his death.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>IIMP subjects</strong></th>
<th><strong>RILM subjects</strong></th>
<th><strong>MI subjects</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britten, Benjamin</td>
<td>Britten, Benjamin</td>
<td>Britten, Lord Benjamin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reception</td>
<td>operas</td>
<td>works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operas</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>operas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popularity</td>
<td>1976 to present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opera</td>
<td>opera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by composer</td>
<td>by place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musical life</td>
<td>influenced by Britten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expanded upon by IIMP’s eighty-word abstract, though it is helpful to note that particular software packages are described. MI and RILM each assign a single subject relating to computers without attempting to account for the uses made of them. IIMP uses three computer subject terms, including one for the particular protocol “MIDI,” along with a number of broad terms relating to uses of the machine.

The abstracts for example 14 differ in style but mention most of the same concepts: iconography, painting, still life, musical instruments, and Baschenis (with dates). RILM is more geographically specific regarding Baschenis’s circle (“Bergamo school” rather than “school of Italian Renaissance painter . . .”) and provides the museum name and catalog number for the work being studied. On the other hand, the IIMP abstract includes the idea of “symbolic elements” not found in the RILM abstract, though it appears in the subjects in RILM. The difference in length of the two abstracts is mostly accounted for by the final two sentences in IIMP indicating the presence of the illustrations, bibliography,
and notes. While most of this information is captured by RILM in the special features field, it is beneficial to have the presence of a reproduction of the painting explicitly stated.

IIMP’s subject terms are inadequate, providing no access to the artist or his school and even lacking a term for the proper field of study, iconography. “Symbolism” is a useful term here, but “musicology” is simply too broad to be significant. MI provides two useful entries, but none for symbolism or musical instruments. RILM’s subjects describe the content well, although rotation of a couple of the important concepts (symbolism, musical instruments) to initial positions would have facilitated browsing.

The final example is remarkable because although the abstracts are almost exactly the same length and share many keywords, the differences in how those words are framed considerably alter the apparent emphasis of the article (ex. 15). At the very outset, RILM says that instrumental works of mourning are “numerous,” while IIMP describes the same repertory as “relatively limited.” Later the two abstracts seem to reverse the relative importance of “tribute works” and those that depict stages of
the grief process. *RILM* seems to dismiss the former with a brief clause ("Besides . . . tribute compositions") while focusing on the latter, whereas *IIMP* gives more emphasis to the former ("Discusses tribute compositions"), making the latter seem more of an afterthought (". . . but also . . .").

*IIMP*'s subject terms include "Requiem," a genre mentioned in the abstract only in the context of distinguishing what the article is not about. To *IIMP*'s credit, it is the only one of the three databases to add a subject term for "instrumental music," which is a distinguishing part of the article's topic.

### CONCLUSIONS

In their application of subjects to the fifteen items sampled, the three databases under consideration may be seen to lie along a continuum of specificity and structure. The approach of each database also reflects its origins in some way.
That subjects in RILM began as a separate index to a printed collection of abstracts may be seen in its very focused terms and extensive employment of relational and hierarchical subdivisions. More than just retrieval points, RILM subjects help convey the “aboutness” of the item. This is amplified online by the relevance-based order of display in the individual record. Drawbacks to RILM’s approach to subject access are
that the highly subdivided structure does not lend itself easily to online browsing (this is true using either the OCLC or the NISC interface), and the preference for scholarly over common language can be an obstacle for inexperienced users.

Subjects in MI were created as a tool for collocating similar entries in a printed index. As such, the tendency is to use rather broader terms than RILM, and to apply more subjects to each item. Though MI subjects were initially modeled on Library of Congress Subject Headings, its Subject Heading List has evolved independently, and MI uses subdivisions much more sparingly. In the examples, MI subjects were generally well-focused on the main topics of the articles. This makes the alphabetical arrangement in the online display less of a drawback than it might be. Though the shorter headings and minimal use of subdivisions make relationships between concepts less clear than in RILM, the greater number of entry points makes MI much more browsable. There are some constructions used in MI subjects that could pose problems for the novice user (“wind band,” “tape, video”), but an online “cross-reference browser” provides the necessary connections from more familiar terminology.

