

## Silenced Sounds: The State of Post-1940 Popular Music in United States Libraries and Archives

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### Introduction

Popular music may be one of the most ubiquitous aspects of American culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, yet researching popular music can be among the more difficult tasks in media studies, musicology, ethnomusicology, and other disciplines or fields studying the subject, in terms of simple availability of and access to archival materials. In this article, I provide an overview of popular music libraries and archives in the United States, with specific emphasis placed on rock music, a broad cultural category that spans from the late 1940s to the present day and encapsulates a wide range of genres from rhythm and blues and folk rock to heavy metal and punk. Special attention is paid to the presence (or lack thereof) of subcultural genres and forms, such as punk and indie rock, within these collections. Sound recordings are by far the most collected popular music resource, although many libraries and archives have, historically, been reluctant to collect even those. Other important materials for popular music research are notably scant: artists' personal papers, record company business records, books and periodicals, manuscripts, artwork, photographs, publicity materials, and memorabilia and ephemera. Ultimately, it is my aim to show that the availability of both subcultural materials and nonsound recordings is strikingly limited—though the popular music studies landscape is shifting, and the future ahead looks more promising. Thus, while my research begins by asking the questions of *what holdings exist, and where?*, this article is fundamentally as much about the questions of *what doesn't exist, and why?*. I argue that these absences (or silences) are reflective of institutional biases toward well-known canonical performers and exclusive “highbrow” and “traditional” musical categories—biases that are distinctly classed, gendered, and raced.

Most simply, this article serves as an introductory guide for young scholars, researchers, and historians, outlining what popular music materials are publicly available in the collections of U.S. libraries and archives. The first, and longest, part of this article identifies which U.S. institutions

maintain the largest collections of popular music materials, while also providing a cursory description of their main collections (i.e., the genres, time periods, and formats that predominate, plus the availability of papers and other ephemera). I have kept the evaluation of each collection necessarily brief, my intent being only to create a sketch of what is available and where, with the ultimate purpose being to identify prevailing trends across the research landscape. While similar resources have been written for other mass media like radio, television, and film (Schreibman; Hilmes and VanCour), no such survey of popular music collections currently exists in the academic literature.

The second part of this article explores the institutional approaches and various problems facing popular music materials in U.S. libraries and archives. These range from issues of corporate ownership and copyright to collection development policies and taste biases. Particular emphasis is placed on the types of materials that are underrepresented or missing entirely from research collections, and how these omissions—or “silences,” as anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called them (29)—may shape future historical accounts of twentieth and early twenty-first century popular music. That is, the materials collected in libraries and archives leave traces that determine ensuing historical narratives: future generations of researchers will not be able to write about what has not been saved. Indeed, this is as much an institutional history of the various libraries and archives that collect (or do not collect) popular music materials as it is a history of the materials themselves.

### **Sound Collecting: The Historical and Institutional Context**

There has been relatively little academic research done on popular music and sound recording collections in the United States. The majority of extant literature comes from the few available popular music studies journals and deals more generally with the position of popular music studies as a field within musicology, media and communication studies, and other humanities-based disciplines. Broadly speaking, the field of popular music studies in the United States is still nascent—younger than television studies even—and it is too interdisciplinary to be regarded as a “discipline” (Burns 123). For instance, there are relatively few popular music scholars in U.S. colleges and universities to begin with, and they tend to maintain a “home” discipline in fields such as media studies or English, finding ways to integrate popular music into their teaching and

research in those departments (Caw 49). Many music departments have been resistant to studying popular music, and have kept their curriculum focused on the canons of Western art music (classical and opera) and the indigenous, traditional, or folk music that the ethnomusicology tradition regards as anthropologically or sociologically legitimate (folk, blues, jazz, global). For instance, non-Western “world music” is preserved at prestigious universities like Harvard and Wesleyan, while homegrown American music of almost any kind is mostly ignored. There are prominent “traditional” folk music archives at Indiana University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, while archival and research facilities committed exclusively to jazz music exist at Rutgers University, the University of Chicago, and Tulane University, among others. Certainly, there are a number of universities in the United States that are friendly to the study of popular music: musicology departments at public universities, such as UCLA and Indiana University, as well as various media and cultural studies departments. Unlike Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands and other European nations, however, there are no popular music studies graduate degree programs or departments anywhere in the United States (IASPM, par. 1). The professional organization for sound recording preservationists is the Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC); however, even the *ARSC Journal* features relatively little in the way of scholarship on the status of popular music materials in U.S. libraries and archives.<sup>1</sup>

Outside of the popular music studies field, work from library and information science speaks most directly to the placement of popular music materials in U.S. institutions. Tom Caw’s brief 2004 article, “Popular Music Studies Information Needs: You Just Might Find . . .” (published in *Popular Music and Society* but written by an academic librarian), elucidates many of the difficulties facing these collections in the United States, including higher education curricula and collection development policies that have historically treated popular music and other pop culture forms as not sufficiently “academic” (52). Caw provides a number of helpful resources for the popular music researcher, ranging from journals to electronic databases (50–51). However, his focus is specifically on academic music libraries and access, not archives or preservation. The professional organization for music libraries, the Music Library Association (MLA), has a journal, *Notes*, that has over the years addressed some of these same issues, while also highlighting specific institutions collecting popular music materials, such as Bowling Green State University (Boettcher and Schurk 849–59). Yet, in analyzing these special collections in isolation, little is revealed about

the state of institutionalized popular music collection or protection more broadly, nor are questions of power acknowledged. Moreover, the emphasis in most of this literature is, not surprisingly, on academic libraries and questions of research and access, not archives or long-term conservation and preservation.

