

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR

4

STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH ACADEMIC SOURCES

In Chapter 4 of *Writing in Music* we offer guidance on how to locate, evaluate, organize, read, and summarize academic sources. In this companion website, we provide additional tips for the following topics:

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Using Publication Information to Evaluate a Source

Using the WorldCat database, a library search engine, to identify sources on “New Orleans” AND “jazz,” we found the following title and bibliographic record. After the bibliographic record, we demonstrate how to use it to evaluate the credibility and relevance of the source.

Title	<i>Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans</i>
Author	Kennedy, Al, 1953–
Subject	Jazz—Louisiana—New Orleans—History and criticism School music—Instruction and study—Louisiana—New Orleans—History Music teachers—Louisiana—New Orleans
Publisher	Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press
Creation Date	2002
General Note	Originally presented as the author's thesis (doctoral—University of New Orleans).
Contents	“From teachers to jazz mentors: schools on the periphery of the new music—From student to jazz mentor/Clyde Kerr—Shaping New Orleans music/Yvonne Busch—From jazz mentors to a jazz institution/New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts—The community comes into the school: Celebrating the music traditions of New Orleans within a classroom.”
Series	Studies in Jazz, no. 41
Format	xxviii, 203 p., [16] p. of plates: ill.; 24 cm.
Language	English

1. Who is the **publisher**? The publisher is Scarecrow Press (located in Lanham, Maryland). According to their website, the press publishes scholarly, general interest, and reference books.
2. Has the source been **peer reviewed**? This book is part of a series called “Studies in Jazz.” Editors of a series either serve as the reviewers of a book or send it out for peer review.
3. Who is the **author**? We see in the description that Al Kennedy earned a doctorate from the University of New Orleans and that this book emerged from his thesis.
4. Is the book **current**? Yes, it is still a relatively recent publication, from 2002.
5. Who is its intended **audience**? People interested in jazz—as either performers, teachers, or enthusiasts—would likely find this book engaging and useful.
6. Is it **related** to the topic of the research question? Indeed, this book is certainly related to questions on New Orleans jazz.

In sum, is this book a scholarly source? By assessing this bibliographic information, we deduce that the book is most likely a scholarly source. Further evaluation of the source will be based on more detailed study of the book’s content. A demonstration follows.

Evaluating a Source’s Accuracy

The book cited earlier, *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans*, opens with a lengthy description of the oral history methodology that the author used to gather information on his research question. Every statement in the book is attributed to its original source in endnotes, and a lengthy bibliography includes the archival, print, and digital resources that the author drew from for this publication. The author demonstrates at every point that his work is scholarly and trustworthy. In contrast, we found the following book while searching for sources on Beethoven’s mysterious “immortal beloved” in the WorldCat database:

Evaluating a Source’s Accuracy: Examples

Suchet, John. *Beethoven: The Man Revealed*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012.

This source looks promising. The publisher is a historic press known for publishing avant-garde fiction, and this is a relatively new publication from 2012. However, a web search reveals that the author is not known as a scholar, but rather as a classical music radio host; furthermore, there is no evidence on the publisher’s website to indicate that the book has been peer reviewed.

The book might still be a useful resource if its contents are accurate. We can start to evaluate the accuracy of the book by scanning its contents.

1. *Is the language precise and appropriate to the field?* Chapter titles such as “O, Beloved J!: Musical Failure, but Will Beethoven Succeed in Love?” and “I Want to Be a Soldier’: In Which Beethoven Gets Drunk with Friends” are far more casual in tone than one would expect from a scholarly source.

2. *Is the content clearly written, organized, and appropriate?* While the chapter headings indicate a chronological account of Beethoven’s life, the subject matter seems gratuitously salacious.

To answer the next set of questions, take a look at the following excerpt from the book:

On 26 March 1778 there occurred a remarkable event in the early life of Ludwig van Beethoven, one that has given rise to much myth and speculation surrounding the actions of his father.