IIMP is a product of the computer age, and its application of subject terms seems to reflect the awareness that most users will begin by performing keyword searches. IIMP subject terms are single words or short phrases generally couched in common language, and no subdivisions are employed. Placing all concepts on the same level makes for very high browsability, and the use of accessible language eases retrieval for novice users. Looking at the subject terms applied to individual records and then thinking backwards about how they might be retrieved, however, exposes some drawbacks to the keyword-driven approach to subject access. In the sample, this was seen in the application of terms for concepts receiving only passing mention in the article, of terms whose meaning seems to shift (“analysis”), and of some terms so broad as to be of little assistance (“musicology,” “composers”). Many records contain both broad and narrow terms relating to the same concept (“disabilities” and “learning disabilities”). Conversely, examples were found where unique terms (“microtime,” “emotional IQ”) were applied to the exclusion of related broader terms that would have eased retrieval. (According to editor Sarah Brechner, IIMP endeavored during the summer of 2000 to address thesaurus issues such as “tightening up terms, establishing relationships, deleting redundant or inappropriate terms,” though of course without updating older records, the infelicities above will remain in the database.19) The decision not to employ any subdivisions renders

19. E-mail correspondence from Sarah Brechner dated 28 June 2000.
relationships between concepts unclear, and the display of subject terms in alphabetical order makes it difficult to differentiate between topics that are the focus of the article and those more tangentially related.

Abstracts in an online database serve two purposes: to provide a pool of keywords for access and retrieval; and to convey an idea of what the article says so that its potential usefulness to the reader can be estimated.\textsuperscript{20} Based on the fifteen examples above, both RILM and IIMP abstracts fulfill the first function well; however, RILM’s summary style abstracts were in general more informative about what the articles actually say than were the descriptive abstracts in IIMP. The latter’s practice of giving full treatment to all items made its abstracts preferable for some articles in the performance class and for interviews, obituaries, and documentary items for which RILM admittedly provides minimal treatment.

Of course, the findings of this study cannot be considered predictive because of the small sample sizes, and firm recommendations of one database over another cannot be made without considering other issues such as journals covered, currency, and search interface. Nevertheless, a number of observations can be made that will be useful to both scholars and librarians as they use these tools or teach patrons about them.

IIMP’s browsability and common language make it quite approachable for undergraduates, but users will have to read the abstracts carefully to determine if articles retrieved actually focus on the topics they are seeking. The depth of indexing in IIMP did not vary greatly among the various fields of music, but comparison with the other two databases suggests that IIMP might be the better place to start for users seeking performance-related information.

Although lack of abstracts is a handicap for MI, the precision of its subject indexing helps ensure that articles retrieved are focused on the topic sought. As noted above, though some of the subject vocabulary is arcane, the “cross-reference browser” feature leads inexperienced users to the proper terms. It is hoped that eventually the duplicate records can be merged, eliminating a major source of misleading search results. MI will serve most undergraduates well, especially those doing research in music education.

The use of very precise, scholarly indexing language suggests that RILM will best be used by scholars and advanced students, especially in musicology. The lack of cross-references means that librarians will want to encourage less experienced users to consider their terminology carefully. Such users might be well served by beginning with a keyword

search of the abstracts, and then noting useful subject terms in relevant records for further searches. Users should also keep in mind that *RILM* extends its coverage beyond journals to include the whole range of scholarly publishing, and that its summary abstracts generally convey more about the conclusions of a work than the descriptive abstracts in *IIMP*.

It is hoped that these observations, coupled with the findings of the other studies referred to above, will help librarians and researchers in their approaches to using and teaching about these three databases. Database producers will want to be guided by these studies as they continue to develop their products.