Other library and information science literature further illuminates the significant role that collection development policies play in each institution's selection of material for permanent retention. For instance, Bob Pymm has observed that appraisal taxonomies developed in the 1950s established certain paradigms of cultural value—based on a range of aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social criteria—that have limited the range and diversity of materials admitted into the archival community (63). Such values are largely based on individual taste and judgment, and while these frameworks have been challenged over the years, taste-based notions of “significance,” “importance,” and “quality” still drive collection development and, ultimately, “provide the appropriate resources to enable future generations to construct their view of the past” (Pymm 64). Here, Pymm hints at how power operates in the collection development process, and how the process of inclusion is also always a process of exclusion—as some materials are selected for collection and preservation, others are always left out. Indeed, libraries and archives, as our culture's “official” sites for the historical record, play a crucial and influential role in the production of history by determining what resources will be available to future historians. As Trouillot writes, “In history, power begins at the source” (29). The obvious risk here is that if U.S. colleges and universities continue to undervalue rock and other forms of popular music in their curricula, then popular music materials will keep on being excluded from those institutions' collection development strategies and, in turn, remain out of reach for easy, long-term availability and discoverability.

Additional important issues have been raised in academic discourse surrounding the collection and protection of other mass media, namely radio, film, and television. The very fact that these media are mass-produced and part of the popular culture often leads to the twin assumptions that (1) they are ephemeral and not worth saving and that (2) other parties, such as their producers or consumers, will save them (Overmier and Harris Taylor 33). However, as the evidence from film and broadcasting bears out, this is hardly the case: significant portions of American film, radio, and television history are forever lost because all existing copies were lost or destroyed (often by their corporate owners), if copies were ever even made to begin with. In

other words, it is a mistake to presume that cultural texts will always survive simply because dozens, hundreds, thousands, or even millions of copies were in circulation at one point in time. Even if they do exist someplace in the world, if these materials survive only in corporate vaults or collectors' homes then they remain inaccessible and, in effect, lost to scholars. Beyond that, much like movies and radio/television programs, sound recordings and many other popular music artifacts are intellectual property protected by copyright law and other legal protections. As a result, their collection and use in libraries and archives comes burdened with considerable legal and financial risk (Schreibman 90–91). Moreover, the commercial interests of media producers have reduced donations to archives, as back catalogs have now become valuable “assets” to exploit through syndication, the home video market, reissues, and so on (Compton 131). Media corporations are also increasingly reluctant to donate their business papers to archives out of fear over potential legal repercussions.

Libraries and archives are also complicit in the production of cultural value hierarchies that privilege certain cultural forms while marginalizing others. As Caroline Frick has observed about cinema and Michele Hilmes and Shawn VanCour have noted about radio and television, there is a tendency in America's largest media archives, including federal repositories like the National Archives and the Library of Congress, to collect materials deemed to have national historical importance. Quite often, however, this translates as the output of the dominant culture industries (i.e., the Hollywood studios, national broadcasting networks, major record companies). As a result, the products of the national networks, motion picture studios, and major record labels are branded as America's national heritage, and thus the most historically significant. Meanwhile, more obscure, locally or independently produced and noncommercial media is marginalized from these historical canons and left to reside in smaller state and municipal repositories, if anywhere (Frick 39–41). Not only are resources fewer in these regionally oriented archives (making long-term preservation less than assured) but these materials are often more difficult for historians to locate and access (since collections are rarely digitized or even cataloged for easy discoverability), potentially resulting in their being overlooked and even further marginalized within the historical record.

There is also the issue of preservation versus conservation. Collecting on its own is an act of preservation, which entails only the maintenance of media artifacts. Conservation, on the other hand, refers to the treatment and repair of artifacts in order to impede decay or restore them to a usable

state. Often, maintaining a collection does not mean that those materials are preserved for the long-term, especially when access to them is left fairly open. For instance, Fay Schreibman describes how many early television programs in collections at places like the University of Georgia were lost or destroyed due to theft or mishandling (90). Safeguarding materials for preservation, however, often equates to restricting access to them, or limiting access to user copies only (i.e., CD, DVD, or other digital format reproductions). Added to all of this is the matter of format change: sound recording technologies, in particular, continue to change, and archivists are made responsible for preserving recordings on a variety of old formats, as well as the equipment on which those formats are played. This raises issues of storage, since space is a resource that is always in limited supply. It also raises issues of authenticity, as the specific format plays a role in the “historicity” of a recorded experience. Especially if and when libraries and archives are able to transfer older formats to current, more stable ones or replace old recordings with new versions, they must decide whether or not to keep the earlier versions. As Margaret Compton points out about television, every shift in the object of study (e.g. from analog tape to DVD) is fundamentally a shift in institutional priorities and funding (129), and the same is certainly true about popular music as well. Thus, issues of use, storage, and formats always affect what is collected and how it is safeguarded. Plus, preservation priorities are always shifting and also always budget dependent.

