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Monica Berger

*CUNY New York City College of Technology*

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## **The Scholarship of Rock Music: Knowledge Mapping through Bibliography**

Monica Berger

Professor, Instruction and Scholarly Communications Librarian

New York City College of Technology, City University of NY

Northeast Popular Culture Association, Annual Conference, virtual, Oct. 12, 2023

### **Abstract**

Scholarship on rock and popular music has grown dramatically in volume and methodological variety and complexity including extensive use of interdisciplinary approaches. There currently is no comprehensive resource for scholars and educators to explore monographic scholarly literature on rock. I will showcase a new annotated bibliography, with a focus on disciplinarity and methodology, which provides a lens into how this scholarly discourse has evolved. This bibliography also makes visible broader trends regarding research topics in rock and popular music. This project will be a resource to academics and other authors, faculty designing and updating curricula, and librarians interested in building their collections on rock and popular music. This talk will also be of interest to scholars involved in digital humanities who are interested in bibliography.

I will discuss the evolution of this project and the challenges of creating consistent and logical descriptive metadata for the book records as well as selecting the right platform. Zotero was chosen because it is publicly available and can be easily browsed and searched. [Completed records in Zotero](#) are publicly available. After work on the annotated bibliography is complete, a second bibliography of materials without annotations and specialized tags will be brought into Zotero to cover other monographs that are more current and foreign language. I seek to engage scholars of popular music as contributors and to connect with digital humanities experts to explore future data visualization.

### **Overview, background, project history**

In this talk, I'll cover: the history of this project; discuss not giving up the ghost; my process, documentation, and data cleanup; what I found; and wrap up with a related library guide and a discussion of next steps.

What other bibliographies are noteworthy? In 2017, Routledge published a great, comprehensive bibliography for popular music theory and analysis.<sup>1</sup> Recently, the Music Library Association published a book length bibliography on metal.<sup>2</sup> There's also a popular music bibliography on the Humanities Commons.<sup>3</sup> All of above cover a mix of single author books, book collections, and articles. However, back in the 1990s, not very long before I started on this project, there was a website and a book bibliography devoted to the scholarly monographic literature on rock and pop.<sup>4 5</sup> When I concentrated in American Studies in grad school in the early aughts, I was fascinated how scholars incorporated different methodologies from various disciplines to study subjects or topics.

My thesis was an annotated bibliography of single author monographs on rock and pop music. Disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity were highlighted. I delivered a conference talk at PCA in 2007<sup>6</sup> and then published a bibliographic essay in a journal in 2008.<sup>7</sup> I observed how the rock scholarship discourse grew ever more complex and how musicologists increasingly began incorporating other methods; in my essay, I explored the notion that no *one* discipline exclusively "owns" the discourse.

### **How this project almost died or not giving up the ghost**

After publishing my article, my next step was to publish a reference book, an annotated bibliography of the monographic literature on rock. Over several years, I drafted annotations for about 475 books dating

from 1970 to 2012 and I stored the citations in RefWorks, a web-based citation manager, and the annotations on my computer. After I stopped annotating, I kept a separate collection of newer books in RefWorks. But by the time I was ready to pitch my book proposal, it became clear that publishers weren't publishing bibliographies or they required that the bibliography be comprehensive and cover all types of publications including articles and book chapters.

For my scholarship and publishing, I decided to switch gears and specialize in scholarly communications which is a fancy term for the lifecycle of scholarly publishing. But I did not abandon the rock scholarship ship. I kept up with new books without annotating them, adding them to RefWorks. My department chair encouraged me to do something with this work and so I did. This year, I received an internal grant and got money for a research assistant whose chief role was to munge (cleanup) the exported data from RefWorks as we moved it into Zotero, a different citation manager. Zotero is an open source bibliographic citation management tool. It is both a client, and software on your computer, plus a cloud-based version that mirrors your data. Zotero allows users to create public groups that are visible on the web.

