

# Researchers to bring digital music scores into 21 century

February 6 2014

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Lancaster University is leading a project which will 'unlock' many thousands of musical scores which are stored online as frozen images, opening them up to a new generation of digital-savvy musicians and researchers.

Thanks to huge online libraries of music, thousands of musical scores are available to the public and are used every day by leading music scholars and amateur musicians.

Until now most of these images have been stored as digital scans, like photographs.

For example, to create a new arrangement or to adapt a piece of music to suit a different instrument, musicians frequently have to copy the whole piece out themselves from scratch as they are unable to amend the original digital copy.

Nor is it possible to research and compare the content of these scores using computer searches.

Questions like, 'Where else have I heard this melody?', or 'What is it that makes a piece of music sound Russian?' are currently difficult to answer without putting in a lot of manual research.

But over the next year, researchers at Lancaster University and Leeds will be working on new technology which will unlock these images,

making it possible for people in future to search for particular phrases or note-combinations, to compare large numbers of pieces of music, and find answers to these questions and many more.

The project called 'Optical Music Recognition from Multiple Sources' is led by Dr Alan Marsden of Lancaster University's Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts.

Dr Marsden said: "Just as technologies like Google books have opened up new ways of searching and interacting with printed texts, this [project](#) will hopefully enable musicians to find new ways of working with scores. Within a year we hope to bring about significant improvements in Optical Music Recognition technology, bringing new life to old scores and giving people with an interest in music new opportunities to interact with these large online [music](#) libraries."

It is one of the 21 Digital Transformations in the Arts and Humanities projects to be funded as part of a £4.6 million Big Data initiative by the Arts and Humanities Research Council announced today (Thursday 6 February) by the Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts MP.

At a speech at the High Performance Computing and Big Data Conference Mr Willetts outlined what steps are being taken to strengthen the UK's competitive advantage in Big Data.

Universities and Science Minister David Willetts said: "Getting quality data out of the hands of a few and into the public domain is an important goal for this Government.

"This funding will help to overcome the challenge of making vast amounts of rich data more accessible and easier to interpret by the public. These 21 projects promise to come up with innovative long-

lasting solutions."

Provided by Lancaster University

Citation: Researchers to bring digital music scores into 21 century (2014, February 6) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-02-digital-music-scores-century.html>

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