### **Institutions Collecting Music**

Institutions collecting popular music materials can be divided into roughly five categories: academic libraries, public libraries, academic archives, free-standing archives, and museums. Free-standing archives may include federal and state facilities, local historical societies, smaller private archives and nonprofit foundations, and corporate archives. Museums are distinct from libraries and archives in that they tend to favor preservation over access, and even though artifacts may be put on public display, research access to them can be highly restricted. Moreover, museum collections tend to favor objects that are economically valuable or reflect significant historical or cultural value as defined by hierarchical regimes of taste.<sup>2</sup> The main difference between a library and an archive is that a library is typically only going to collect mass-produced sound recordings and related books, periodicals, and possibly some manuscripts and sheet music. In addition, it is typically within their mission to make those materials available for

circulation and use, including even the lending of items off-site. Archives, on the other hand, are where materials such as personal or business papers, correspondence, photographs, artwork, memorabilia, and other mostly one-of-a-kind ephemera are going to be found, including also rare, unreleased, or master audio recordings. Access to archival materials is typically limited only to staff and researchers, since the institution's primary objective is usually preservation or conservation.

This distinction between libraries and archives is significant because, at least in the U.S. context, popular music materials, more generally, and subcultural rock materials, specifically, are much more likely to be found in *libraries* than archives. Mass-produced sound recordings (vinyl records, cassette tapes, compact discs, even player piano rolls and wax cylinders) are by far the most available popular music artifacts, and very often these items are circulating freely in academic or public libraries, not being preserved for longevity. Here again arises that issue of access versus preservation. For researchers in the here-and-now, sound recordings, books, and journals that are available to circulate, potentially at great distances via interlibrary loan, are a great resource. But if access remains open to such free use, will these materials remain for future researchers decades from now? Another interesting twist is that local public libraries often possess larger and more diverse collections of popular music than academic libraries, since it is their mission to supply the demands of their everyday patrons (Overmier and Harris Taylor 35). While the tightly controlled curricula and taste biases of colleges and universities can keep the accumulation of popular culture materials to a minimum, these items are the foundation of public library collections. Nonetheless, such materials are widely used and abused in public circulation, and hardly protected for longevity. For example, many public and even academic libraries have dispensed with their vinyl record holdings over the past two decades, either selling them off to the public or simply dumping them. Moreover, I would argue there is so little in the way of nonsound recording holdings available in U.S. institutions at least partly because there are relatively few *archives* committed to collecting popular music artifacts.

It is time, then, to turn to the most prominent American academic and free-standing archives specializing in the collection and protection of music artifacts—music of all types, not only popular music. The National Recording Preservation Board of the Library of Congress' maintains an online list of around 600 libraries, archives, and museums with sound or music holdings ("Other Archives"). Most of these institutions collect sound

recordings only. Some are dedicated to nonmusic forms of sound recording, primarily radio broadcasting. A bulk of the archival institutions emphasize nineteenth and early twentieth century pre-rock forms of popular music. A number are international institutions, which I am ruling out for my purposes here. After a close analysis of the website of each institution and its digital catalogues and finding aids, approximately 20 strongly specialize in post-1940 music and contain archival holdings. Of those 20, a good half concentrate on either Western art music (classical and opera) or ethnomusicological forms (folk, blues, jazz, “world” music). In other words, despite rock music arguably defining American musical culture in the second half of the twentieth century (along with rap and hip hop), it is largely absent from the majority of the United States’s largest sound and music archives. For instance, the Library of Congress launched an online “National Jukebox” in 2011, a website and digital streaming audio player that presents “a vast treasure trove of recordings,” according to the Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. But it only covers the years 1901 to 1925 (qtd. in Taboh, par. 4). It seems post-1940s rock music is not regarded as “historical.”

In sum, there are several trends evident in the collections of the United States’s major music archives. Sound recordings are by far the most preserved medium. Certain genres and styles of music, such as classical, opera, jazz, folk, blues, and global, are fairly well-preserved. Meanwhile, post-1940s rock music and other subcultural rock forms, including punk and more contemporary “alternative” genres, are largely excluded.

