The RISM Online User Survey: Report

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Introduction

The idea to conduct a study of RISM's online catalog users arose when a new version of the catalog was released in April 2014 and it became clear that we, the RISM Zentralredaktion (Central Office), had little data on the search habits and needs of our catalog users. The goal of the user study was to discover who our users are, what expectations they have, and how they search the catalog. With this information, we would like to improve our services and focus on the needs of our users. For us, this means concentrating on the aspects that we have control over, namely instruction and the tools and tutorials we offer. The results of the study also serve as a basis for the technical development of the next release of the catalog.

About RISM

The Répertoire International des Sources Musicales (International Inventory of Musical Sources), known as RISM, is an international, non-profit organization which aims for comprehensive documentation of extant musical sources worldwide. These primary sources are manuscripts or printed music, writings on music theory, and libretti. They are housed in libraries, archives, monasteries, schools, and private collections.

The Central Office is the contact point for participants and other interested people from all over the world. We are located in Frankfurt, Germany. The RISM publications represent RISM's activities, which began in 1952 and continue to the present day. The online catalog is the focus of RISM's current activities and was released as a free, online database in 2010. Other publications include series A, which documents printed music (A/I) and music manuscripts (A/II); series B, which covers specific categories of repertory; and series C, the *Directory of Music Research Libraries*.

The online catalog

The RISM online catalog is a free resource that can be accessed from www.rism.info and opac.rism.info. It documents manuscripts, printed music, libretti, and treatises. The online catalog contains all of series A/I, A/II, and years 1500-1550 of B/I. It is made possible through a partnership between the Bavarian State Library (Munich), the State Library of Berlin, and RISM. The Bavarian State Library is responsible for the operation and technical implementation of the RISM online catalog. As of May 2016, the online catalog contains over 1,043,000 records.

The user study

The RISM Central Office conducted a series of user studies from the spring of 2014 to November 2015. We carried out four activities, each available in English and German:
- An online survey
- A card sorting activity: Participants sort elements of a catalog entry into a logical order.
- X/O activity: Participants are handed printouts of a catalog entry and draw an "O" around the elements they find useful and an "X" through the elements they do not find useful.
- An observational study: Participants are asked to find specific items in the catalog while being observed.

This report focuses on the online survey.

The survey
The survey covered the following topics: the RISM project in general, specific aspects of the online catalog, and experience with other databases. It ran from October 30, 2014 until February 28, 2015. 551 valid responses were received. The survey was available in English and German. 62 questions

were asked through a Google Form that participants accessed through a link. The survey was available on the RISM website, the website for the online catalog, and also distributed through mailing lists and social media (see question 61). Participants had the chance to enter their names for a prize drawing at the end of the survey. In addition, they had the option of participating in a follow-up study.

We would like to thank Kirstin Dougan for her helpful advice during an early stage of the user study and Nathalie Siebert for her kind assistance in answering our questions regarding the survey evaluation. Any errors are our own.

The complete survey begins on page 1 and includes a summary of the responses received followed by a brief discussion of each question.

<u>Notes on the evaluation process</u>
The field "Other": In cases of write-in responses (in which "other" was an option and people were asked to provide their own answer) where the response duplicated one of the options given in the question, the duplicated response was tallied with the other identical answers.

Consistency among participants: The number of people who claimed they have never used the catalog seemed to change from question to question. The number of people who skipped questions also varied between 12 and 163. On average, each question was left unanswered by an average of 35.89 people.

Comments: In all, we offered 15 opportunities for comments throughout the survey. However, not every comment field resulted in comments related to the topic at hand, so many comments were, strictly speaking, irrelevant to the questions being asked. Other times, respondents put comments in the write-in "other" fields. Likely reasons for providing off-topic responses could be because the questions caused other issues to leap into mind, or respondents feared that they would not have the opportunity to comment on a certain topic later.

For this report, in the first fourteen comment fields we discuss the comments that help us better interpret the topic under consideration and include representative quotations from respondents. For the last comment field, question 62, we decided to take all of the comments from the entire survey and evaluate them as a group. This way, the off-topic comments from other parts of the survey could receive consideration and we could examine overall trends.

The RISM Survey and Analysis

The Répertoire International des Sources Musicales (RISM, www.rism.info) is an international project with the goal of comprehensively documenting extant musical sources worldwide.

With this survey, we would like to find out more about the expectations of our users and use this information as we continue to develop the online catalog. Your answers are important to us!

This survey is voluntary and will take ca. 15 minutes to complete. No identifying information will be collected.