Johann staged a public concert featuring one of his singing pupils, and his son Ludwig. Here is the advertisement he put in the newspaper:

Today, 26 March 1778, in the musical concert room in the Sternengasse, the Electoral Court Tenorist, Beethoven, will have the honour to produce . . . his little son of six years, [who will perform] various clavier concertos and trios . . . Tickets may be had at the Akademiesaal.

Do you spot the mistake, and, more importantly, is it deliberate? In March 1778 Ludwig van Beethoven was seven years and three months old. So why might Johann van Beethoven, on an important occasion such as this, have stated his son’s age incorrectly?¹

3. *Does the author use solid evidence to support claims?* The author does use an excerpt from a primary source as evidence here (a quotation from a newspaper), but other claims in the book are unsubstantiated.

4. *Does the author cite sources accurately and completely?* Despite the inclusion of primary source evidence, the source is *not* cited; we do not know the name of the newspaper, nor could we find it (without great difficulty) if we wanted to verify its accuracy or read the advertisement in its entirety. The few endnotes in the book are explanatory notes, not citations. Moreover, the book does not include a bibliography.

5. *Does the author appear to avoid bias?* This author seems to paint Beethoven in the worst possible light, highlighting the salacious aspects of his personality and biography. The purpose of the book seems to be to titillate rather than to educate.

Glancing through the book one notes that the writing style is journalistic, not scholarly. In conclusion, this would *not* be considered a reliable secondary source. Indeed, the author says exactly this in the postscript: the book's intended audience is "lovers of Beethoven's music rather than academics," likely those who cannot read music and may be put off by musical examples. He refers readers who desire a more scholarly approach to other works cited in the postscript.

So why is this book in my institution's library? While this book would not be considered a scholarly secondary source, it could be a very useful primary source for questions about how Beethoven is viewed today or treated in popular culture. It might also be a desirable book for its intended audience: enthusiasts (perhaps non-musicians) who want to be entertained with tales of Beethoven.

Locating Online Resources

The table below gives advice on how to find online resources that will aid your research.

Online Sources

If you are researching *living composers and performers*, look for resources such as:

- personal websites
 - video and audio
 - interviews
 - biographies from major newspapers, magazines, or performance organizations
- EXAMPLES: Red Poppy Music (host site for the composers Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, and David Lang); SnarkyPuppy.com; NiefNorf.org

If you are researching *historic composers*, look for resources such as:

- digital archives
 - foundations
 - museums
- EXAMPLES: Holst Museum; Charles Ives Society; Beethoven-Haus Bonn, digital archives; Arnold Schönberg Center

If you are researching *historic performers*, look for resources such as:

- sound or video recording archives
- EXAMPLES: National Jukebox; Historical Recordings from the Library of Congress; UCSB Cylinder Audio Archive; Met Opera on Demand

If you are researching a specific *musical genre*, look for resources such as:

- digitized score collections
- databases
- genre wikis

EXAMPLES: *Sequentia*: An Online Database for Research into Chant and Liturgy of the Early Modern Era; Kleiner Collection of Silent Movie Music; ChoralWiki; Jewish Art Music; African American Sheet Music

If you are researching *performing ensembles* or *venues*, look for resources such as:

- online archives

EXAMPLES: New York Philharmonic Digital Archives; Leon Levy BAM Digital Archive (Brooklyn Academy of Music)

If you are researching *manuscripts*, look for resources such as:

- museum galleries
- library online collections
- digital image libraries

EXAMPLES: Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship; Cambridge Digital Library; Library of Congress Music Treasures Consortium

If you are researching *instruments*, look for resources such as:

- historical instrument collection museum archives
- websites of professional organizations

EXAMPLES: The historic piano collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Collection of Historic Musical Instruments at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; American Musical Instrument Society

1. John Suchet, *Beethoven: The Man Revealed* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012), 12–13.