### **Institutions Collecting *Popular Music***

After sifting through the NRPB list and adding a couple institutions that the LOC leaves off, there are nine major archives in the U.S. specializing in the collection and protection of post-1940 popular music materials: ARChive of Contemporary Music (affiliated with Columbia University); Bowling Green State University (Music Library & Sound Recordings Archive and the Browne Popular Culture Library); Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum; Library of Congress (Recorded Sound Section of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division); Middle Tennessee State University (The Center for Popular Music); National Archives and Records Administration; New York Public Library (Music Division and Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound); Rock and Roll Hall of Fame + Museum (Library + Archives); and the University



of California, Los Angeles (Music Library and Archive of Popular American Music).

The ARChive of Contemporary Music is a nonprofit music archive located in New York City, and which claims to be “the largest popular music collection in the United States.” Founded in 1985 by producer and record collector Bob George, the collection contains approximately two million sound recordings from 1950 to the present. It also claims to house three million additional pieces of ephemera and memorabilia, such as books, home videos, photographs, press kits, and sheet music. Its primary mission is the preservation of sound recordings, and the ARChive does not acquire personal or business papers. Among the archive’s special collections is an 8,000 record blues music collection donated by Keith Richards. In recent years, it has focused on developing a 50,000 piece non-Western, “world” music special collection. While the ARChive would appear to have a treasure trove of recordings for popular music and rock subculture scholars, its contents are difficult to access. The archive is orientated toward the commercial entertainment industry, not academic scholarship, and it charges hourly research fees. In 2009, the ARChive entered into a partnership with Columbia University to create an online catalogue and “assist future research” (Uhl, par. 2), though to date only about one-eighth of its collection is searchable online.

Bowling Green State University maintains what many regard as the holy grail of popular music collections. The university, in fact, has two separate collections: the Music Library & Sound Recordings Archive (ML/SRA) and the Browne Popular Culture Library. The ML/SRA houses nearly a million sound recordings, which it claims “represents the largest collection of popular music recordings in an academic library in North America.” The ML/SRA also contains more than 60,000 books and manuscripts, as well as thousands more popular press and trade publications. Its special collections include a Bob Dylan Collection of live concert recordings, as well as a Bio-Files collection that amasses promotional materials, press clippings, photographs, and “other ephemeral nonbook print resources” for over 17,000 musicians. Of special interest to scholars studying popular music subcultures are an extensive fanzine collection and a “filk” music collection (amateur music produced by science-fiction fans). Also, in a cooperative effort with the University of Toledo, BGSU has announced the establishment of a “heavy music” special collection within the Sound Recordings Archive, which will include heavy metal and hardcore punk (Hickam and Atwood, 3). In other words, the ML/SRA collection is unique

for expanding beyond merely sound recordings, though its holdings are still primarily comprised of mass market commodities or fan productions, not industry materials like personal or business papers. The Browne Library collection predominantly contains television, film, and radio materials, as well as books, magazines, comics, and other printed matter, many of which relate to popular music scholarship.

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame + Museum are unique on this list for being museums, rather than academic or public institutions. Not surprisingly, considering that their mission is to put on public display the history of their respective popular music forms, each organization possesses a wealth of not only recordings but also memorabilia, ranging from photographs and concert posters to clothing and instruments. The Country Music Hall of Fame's Frist Library and Archive features a collection of 23,000 motion pictures and "200,000 recorded cylinders and discs including 98% of all pre-World War II country recordings ever made." It also archives fan club newsletters, scrapbooks, and an Oral History collection that includes interviews with performers and songwriters, as well as music business personnel involved in the country music industry. The archive, however, does not appear to hold any collections of personal or business papers. In contrast, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, finally after 15 years, opened its Library + Archives in 2012, which it claims represent "the world's most comprehensive repository of written and audiovisual materials relating to the history of rock and roll." Notable amongst its holdings are personal and business papers from a number of prominent music industry executives (Clive Davis, Ahmet Ertegun, Stan Cornyn), as well as record labels (Atlantic, Sire, Elektra, Bomp!), performers (Art Garfunkel, Rick Nelson, Scotty Moore, Soul Asylum), producers (Jerry Wexler), and music journalists (Robert Christgau, Alan Light, Ben Fong-Torres) and photographers (Michael Ochs). There are also collections from disc jockeys, recording studios, and prominent concert venues, all making the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's archival collections the single most significant source of contemporary music business and industry materials in the United States.

The Library of Congress and the National Archives both have immense collections of sound recordings, many popular music titles among them. The LOC, for instance, claims to have "the largest [audio collection] in the United States and among the most comprehensive in the world," its collection totaling 3.5 million recordings—though that number includes spoken word and radio broadcasts, as well as all musical periods and genres.

