

DEPARTMENT OF FOLKLORE AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY  
STATEMENT ON ALTERNATIVE MODES OF RESEARCH PRESENTATION

The Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology recognizes a variety of delivery formats, in addition to the traditional modes of scholarly publication, that allow faculty to contribute to the advance of knowledge, including performance and other forms of creative activity, electronic publications, audio recording products, CD-ROMs, academic websites, museum exhibitions and catalogues, and video documentaries. Each of these formats has the potential to make significant contributions to teaching and service, but they are considered research products only to the extent they bring about enhanced understanding of significant topics through fresh and original perspectives. As is true for traditional modes of publication, these formats must be evaluated with respect to such factors as the scope of the project, the credibility of the venue, the critical response, and their impact on scholarly discourse.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The general principles at work in assessing the scholarly value in alternative modes of research production are essentially the same as those operating in the assessment of published work, and it makes sense to draw equivalences between the conventional forms of research achievement – in particular the scholarly monograph and article – in establishing the research value of these alternative media. Nonetheless, the application of familiar criteria such as scope, impact, and credibility, to the broad range of alternative venues requires some adjustments to features of the particular medium. Based on conversations with colleagues active in these media, and on a sample of existing policy statements from various sources, here is a preliminary set of additional considerations coming into play in the assessment of the following scholarly media:

- performance and other forms of creative activity
- electronic books and articles
- audio recording products
- CD-ROMs
- academic websites
- museum exhibitions and catalogues
- video documentaries

It should be noted that these considerations are meant to be copious rather than efficient, offering multiple vistas on the research value of these alternative products. Consequently, they should not be treated as questions posed for each category as identifying necessary components of each research enterprise. Indeed, in some cases the presence of one value mitigates against the presence of another.

Performance and Other Forms of Creative Activity

There are two related pathways to be distinguished here, both of them available primarily to ethnomusicology faculty. One entails composing or performing music as a creative activity, the other composing or performing music as part of a research agenda.

*Performing music as a creative activity*

Here the department recognizes creative activity in the form of musical composition and performance that is only indirectly associated with research, and thus consists in the presentation of artistic works as essentially a creative activity. In assessing the merit in such activities, notice is taken of a number of factors:

- a. Was the work commissioned?
- b. Did the faculty member apply for and receive funding for this activity?
- c. Was there a juried process leading to selection of this work?
- d. What is the stature of the venues in which performances take place?
- e. What is the impact of the creative activity in terms of awards, reviews, adoptions by other performing ensembles, and influence on other creative artists?
- f. Have there been invitations to conduct workshops, lectures, or other events related to the creative activity?

Depending on the answers provided to questions like these, a musical composition or performance might attain a value equal to an article or even two, and perhaps in extraordinary cases, a book.

*Performing music as a research activity*

This format of research presentation is primarily available to ethnomusicologists engaged in research that features performance or other forms of creative activity as an integral component of the project. To qualify as research, such performances would need to be closely coordinated with academic research. For instance, a public performance in a specific musical genre or style could be associated with study of historical, ethnographic, artistic, or other relevant dimensions of this genre.

In order to assess the research component of performance and other creative activities, the answers to questions like must be carefully considered:

- a. Is the performance based on an assessment of relevant scholarly resources?
- b. Has the scholar-performer carved out an original contribution to our understanding?
- c. Is the performance venue associated with institutions of learning and culture?

- d. Did the performance receive peer evaluation before being accepted in that venue?
- e. Did the faculty member take a leading role in preparing and executing the performance?
- f. Was the performance reviewed in academic outlets, and if so, did these recognize it as a contribution to knowledge?
- f. Was funding obtained for the research and performance?
- g. Is there companion published material, and if so, does it constitute a contribution to knowledge?
- h. Is the intended audience of the performance an academic one, at least in part?

#### Electronic publications

The publication of research findings in electronic form is becoming more common across the social sciences and humanities, and there is abundant evidence that these outlets are being taken seriously by scholars and their institutions. A practical code is emerging for assessing the research value of these products, entailing a set of key distinctions to be made:

- a. Is the item self-published?
- b. Is there evidence of a peer-review process?
- c. Can an editorial board, publisher, or sponsoring organization be identified?
- d. Is there a stated editorial policy?
- e. Have recognized scholars published in this venue in the past?
- f. Is there a process assuring duration and longevity?
- g. Is there a mechanism for post-publication review?

Answers to questions like these will help determine the scope and stature of the publication. If the item is simply a personal posting to the web, it would be analogous to a vanity publication, and its value to scholarship would most likely be minimal. On the other hand, if the item is an electronic monograph, edited volume, or article, on a site associated with institutions of higher learning, with recognized scholars as editorial advisors, and a clearly defined review process, then it should be accorded the weight of the equivalent print publication.

### Audio recording products

These include audio CDs, cassette tapes, sound files delivered on-line, and other formats, most often of field recordings prepared for dissemination to a wider public. Performances in the many forms of music and song, as well as chanted and spoken language, lie at the heart of folklore and ethnomusicological research, and it is becoming increasingly common to present them in research products, either in combination with other elements (on a CD tucked inside a published monograph, for example) or as components of free-standing items.

