

## **Interdisciplinarity in JIMS**

JIMS regards interdisciplinarity as synergetic generation of new knowledge - as opposed to multidisciplinary, the accumulation of knowledge from different disciplines. Interdisciplinarity may be regarded as a temporary state, since interdisciplinary research areas (such as for example music history and computing, music analysis and cultural studies, or musicology and psychology) tend to transform gradually into new disciplines or paradigms (such as computing in musicology, semiotics, or music psychology).

The journal promotes interdisciplinarity between epistemologically distant disciplines and in particular among humanities, sciences and practically oriented disciplines. While JIMS considers these three broad categories to be equally important, they can be difficult to define, and their boundaries can be hard to locate.

### **Defining "humanities" and "sciences"**

There is no clear consensus about the definition and boundaries of humanities and sciences. JIMS is reluctant to offer a general definition, but prefers to consider their relationship in individual submissions. The following attempt at a definition may be useful as a basis for discussion.

There is stronger consensus about the meaning of "humanities" than "sciences". Most agree that humanities include arts, cultural studies, history, languages, literature, philosophy and religion. JIMS uses "sciences" in the modern English sense of natural and social sciences, which excludes humanities and practically oriented disciplines, and not in the original Latin sense of any knowledge, skill or scholarship.

Although the original sense of *scientia* appears to include humanities and practically oriented disciplines, the *scientia* of philosophers such as Aristotle and Boethius was (from a modern viewpoint) positivistic, emphasizing logic, first principles and demonstration. The ambiguity of the word "science" is less pronounced in other languages such as German, in which "humanities" translates to *Geisteswissenschaften* and "sciences" (in the sense used here) to *Naturwissenschaften* (or *Natur- und Sozialwissenschaften*).

The following broad generalisations distinguish modern humanities from modern sciences. Of course there are plenty of exceptions to every rule.

Music research in the humanities tends in the following directions:

- The object of research is individual manifestations of music (performances, works, pieces, songs, styles, genres, traditions, cultures).
- Knowledge is acquired by personal experience, intuition and introspection.
- Research methods are qualitative (based on text and language) and include analytic, critical, and speculative approaches.
- Different researchers are expected to come to different conclusions.

Music research in the sciences tends in the following directions:

- Questions are posed about music in general.
- Knowledge is acquired by observation and comparing hypotheses with evidence.
- Research methods are quantitative (based on measurement, data, computation, statistics) and empirical.
- Different researchers are expected to come to similar conclusions.

Practically oriented disciplines can be defined as those disciplines whose primary aim is the application of research findings. They include performance, composition, education, therapy and medicine.

### **Historical context**

The distinction between humanities and sciences in music research is best understood in its historical context. JIMS tentatively interprets that history as follows.

Since the 19th Century, the study of music has traditionally been situated in three main areas:

- the humanities, which focus on historical or critical methods;
- the social sciences, whose methods include ethnography and mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods; and
- musical practice, such as composition, performance, and education.

But scientific research on music (as defined above) has also flourished since the 19th Century in areas such as acoustics, psychology and neuroscience, and much of the scholarship that led to or began ethnomusicology was carried out by people grounded in the natural sciences such as Ellis, Stumpf, Hornbostel and Abraham. Moreover, scientific approaches to music can be traced back to ancient philosophy and medieval music theory. Recent advances in production, computer and measurement technologies, and corresponding developments in areas such as cognition and neuropsychology, have expanded the range of music research. At the same time, traditional musicology has grown and diversified.

### **Implications for JIMS**

JIMS promotes all internationally established, academically recognized approaches to music research. JIMS regards humanities, sciences and practically oriented disciplines as fundamentally equal in importance. We believe that a thorough understanding of music can only be gained by bringing together and balancing these three contrasting epistemologies.

Consistent with this belief, JIMS aims for a balance among articles that primarily address specific musical pieces, styles, traditions or cultures (which is typical of the musical humanities), articles that primarily address more general musical questions about music (typical of the musical sciences), and articles that primarily address issues of performance, composition or improvisation. We also encourage authors to aim for a balance between at least two of these three aspects within individual submissions, and to bridge those aspects both epistemologically and methodologically (e.g. by qualitative research methods).

The unclear boundary between humanities and sciences does not mean that expertise is transferable from one side to the other. In recent decades, the research literature in most disciplines has steadily expanded and become more specialised, and there has been a similar development in practically oriented disciplines, including musical performance. Today, it takes many years of careful work to acquire expertise at the highest international level in a given discipline. It is no longer possible for individual music researchers to attain international recognition as experts in more than one of the humanities, sciences and practically oriented disciplines. JIMS explicitly promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, because it has become a prerequisite for interdisciplinary scholarship at the highest level.

**Acknowledgment.**

We thank David Fallows, Susan McClary, Raymond McDonald, Bruno Nettl and Eleanor Selfridge-Field for their valuable comments and support and welcome further suggestions.

*Richard Parncutt*  
academic editor