As previously mentioned, its institutional priorities focus on late nineteenth and early twentieth century recordings, as well as classical and “traditional” forms of American music. For instance, the LOC’s special collections include a Duke Ellington collection and numerous blues and jazz collections, but little post-1940s popular music and no rock music. The LOC also recently received over 200,000 master recordings from the Universal Music Group, yet no print materials or other ephemera were included in the donation and the recordings all pre-date 1948 (Rohter C1). In addition, the LOC has a separate folk music and culture research center, The American Folklife Center, which prominently features ethnographic sound recordings. Mostly made between 1933 and 1950, the collection includes the folk and blues music field recordings of famed “song collectors” John and Alan Lomax. Thus, although these federal repositories are undoubtedly vital resources for popular music sound recordings, including many master recordings (Lewis, par. 4), rock music materials are not a collecting priority.

Along with the ARChive of Contemporary Music and Bowling Green State University, Middle Tennessee State University’s Center for Popular Music is one of the few institutions that has a collection development policy committed expressly to popular music forms. The Center’s mission is to document “the music of our national vernacular culture,” which includes all genres and styles of popular music. There are special collections of sheet music and broadsides from as early as the eighteenth century, and Southern gospel and other regional musics of the Southeast feature prominently (Ragtime, jazz, blues, folk, country). In addition to rare songbooks, trade catalogs, and periodicals, the Center holds approximately 168,000 commercial sound recordings. However, it also has a handful of notable personal collections of manuscripts and papers, including the business papers of Mega Records founder and RCA A&R director Brad McCuen and the research papers of country music scholar Don Cusic. Thus, the MTSU Center for Popular Music’s rock subculture holdings are not especially vast, but the institution does stand out for its collection development policy.

The New York Public Library (NYPL) is the only public library on this list with its Music Division and Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound. It holds a vast collection of approximately 700,000 sound recordings and more than 100,000 printed items. These materials cover all genres and time periods, as well as speeches, radio broadcasts, and other nonmusic forms. In fact, most of the NYPL’s special collections emphasize classical music, global and ethnic musics, musical theater,

and radio. However, there are a number of individual archival collections documenting the music business, including the papers of critic and collector Nicholas Schaffner, who was an expert on the 1960s–1970s British Invasion of rock’n’roll and accumulated a range of photographs, publications, and memorabilia from the era. There are also archival collections related to famed venue Radio City Music Hall, activist and punk performer Stephen Donaldson, and more. New York’s central positioning in the music culture means that there are many small collections from performers, journalists, activists, and the like that relate at least tangentially to popular music subcultures.

The University of California, Los Angeles’ Music Library and Archive of Popular American Music is another collection that applies the term “popular music” very broadly. It covers music from 1790 to the present, and includes 62,500 sound recordings. Its most prominent special collection is a 450,000 piece sheet music collection, which the library is in the process of making available digitally online. The Music Library also has a sizable Ethnomusicology Archive of “world” music recordings and videos. In other words, UCLA’s collections do not emphasize post-1940s popular music or the rock subculture. They do, however, have a number of collections related to the recording industry, including an extensive collection of press kits and, most notably, A&M Records owners Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss’ business papers and other materials from 1962 to 1992. Apart from the collections at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, this is one of only a few post-1940 collections of a major American recording company to be housed in a publicly accessible archive.

Though I have focused here on the archives with the largest popular music collections, there are many free-standing and regional facilities, plus academic archives with special collections, that house materials pertinent to the popular music scholar. Typically these consist of personal collections donated by individual artists, executives, journalists, et cetera—though, since many of these collections end up at unexpected and/or small local facilities, they can often be difficult for the popular music researcher to find and access. For instance, New York University is not especially known for collecting popular music materials; however, it has attracted a number of notable special collections related to the rock music subculture. Among these are the papers of influential punk musician Richard Hell. There is also the recently established Riot Grrrl Collection, which includes zines, artwork, flyers, audio and video recordings, and other artifacts from the 1990s feminist punk movement. Included in this collection are the personal papers

of prominent members of the movement, notably Bikini Kill singer Kathleen Hanna. These materials have ended up at NYU at least in part because of the institution's Downtown Collection, and its institutional commitment to avant-garde, underground art and culture. Another example is the personal papers of *ROCKRGRL* magazine (1994–2005) founder and editor, Carla DeSantis, which is housed at Harvard University, in the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute. Popular music is not among Harvard's institutional priorities, yet these materials have found their way into Harvard due to their significance in the field of gender and women's studies, since *ROCKRGRL* was among the first music publications dedicated entirely to women in rock music. The prominent indie rock label Merge Records donated its archives to the University of North Carolina's Southern Folklife Center in 2012—a natural fit considering the label's longtime affiliation with the Chapel Hill music scene. Hopefully other regional archives will follow these examples and seek out the collections of independent labels, performers, and the like.