In assessing their contribution to research, it will be important to inspect the role(s) of the faculty member in producing them, the quality of the material, and evaluative processes activated before and after their public release. Answers to questions like these may prove helpful:

- a. Is the audio recording product based on original scholarship?
- b. Is it accompanied by careful documentation, analysis and interpretation?
- c. Was the project subject to peer evaluation, for instance, in applications for funding, in acceptance for publication or release, or in post-publication review?
- d. Was the faculty member actively involved in making the source recordings? in producing the audio product? in creating the companion literature?
- e. Does the product make a significant contribution to our understanding of an important topic?

### CD-ROMs

Without doubt, CD-ROMs are capable of conveying extensive research findings, arguably, in some cases, on a scale comparable to the monograph. As CD-ROMs tend to feature a highly collaborative process of production, the precise role of the scholar in producing the artifact must be carefully specified. Here are some considerations:

- a. Is the CD-ROM based on original scholarship?
- b. Does it explore in great depth a topic of significance?
- c. Was there major external or internal funding for the project?
- d. Did the faculty member take a leading role in assembling, preparing, and producing the content?
- e. Did the product experience a process of peer review?

f. Is the intended audience a scholarly one, at least in part?

If answers to questions like these point to a research endeavor comparable in scope and impact to a monograph, then the CD-ROM should be granted the equivalent weight. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence of CD-ROMs achieving this level of recognition in tenure cases at IU. But all factors must be in alignment to secure this level of importance; otherwise, lesser weighting would be appropriate.

#### Academic websites

The current proliferation of websites makes the evaluation of these products especially important. One must immediately set to one side the vast domain of vanity pages, that is, those sites constructed to feature material that is primarily personal in character. At the other extreme, there are academic websites loaded with the results of scholarly research, and these should be given their due in assessing research productivity. Here are some relevant considerations:

- a. Does the website explore in great depth a significant topic?
- b. Is there ample material presented deriving from original research?
- c. Is there discussion of scholarly literature?
- d. Does it compel consideration of prominent theories, or utilize methodologies within or across academic fields?
- e. Does the website attract a significant number of “hits”?
- f. Is it referenced or linked to by other sites?
- g. Are there serious reviews of the site, and if so, how do they evaluate it?
- h. Is it assigned as a resource in advanced teaching and learning situations?

Answers to questions like these will help distinguish between websites that fall outside the realm of research production, those that have primarily an instructional or service function, and those that contain evidence of scholarly production. They will also help determine the dimensions of the scholarly product, whether comparable to the minor or major print venues for the release of research findings.

#### Museum exhibitions and catalogues

This category, while distinct in many ways from scholarly publication, affords clear opportunities for the dissemination of research findings. Some exhibitions are primarily about service and teaching, and present little in the way of original scholarship. Others, however, are rich in original research, and should be accorded the same recognition given

to scholarly publications. In this category it is particularly important to establish the role played by the scholar in devising and creating the exhibition. The presence of an exhibition catalogue, and the character of that catalogue, are additional features critical to assessing research contribution.

Here are some considerations:

- a. Is the exhibition's venue a prestigious one?
- b. Is the exhibition based upon original research?
- c. Does it explore in great depth a significant topic?
- d. What are its dimensions in square or linear feet, or in terms of the number of artifacts?
- e. How many staff were supervised by the scholar in mounting the exhibition?
- f. How much time did the scholar devote to the exhibition?
- g. What is the nature of the scholar's involvement – from most to least, as project director, curator, consultant, staff?
- h. How was the exhibition funded, and did the scholar take a leading role in securing that funding?
- i. Are there published reviews, and if so, what do they have to say about the exhibition?
- j. Is there a catalogue companion, and if so, does it feature peer-reviewed contributions?
- k. How long is the exhibition to last, and will it travel to other locales?

Answers to these kinds of questions will help determine whether there is significant scholarship in these products, the extent to which the scholar can be credited for this, and the dimensions of this research production. A full-scale exhibition, based on original fieldwork, directed and curated by the scholar, with major outside funding from NEH or an equivalent source, accompanied by a peer-reviewed catalogue, might well be weighted as the equivalent of a published monograph. A lesser weight would be attached to the process of consulting with original research on a major exhibition – this might be equivalent to publishing a scholarly article.

#### Video documentaries

Making video documentaries is in many ways comparable to producing published scholarship, with shared elements of selection, editing, and constructing a persuasive argument. As with other alternative media, questions arise concerning the scope of the product, its credibility, and the role played by the scholar in producing it. If these are

sorted out appropriately, video documentaries should receive recognition as research products. Here are some considerations:

- a. Does the video address a significant topic in great depth?
- b. Is it based on original research?
- c. Does it connect, at least implicitly, with academic themes and issues?
- d. Does it create new knowledge?
- e. What is the scope and duration of the video?
- f. Did the scholar obtain external funding for producing the video?
- g. Is it suitable for assignment in university classes?
- h. Has it been reviewed, and if so, how was it evaluated?

It seems unlikely that a video project would acquire the weight of a scholarly monograph, though this might occur in exceptional cases, when a major external grant has funded the production of a video documentary with extensive original content used to construct a significant academic statement. But it is entirely likely that a video documentary would deserve to be weighted at the level of the scholarly article, or even a pair of articles, depending on the answers to questions like those posed above.

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