### **Process, documentation, and cleanup**

In the original data gathering phase, I subscribed to email updates from publishers and journals but many data sources slowly died. For example, UCLA's library stopped creating its monthly recap of new books on music. Other RSS feeds and alerts broke or ended.

I had to draw boundaries about what subject matter to include. I decided if the author is an academic, I would almost always include their book. I also included books by non-academic authors if they used scholarly approaches. Music genres that were excluded included rap, hip-hop, soul, r & b, country, dance music like EDM or disco, and other very specific genres that weren't rock or pop like salsa.

How do I currently find new books? Once I had the data in Zotero, I my data by publisher and series and created a list of the most common publishers, following up by searching and browsing their websites. I also reviewed the Association of University Presses publisher listing by subject to identify those that published on music and am working my way through dozens of university presses. I now carefully document what I'm doing and date when I've reviewed a source, for example, the International Association for the Study of Popular Music or the New Books Network on HNet.

I also set up RSS feeds in Zotero for journals so I could identify book reviews. I get emails from publishers but many publishers don't offer updates for new books on music. Additionally, I also get journal alert emails for music journals or have to manually search them and I also periodically search library catalogs include UCLA and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Below is a screenshot of my documentation:

### Book publishers

1. Academic Studies Press reviewed all Aug. 2023
2. Anthem Press, reviewed all (July 2023) and signed up for newsletter for music
3. Bloomsbury, get emails for all their new music books
  - a. I.B. Taurus absorbed in Bloomsbury in 2018, seems only about middle east?
4. Duke have an alert on RIM, update to date 9/1/23
  - a. <https://www.dukeupress.edu/series/Studies-in-the-Grateful-Dead>
  - b. <https://www.dukeupress.edu/series/Refiguring-American-Music>
5. Emerald, not much but signed up for their TOCs for series of relevance, reviewed all 8/3/23 - have an alert on RIM for Metal series
6. Intellect books Intellect Books | Music Get emails for them?
7. Mercer UP not scholarly, reviewed on 8/15/23
8. Oxford UP: newsletter for music moved to [monicabergerbklyn@gmail.com](mailto:monicabergerbklyn@gmail.com)
9. Reviewed Reaktion all current books, 11/28/22; I get emails for all their new books
10. Polity Press
11. Routledge series: Pop music, culture and identity via UCLA catalog
12. Rowman and Littlefield, all monographs as searched every six months for keywords rock, pop, music, punk, metal, last performed on 8/2/23
13. SUNY (mix of academic and non-academic authors, reviewed on 8/15/23)
14. U. Alabama (only on)
15. U. Chicago: no new

### Journals

1. CAML Canadian Music Libraries low priority to review, created a new issue alert in OJS
2. ECHO UCLA low priority to review, none since 2019
3. IASPM Journal
  - a. Scan through Vol. 11 No. 2 (2021): Special Issue: Popular Music, Decolonization and Indigenous Studies | IASPM Journal back issues [to do??]
  - IASPM Journal, RSS doesn't work in NetVibes I am registered under my work email but I have never gotten notifications of new issues. RSS feed added in Zotero, successful!
4. Journal of Beetle Studies, reviewed 8/3/23, signed up for TOC alerts, reviewed Vol. 2023, No. Spring/Autumn 3 Sep 2023
5. Journal of Popular Music Studies
  - a. New issue alerting not working, supposedly set up via gmail, added again on 8/2/23. Could peruse all recent issues (no longer with Wiley). Here is a search of only the book reviews that requires review
6. Journal of World Popular Music is not indexed in our discovery tool but is in UCLA's. I searched the site and UCLA and found a few on 7/31/23, reviewed all to that date. Set up a RSS alert in Zotero
7. Metal Studies Review, an alert was created on 8/3/23, need to peruse all back issues for book reviews