Although this article concentrates on subcultural rock music like punk and indie rock, it must be noted that there is a similar scarcity of libraries and archives that focus on collecting African-American forms of popular music related to rock, including rhythm and blues (R&B), soul, and hip hop. Most collections with an African-American emphasis concentrate on jazz or blues; this is material that largely pre-dates 1940 and also fits more comfortably within the art music, "world music," or folk music traditions that have found legitimacy within U.S. high culture and institutions of higher learning. A few notable exceptions include The Cornell Hip Hop Collection at Cornell University, which features a wide range of materials—audio and video recordings, photographs, flyers, publicity materials, magazines, clothing—from the late 1970s to the present. It contains the personal collections of various musicians, record industry executives, journalists, filmmakers, and graffiti artists. Harvard also has the Hiphop Archive & Research Institute, which was established in 2002 and is housed within the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research. (Harvard's "archive," however, is really more of a research organization than a deep repository for hip hop's material culture.) Tulane University also recently established the NOLA Hip Hop and Bounce Archive, an online, open-access collection of recorded interviews with local New Orleans musicians. While limited to only a few special collections so far, hip hop seems to be benefiting from a growth of scholarship driven by younger academics possessing an archival impulse and historical consciousness not equally bestowed upon

African-American popular music from the 1940s-1970s. There are relatively few special collections dedicated solely to R&B or soul music, for instance. One of the few is the Rock 'n' Soul Audiovisual Project Collection at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, a series of audio and video interviews with R&B and soul musicians and record executives made during the 1990s, which served as the basis for exhibits at the Memphis Rock n Soul Museum. Indeed, it could be argued that, at least up until recently, there was a white bias to the archive, in addition to a class bias.

Local historical societies, universities, and museums also maintain unique collections of regionally specific material. One such case is the Hermosa Beach Historical Society in Hermosa Beach, California, which has a collection of punk rock concert flyers from the 1970s and 1980s. The small Los Angeles County city was home to a vibrant punk rock scene that included the band Black Flag. The University of Louisville recently launched the Louisville Underground Music Archive (LUMA) project dedicated to collecting material related to the Kentucky city's post-1970 rock music scene, which includes prominent "post-rock" bands like Slint and Rodan. There are also nonprofit foundations and archives dedicated to certain famous artists, such as The Woody Guthrie Archives, which is housed within the Woody Guthrie Center museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is open to researchers. These are merely a few select examples—needless to say, there are countless more local historical societies, academic facilities, and nonprofit foundations with similar collections. Notably, it is in these smaller, often unexamined repositories that papers, manuscripts, and other ephemera are deposited, as well as the collections of more marginalized cultural figures.

Also, specialty items like fanzines (or "zines") may wind up in libraries and archives that do not otherwise specialize in collecting music materials. This may be for a variety of reasons, ranging from the fact that they are print media, and therefore fit within pre-existing collection development policies, to institutional missions to collect countercultural materials, special interest literature, or items of regional import (Stoddart and Kiser 193–194). For instance, Barnard College and Duke University have collections of female-produced zines, many of them from the 1990s riot grrrl movement, that are tied to those schools' women's studies programs and thus serve as curriculum support. Other institutions, such as the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, have a more general interest in alternative press publications and protest literature, categories that zines are often classified under. The

largest zine collection in the world, totaling over 10,000 items, resides at the New York State Library and Archives in Albany, New York, for little reason other than its donor, *Factsheet Five* publisher Mike Gunderloy, lived nearby (“A Zine-Lover’s Dream,” par. 3).<sup>3</sup> Other institutions with sizable zine collections include DePaul University (Chicago), Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Michigan State University, University of Montana-Missoula, Bowling Green State University, and even the New York City, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco Public Libraries (Stoddart and Kiser 193–195). There are also numerous volunteer, community-run zine lending libraries located across the United States, such as the Papercut Zine Library in Somerville, Massachusetts, and Denver Zine Library in Colorado. Zines are important resources that are often held in sites outside the standard domain of the music researcher—further evidence that the popular music scholar’s objects of study are highly diverse and fragmented.

Additionally, due to lack of available resources, many popular music scholars resort to both purchasing their own materials and scouring fan and collector communities. Caw describes this as “personal collection development” (50). A good many scholars writing about popular music are already record collectors, if not also collectors of books, magazines, posters, and other memorabilia. Thus, they are able to tap into their own personal archives for research purposes. Of course, this comes at considerable financial expense. It also limits scholars’ research to those materials that are readily accessible and affordable on the open market.

Researchers may also prevail on friends, colleagues, or fans and collectors. Indeed, many collectors view themselves as archivists and cultural preservationists of a sort (Shuker 30), and accumulate a wide range not only of sound recordings but also publications, concert flyers, photographs, and other memorabilia that rarely makes its way into libraries or archives. In addition, researchers can use resources such as the *ARSClist* email listserv, which is populated by music archivists and scholars as well as collectors and hobbyists, to locate historical materials in private collections. Nevertheless, collectors are known to be erratic, disorganized, and skittish about dealing with strangers. As Frick describes film culture, both media producers and archivists have frequently relied upon private collectors for materials needed for film restorations and home video reissues. The same is true of music culture. However, some collectors have been mistreated in the process, even being sued or getting their artifacts seized, which has made them weary about opening up their collections again (38). Moreover, fans and collectors gain both economic and cultural capital from possessing rare

items, and thus it is often in their personal interest to keep their artifacts exclusive.

