
A New Vision

By

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The New Jersey Music Educators Association (NJMEA) is pleased to sponsor a new publication, *Visions of Research in Music Education (VRME)*. The goal of this journal is to report peer-reviewed research of a philosophical, historical, or scientific nature, which contributes to an understanding of music teaching and learning at any level.

Peer-reviewed research is central to the fabric of higher education, and the formal report of this kind of inquiry is vital to advancement of our field. *VRME* will follow the traditional practice of scholarly inquiry--dissemination of peer-reviewed research. It will differ from most existing journals in that it will be published only in electronic format. In this way, many of the practical problems faced by print journals will be eliminated. One of the most obvious is the cost of production; this publication is not dependent on subscription, and can therefore continue and grow in ways that were previously not possible.

Higher education is encountering an enormous strain with the ever increasing number of print journals. Yet with the expansion of knowledge, this increase in the number of journals is inevitable. University libraries face tremendous financial pressures, attributable in large measure to the constantly increasing costs of subscribing to print journals, particularly a concern in the sciences. In the Rutgers library system, an existing journal subscription must usually be eliminated before a new one can be approved. The virtual monopoly by a few science publishers has continued to pressure university libraries to continue older subscription models even as we move to electronic formatting. By eliminating the need to subscribe, this very practical problem will be eliminated--at least in this one journal.

Electronic publication allows considerably greater access. The only real limitation is for readers to be made aware of a web-address. (One must also hope that addresses of electronic publications will remain consistent over a long period of time. Otherwise, the information will become lost. Most readers are well aware of the highly unstable and dynamic nature of the web.) There are a number of obvious factors that restrict dissemination of research with older print models. Readership is limited to those who actually subscribe to the journal or to those who use the resource in the library. Electronic presentation can greatly expand readership. For those dependent on the library, the ability to access the journal at any hour should be of significant benefit.

Digitization is both a blessing and a curse. Readers no longer need to use the photocopy machine since resources can be copied electronically. However, copyright regulations can be easily abused. Electronic publication can also allow for new methods in the presentation of information such as hypertext linking; in this journal, references embedded in the text are linked to the reference list. Hypermedia presentation is also an area that requires further study. This might be especially true for web-based hypertext and hypermedia since much of the research thus far conducted has been related to other information delivery systems.

Many publications on the WWW rightly receive considerable criticism. Most are not subject to editorial criticism and review, a long recognized and successful practice in print-based media. Virtually anyone can post virtually anything on the web, ranging from the incorrect to the offensive. There is no valid real reason why this climate cannot be altered, at least for scholarly work. In an increasingly electronic world, one must insist that serious publications, whether electronic or print, be subject to existing models of editorial review to assure that a standard is obtained.

Another vital aspect of electronic publication is how it will be considered by colleges and universities in promotion and tenure cases. (I am writing this introduction following a session on the topic at the 1998 National Association of Schools of Music national meeting.) As the dissemination and storage of knowledge becomes increasingly electronic and less print-based, researchers (and, perhaps more importantly, college administrators and tenure evaluators) must recognize new paradigms. It is the long-standing practice of peer-review that must remain constant, not the media form in which the information appears. Again, using Rutgers as a model, the University promotion and tenure instructions now recognize electronic publications, although they do differentiate between print and electronic materials. It is hoped that universities and colleges will adjust to this new mode of peer-reviewed publication.

The publication of *VRME* is offered as a service to the profession by NJMEA and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. This publication would not be possible without a serious commitment to volunteerism by the community of music education researchers in New Jersey. The author also wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Anneliese Grasemann from the Rutgers music history faculty who is serving as Editorial Associate, Paul Reid, Rutgers Music Department computer technician who is maintaining the web site, and especially, Matthew Riedel, a graduate student in composition, who designed and coded all of the pages. We in New Jersey hope that our Vision will be of benefit to others.