Dear Mr. Colby,

I would like to propose the creation of a Digital Humanities Round Table at the Music Library Association. Through conversations with music librarians at recent MLA and other conferences, it is apparent that we are already involved or becoming more involved in collaborative work and support for DH projects with faculty and students at our institutions. A round table would provide an environment in which we could discuss issues facing the digital humanities and libraries, including those of sustainability and scalability, as well as questions about project management or metadata creation related to digital humanities research.

As digital humanities projects become a regular part of pedagogy and scholarship, libraries and librarians are at various stages in attempting to figure out how they can support their advanced students and scholars. Some libraries have created a digital scholarship team within their program areas, hired digital humanities/scholarship librarians, or created physical centers/labs, which pull together several staff who provide support for or collaborate on DH projects. Most recently, libraries have started to take a proactive approach to the digital humanities by introducing various programs aimed at re-skilling librarians so they can become competent in using DH tools, methods, and understand the process of research from a DH perspective. At Columbia University, for example, they have begun the Developing Librarian Project, in which humanities librarians will work together on a DH project in order to learn specific skills and tools through a hands-on approach.¹

The general role of the library and library staff has been extrapolated upon and debated by various players in digital humanities.² Recently, Miriam Posner, Digital Humanities Program Coordinator at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote about several common limitations of doing DH in the library, including lack of support for librarian-conceived initiatives, overburdening subject librarians with additional work, or lack of institutional commitment to DH.³ In response to Posner, Trevor Muñoz, Assistant Dean for Digital Humanities Research at the University of Maryland, provided his own take on how DH in the library is not a service and that libraries should not wait for faculty-initiated projects, but

¹ Developing Librarian Project at Columbia University, [http://www.developinglibrarian.org/](http://www.developinglibrarian.org/).
² For recent discussions about digital humanities and the library, see: Micah Vandergrift (Scholarly Communications Librarian at Florida State University); Bethany Nowviskie (Director of the Scholar’s Lab at University of Virginia) “A Skunk in the Library,” June 28, 2011; Tom Scheinfeldt (Director-at-Large of Center for History and New Media), “Nobody Cares about the Library: How Digital Technology Makes the Library Invisible (and Visible) to Scholars,” February 22, 2012.
that librarians should be able to lead DH initiatives and projects, as well as actively participate in the DH community. While constituents have varying expectations of what the library and staff can offer or how they can participate in DH, it becomes apparent that students and scholars are using libraries or archives to access materials for use in digital projects and are collaborating with subject librarians, IT staff, GIS specialists, and others in order to build and maintain their projects. Over the last five years, reports and findings about digital humanities centers, evaluating digital work, as well as library services or support for digital humanities have been released from organizations, such as the Council on Libraries and Information Resources, Association for Research Libraries, Modern Language Association, and in journals, such as *Journal of Library Administration*.

Almost ten years following the 2004 release of *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, which included a chapter on music in relation to the digital humanities, music librarians have gone beyond supporting technology needs of faculty and students. Back then we taught and supported the use of midi or notation software, or music databases—now we are serving on teams in digital humanities centers, the library, and grant-funded projects. Our expertise about metadata, linked open data, digitization and preservation standards is being called upon for projects that, for example, examine historical events through geo-spatial or temporal visualizations. We are participating in re-skilling workshops in order to learn how to encode texts using TEI (or music using MEI), write lines of code to analyze musical forms, or create open-access publications in platforms, such as Omeka or Scalar. In order to support music library professionals who have become involved in digital humanities work, the MLA should consider the creation of a round table, where librarians who share similar experiences or concerns can meet, share ideas, and discuss the role of music librarians in digital humanities.

Sincerely,

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4 Trevor Muñoz, “Digital Humanities in the Library is not a Service.”