Many researchers must resort to coordinating with artists and record labels directly, an endeavor that can be hit or miss. Magazine/fanzine publishers and journalists can be a good source for publicity materials, such as press releases, photographs, and promotional record pressings. However, artists, labels, and journalists are often not as good about preserving their own histories as one might assume. In both the case of personal collection development and community sourcing, though, access to one-of-a-kind materials, such as personal and business papers, is unlikely. Private owners are also rarely interested in, or capable of, properly preserving artifacts to archival specifications. Moreover, researchers must endure significant burdens of time and money not experienced by academics in most other fields.

It should be acknowledged that the Internet has made an immense amount of formerly obscure popular music materials widely available. Many formerly rare sound recordings, for instance, can today be easily found via legal and illegal services like iTunes and peer-to-peer file sharing websites, as well as through YouTube, UbuWeb, Internet Archive, and fan and collector blogs. There are drawbacks, of course: the audio quality of these digital audio files is compressed and distorted compared to the original source and the artwork and any other physical materials that might have accompanied the original release, such as liner notes, are rarely provided. There are also subscription-based sites such as Rock's Backpages, "the online library of rock writing," which archive thousands of pieces of music journalism from the 1960s to the present. The complete run of the music industry trade magazine *Billboard*, along with decades' worth of other prominent popular music publications such as *Spin*, *Melody Maker*, and *New Musical Express (NME)*, is available digitally through online databases like ProQuest's Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive. In addition to full-text of articles, scholars can access 70 years of *Billboard*'s record sales and radio airplay charts—a vital resource for analyzing trends in popular music. These electronic resources are blocked by paywalls, though, and not all universities and colleges subscribe to them, limiting access for some popular music scholars. Free music encyclopedia sites like All Music Guide and Trouser Press provide historical and discographic information for a wealth of artists, many of them subcultural groups that are typically left out of more mainstream reference guides like *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll*. Additionally, there are countless fan and collector run blogs



offering hard-to-find information, as well as collaborative wikis like Discogs and even Wikipedia. While these sources can be tremendously helpful in the research process, they are often incomplete and factually incorrect, and thus do not function as reliable sources for scholarship.

### **Findings and Conclusions**

As this analysis bears out, post-1940 popular music and, particularly, subcultural rock music (along with other often marginalized genres like hip hop) have been noticeably absent from the largest U.S. libraries and archives collecting music. There are only a few sites that make these genres an institutional priority, most notably: the ARChive of Contemporary Music, Bowling Green State University, and both the Country and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame. Even though sound recordings from this period and these genres are represented in many collections, when it comes to institutional priorities and special collections, the focus remains on certain “highbrow” styles and genres of music, such as classical and opera, that have been enshrined in university music curricula, as well as “traditional” musics that have been the object of study of ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and folklorists. These trends can be linked to taste biases in the academy and within elite culture that favor certain exclusive forms over popular culture forms, and the academic curricula and collection development policies that have developed to support them. That is, popular music is often regarded as a “lowbrow” cultural form, lacking the perceived cultural value of classical, opera, jazz, etc. (Frith 3–20). As such, it is not widely regarded as something worth saving for the long-term. Popular music further suffers from the widespread belief that it is ephemeral, something to be enjoyed in the moment, its cultural value not only low but fleeting. Whatever the case may be, relatively little preservation or conservation of popular music is being undertaken in these institutions, and not much focus is placed on more contemporary materials.

In addition, there is a noticeable emphasis within many collections, including federal repositories like the Library of Congress, on materials from the period of the invention of sound reproduction technologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These materials, I would argue, take on added cultural value because of their connections to modernist technological developments and to American national heritage. They are representations of what Jonathan Sterne describes as modernism’s ideology of progress (9). As such, these earlier materials maintain relevance not

only for music scholars but also for historians of science, technology, and business. Post-World War II popular music, in particular rock music and genres like R&B, soul, and hip hop, do not appear to fit into that (white and masculine) high culture narrative of modernist progress, perhaps partly due to their associations with counter-cultural movements as well as particular gendered, racialized, or classed audiences (e.g. teen girls, African-Americans, the lower classes) that historically have been figured as culturally inferior, as “modernism’s Other” (Huysen 47).

Also, not surprisingly, there is an emphasis in these collections on sound recordings. There are certainly some collections of papers, publications, memorabilia, and the like, but the overall holdings in these areas are fairly minimal. Most significantly, there is very little in the way of record company or other music business materials publicly available in U.S. archives. Thus, based on the types of materials available to researchers, textual analysis of recordings may be relatively easy to perform, while industrial analysis is far more difficult. Indeed, the wide availability of music on the Internet has made the textual analysis of formerly rare historical recordings much easier. It would be a shame, though, if the availability of online sound recordings lessened the impetus to collect physical artifacts in libraries and archives, as audio recordings are but only one part of popular music culture.