### Catalogs, listservs, and other sources

22. Choice: alerting for new books, "rock music" with audience limiters to faculty/researchers or graduate students
23. Reviewed H-Net reviews on 5/16/23, searched "rock" "punk" "metal" "pop music"
24. H-Net New Books network
  - a. New Books in Music History and Musicology | H-Net completed on 8/15/23, no RSS feed or email option
25. IASPM US seems to no longer have a list of new books
  - a. Reviewed <https://www.iaspm.net/book-prize/> through 2021
  - b. Reviewed International Association for the Study of Popular Music - US Chapter - The Woody Guthrie Award (wildapricot.org)
26. New Books Network perused backwards chronologically to Jan. 17, 2019, perused forward to Aug. 3, 2023; need to continue reviewing; did I start on May 16, 2023? RSS fixed! RSS added to Zotero and marked as read through Jan. 17, 2019!
27. Oxford Bibliographies on music reviewed 12/21/22
28. Searched Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for books from 2020 to 2022 (music and bibliographic)
  - c. kw:(music) AND kw:(bibliographic)
29. UCLA library catalog
  - d. Rock music + any field contain bibliographic or bibliography 2020-2023 complete
  - e. Rock music + any field contain bibliographic or bibliography 2016-2019 complete

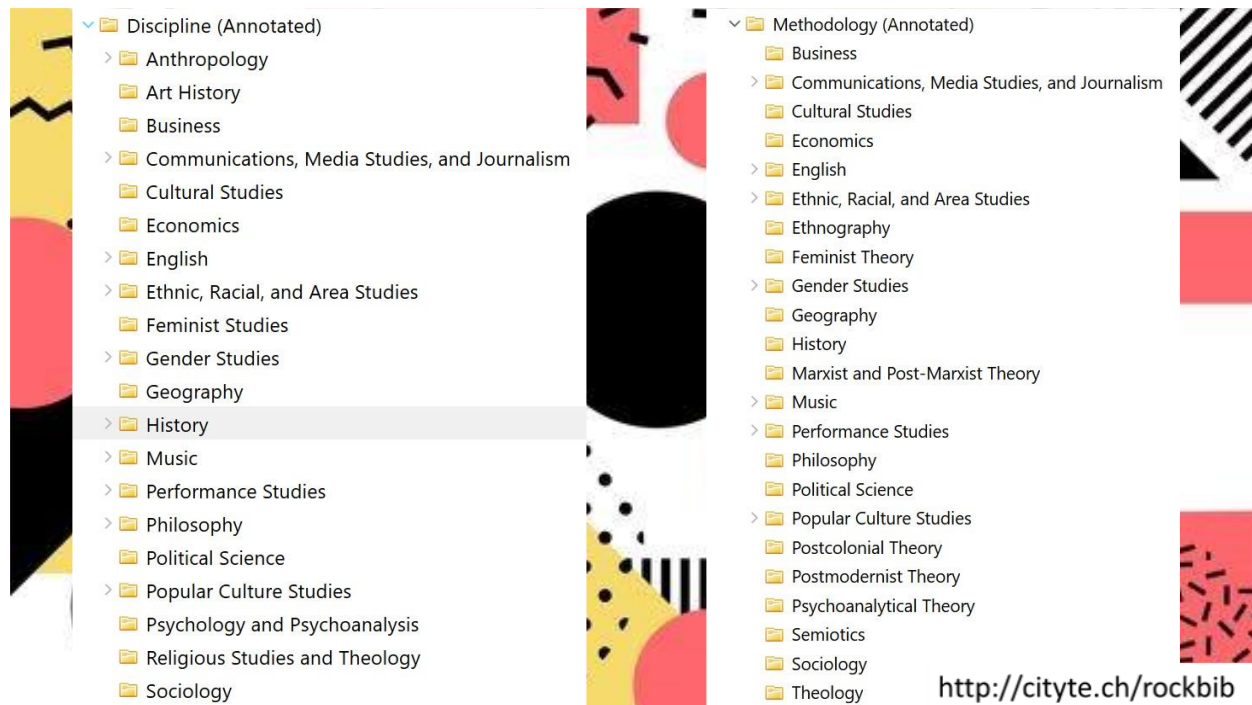
<http://cityte.ch/rockbib>

Cleanup for the bibliography was very difficult because I had multiple user-created, non-standard fields in RefWorks, for example, fields for genre, topic, and performer as well as discipline and methodology. I also had to manually add many of the annotations. Once I added the annotations, I had to review all the metadata for my records to identify what was missing. I also had to create style and procedure rules before handing the data migration over to my research assistant. For example, discipline was required but methodology was optional since many books were quasi-scholarly. I used excel to manage this phase as well as Google Docs.

