The Music Inventory Database

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RISM | Répertoire International des Sources Musicales
Schweiz - Suisse - Svizzera - Switzerland
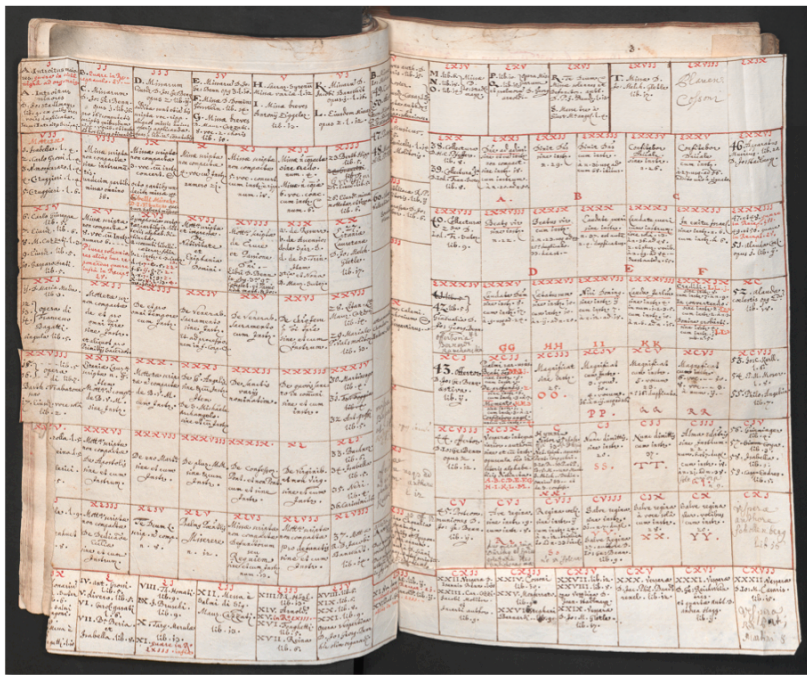
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1 — Background

○ Music sources (printed or manuscript) are the primary material for musicological studies, and in particular, they enable music production, transmission and consumption to be understood.

○ Many music sources have been preserved, but music inventories from the past containing lists of music sources available at that time show us that many other sources are unknown and might have been lost.

○ Music inventories describe music collections that most often no longer exist as is and, in many cases illustrate the musical interest of a particular institution at a certain time.

2 — The project

○ The goal is to build an online database that brings together several music inventories.

○ Having the content of the inventory in a digital form in the database creates new opportunities to browse and search a library catalogue as it existed several centuries ago.

○ The project is a collaboration between the Musicology Department of the University of Fribourg and the Swiss RISM Office, with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.
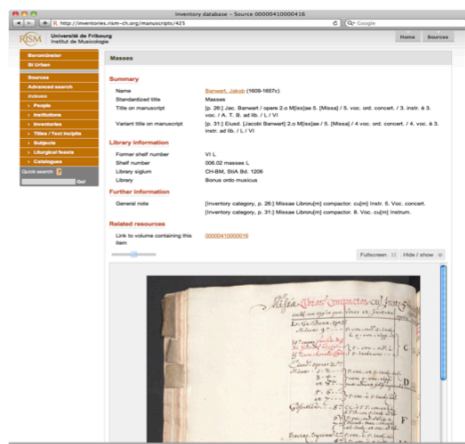

The Beromünster inventory (Bonus Ordo), 1696

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A bibliographic record in MarcXML

3 — The database

○ Because music inventories contain essentially bibliographic information, it was possible to re-use the RISM (Répertoire International des Sources Musicales) framework developed by the RISM UK and CH.

○ In this project, the bibliographic entries are the content of a book (describing a collection of sources), and not of a library as in a normal RISM series.

○ The database contains also bibliographical data about the inventories themselves.

○ The database uses MARC21 (or MARCXML), which will enable good interchangeability.

○ The inventories are also available in extenso in high-resolution scanned images displayed in a dedicated image viewer.

○ Each entry in the database is linked to the image(s) from where the information was taken from, so the user can see the transcriptions together with the original document.

○ The data is compared to existing bibliographical tools, e.g. RISM A/I and EitnerQ.

4 — Current stage

○ The cataloging of two inventories is underway, with about 500 entries made available to the public (June 2010).

○ The first is the inventory from the Cistercian monastery of St Urban (Lucern, CH) from 1661 listing many Milanese prints which are not known today from any other source.

○ The second is the inventory of the collegiate church of Beromünster (CH) from 1696, which includes the detailed content of approximately 200 prints and manuscript volumes, divided according to their musical genre.

○ Both inventories were digitised and are accessible online.

inventories.rism-ch.org

The web interface with high-resolution images

5 — Future work

○ The preliminary results, which show that more than 10 percent of the sources listed are unknown, will need to be further analysed.

○ The database will also enable the connections between the different musical centres to be better understood by analyzing the music sources shared (or not) across the inventories, but specific searching capabilities need to be added for it.

○ Potentially, the database can be extended to other inventories from modern Europe, and dozens of them have already been identified.