Indeed, there is a point to make here, too, about modes of analysis in the study of music, and how this has potentially shaped music collections. Traditionally, music scholarship has focused predominantly on either the score or the performance, viewing compositions or sound recordings as the “primary text” and thus making these the most essential artifacts (Moore 1). Perhaps as a result of this valorization of the score/performance as text, there has been less motivation to collect and protect other types of music artifacts. Still, it cannot be overlooked that these are commercial properties, and that profit motives, legal fears, and intellectual property and copyright concerns may be preventing the inclusion of these materials in archives. There is also the very distinct possibility, heretofore unaddressed, that participants in musical subcultures may wish to keep their activities hidden, and hence out of archival institutions.

This has been a necessarily cursory history, and there are surely many libraries and archives with collections of popular music materials that I have not discussed in this article. Nevertheless, I have attempted to touch on the major resources and trends. Moreover, most new collections I encounter tend to reinforce a few main points: rock and other popular music

collections receive far less attention than art music and “early” American music or ethnomusicological forms (classical, opera, folk, blues, jazz, etc.); sound recordings predominate; and music business documents and other ephemera are scarce. Still, I find great solace in the fact that there are many regional and local historical societies and museums around the United States that are collecting popular music materials from artists, executives, producers, managers, journalists, concert promoters, radio stations, amateur collectors, and other participants in the rock music culture. These collections may be small, but they frequently contain the papers, correspondence, memorabilia, and other such materials that the larger libraries and archives too often neglect. They also articulate voices from outside the mainstream. For scholars and researchers, though, the fragmentation of these materials can make them hard to discover and even harder to access. It also does not guarantee their protection and preservation over the long term, as these smaller institutions often suffer from a severe lack of resources. In addition, this situation only reinforces my point about the institutional bias that so many of this nation’s largest libraries and archives seem to have against popular music and other popular culture forms.

I would be remiss if I did not strongly emphasize that these collecting practices I have been analyzing throughout this article are undergoing notable shifts, to the point that many of the deficiencies and biases I have described here may soon be better viewed as historical rather than ongoing phenomena. That is, the popular music studies research landscape has changed considerably over the past decade or so, as disciplines from ethnomusicology and media studies to sociology and cultural anthropology have become increasingly receptive to popular music-oriented scholarship. Moreover, a number of the most crucial resources I have highlighted in this article—the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library + Archives; the Archive of Contemporary Music’s partnership with Columbia University; the Riot Grrrl and other special collections at NYU; the Rock ‘n’ Soul Audiovisual Project Collection at the Smithsonian; the Cornell Hip Hop Collection—are only recently established. Additional resources like these are sure to appear in the near future. Let us hope that much of what is written in the present tense in this article might eventually be switched to the past tense.

Still, for now, it appears that popular music scholars, especially those studying papers and ephemera other than sound recordings, will need to continue exploring multiple sites of analysis in order to find the materials that they need, including small and regional archives and historical societies. Corporate archives and ancillary organizations, including the Recording

Industry Association of America (RIAA), music publishers like BMI and ASCAP, and other professional organizations, can also be pursued, but they are notoriously difficult to access. Scholars must think broadly during their research and consider these alternate sites, as well as engage in personal collection development and continue to network with fans, collectors, artists, and labels. That is because, if scholars limit their study to those popular music materials that are available in only the nation's largest libraries and archives, or only those that are available commercially or online, then they will be missing out on such a gigantic portion of popular music history. At the same time, it is my hope that as U.S. colleges and universities more fully embrace popular music as a field of study, their libraries and archives will increase their popular music holdings, since the primary mission of these institutions is curriculum support. Moreover, librarians and archivists should expand their collection development efforts to work out arrangements with artists, record labels, and other music industry personnel and organizations. Prolific fans and collectors should also be pursued for their personal collections. The scholarly study of popular music demands that libraries and archives, along with the music community itself, recognize that history begins with these artifacts being preserved for the future. If not, the hushed silences that currently exist in the archival record may grow into deafening voids for future researchers.

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### Notes

1. This is not meant to diminish the significance of the *ARSC Journal*, only to say that the majority of its articles address fairly narrow topics, such as the discographies of specific artists and record labels or legal and technological issues within the sound preservation field. Early twentieth century musics also predominate in its pages. Notably, the majority of articles addressing popular music libraries and archives, including issues such as collection development, were published back in the 1970s and early 1980s.

2. While there are undeniably many different types of museums in the United States—ranging from large to small, national to local, private to public—the largest, most famous, and most influential art museums (which includes film, broadcasting, and music, as well as visual art like painting and sculpture) still

tend to be based around the private collections of wealthy individuals, families, or foundations, and thus reflect these elite conceptions of art and culture. With a few rare exceptions, such as Paul Allen's Experience Music Project Museum in Seattle, those elite tastes do not often include popular music.

3. *Factsheet Five* was a zine that reviewed other zines, hence Gunderloy was the recipient of most zines published in the indie/alternative subculture from 1982 to 1991.

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