After my research assist imported the metadata, they filed the records in folders for discipline and methodology. I eventually discovered that Zotero automatically splits up library of congress subject heading strings resulting in tag clutter. For example, the original heading of **Industrial music -- Germany - - History and criticism** split into three tags and then I had to reformat the data into the original string. It was and is hugely laborious to restore the tags as hierarchical subject headings but this process helps to clean up the tag library. I am concerned that if I migrate this project to a different platform, the tags will split again.

### Organization by discipline and methodology

I tried my best to merge data where logical and to move some disciplines or methodologies under broader categories. For example, I put American Studies under Area Studies. By creating tags for specific disciplines and methodologies, the user can find the relevant books no matter where the folder ended up in Zotero's taxonomy. Below are the disciplines and methodologies folders:



### Data analysis

Here is a brief analysis of my data. The most common disciplines were:

Music--133

Ethnic, racial, and area studies (incl. American Studies)—77

Cultural Studies—71

Communications, Media Studies, Journalism--66

The most common methodologies were:

Music-related (which included Ethnomusicology and Musicology)--92

Communications, Media Studies, Journalism--45

Cultural Studies—44

The most frequent genres:

Punk—38

Metal—17

other genres are spread out

The most common performers: Not surprisingly, the classic subjects of study:

Dylan—20

Beatles—15

Elvis--13

There are 137 topics and, in a quiet moment, I need to review them and merge some carefully.

### Teaching, next steps

I created a [library guide](#) for an asynchronous English composition course that uses popular music as a theme which also includes the bibliography project. I may pursue a grant for next year to visualize and/or report on the data; I need to balance what I want to do with the data versus what an end user would want. What would I like to do with the data? Get reports of tags by quantity—I had to manually count them for this presentation. I also would like to visualize the overall database by tags and be able at a minimum to generate tag clouds. Lastly, I'd like to create timelines that are much finer grained than the one in Zotero. My limits re. knowing digital humanities techniques and platforms is a hindrance. It's unclear if Omeka can add better search and functionality and my university doesn't license products for data visualization. Please share how you'd use this bibliography during the Q & A or email me at [monica.berger11@citytech.cuny.edu](mailto:monica.berger11@citytech.cuny.edu). Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Robinson, *Popular Music Theory and Analysis : A Research and Information Guide*, Routledge Music Bibliographies (New York, NY ; Routledge, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Sonia Archer-Capuzzo and Guy Capuzzo, *Metaldata: A Bibliography of Heavy Metal Resources*, Music Library Association Index and Bibliography Series, Volume 43 (Middleton, Wisconsin: mla Music Library Association, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Society for Music Theory, Popular Music Interest Group, "Popular Music Bibliography," Humanities Commons, 2018, <https://hcommons.org/docs/popular-music-bibliography/>.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Rodman, "Everyday I Write the Book," Everyday I Write the Book, accessed November 29, 2022, <http://users.comm.umn.edu/~grodman/biblio/biblio-ac.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey N. Gatten, *Rock Music Scholarship: An Interdisciplinary Bibliography*, Music Reference Collection, no. 50 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Monica Berger, "Rock Music Scholarship" (American Culture Association/Popular Culture Association, Boston, 2007), [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ny\\_pubs/86/](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ny_pubs/86/).

<sup>7</sup> Monica Berger, "Scholarly Monographs on Rock Music: A Bibliographic Essay," *Collection Building 27*, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 4–13, <https://doi.org/10.1108/01604950810846189>.