As our way of saying thanks, RISM will be giving away 25 surprise packages! At the end of the survey, you will have a chance to enter your name in the drawing.
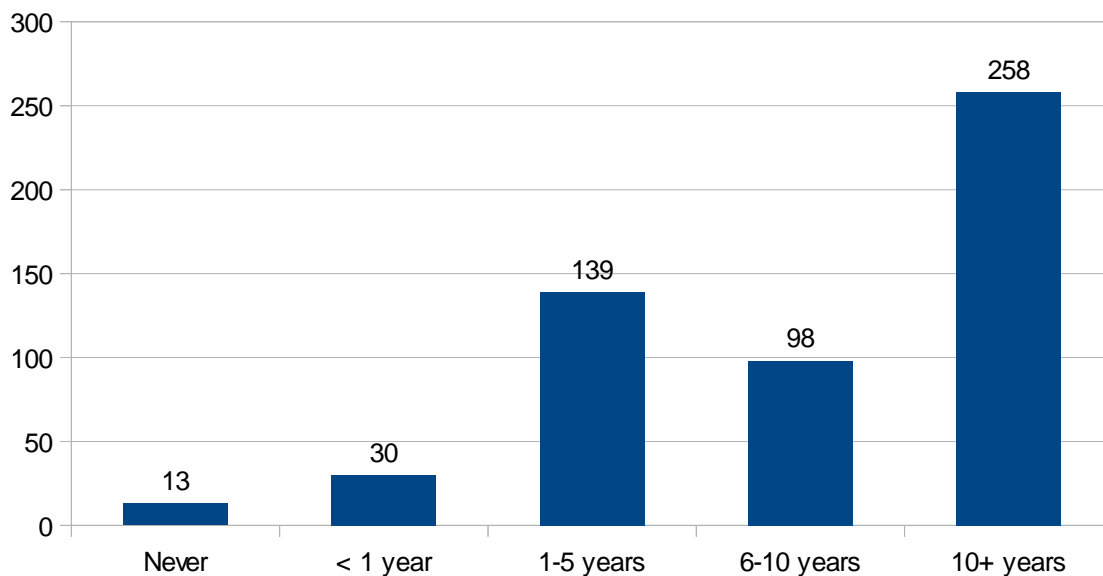
Thank you very much for your help!

Experience with RISM as a whole

1. How many years have you been using RISM?
Anything: Books, manuscript catalog, printed music, CD-ROM, EBSCO database, Series A, Series B, Series C...

| Years	Responses	%[1]
Never	13	2.42
< 1 year	30	5.58
1-5 years	139	25.84
6-10 years	98	18.22
10+ years	258	47.96

538 responses; 13 blank.

Almost half (47.96%, *n*=258) of the people who answered our survey have been using RISM (whether in books, CD-ROM, EBSCO database, or our online database) for over 10 years. The majority of our respondents (66.17%, *n*=356) have been using RISM for 6 or more years. Most of our respondents, therefore, are experienced RISM users who used RISM when "RISM" could have meant the blue hardbound volumes of A/I (*Individual Prints before 1800*) and series B, CD-ROM editions of A/II (*Music Manuscripts after 1600*), or a subscription-only database. For these users, the RISM online catalog is a new development.

For nearly a third (31.41%, *n*=169) of users, namely the ones who have been using RISM for 5 years or less, the free online catalog, released in 2010, has almost always been an option. For them, the term "RISM" might synonymous with the RISM online catalog.

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[1] Percentages throughout this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

2. How did you first find out about the online catalog?

Access to the online RISM catalog is through www.rism.info (picture below, left) and opac.rism.info (right).
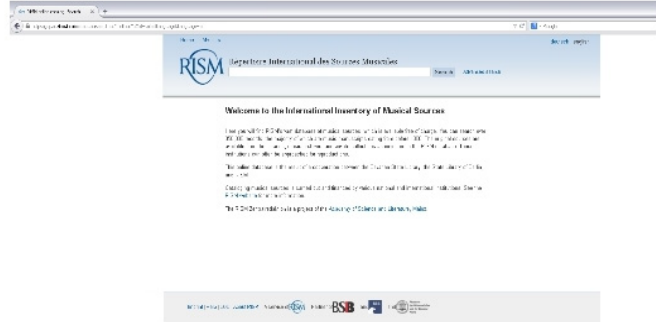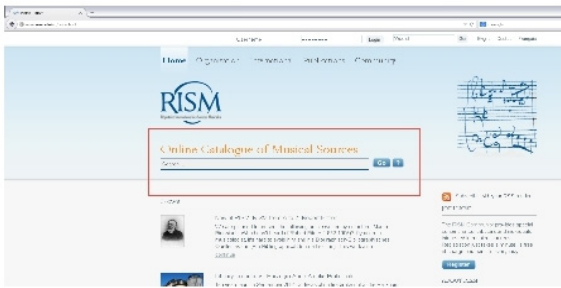
Resource	Responses	%
In a course	159	29.66
Through word-of-mouth	86	16.04
RISM website	62	11.57
Using an Internet search engine	37	6.90
Someone sent me the link	35	6.53
I work for / contribute to RISM	30	5.60
From work	11	2.05
From a library	11	2.05
In a journal	9	1.68
I followed a link from a different website	7	1.31
I followed the link from Facebook, Twitter, or other social media platform	4	0.75
I followed the link from a blog	1	0.19
Other	11	2.05
I don't remember	73	13.62

536 responses; 15 blank.

Most respondents (29.66%, *n*=159) reported encountering the online catalog through a course. Word-of-mouth (86 respondents) and the RISM website itself (62 respondents) also accounted for more than 10% of responses.

We noticed a discrepancy in the responses to this question. The RISM online catalog has only been available since 2010, so the fact that 159 people indicated that they became aware of it through a course would imply that we reached a lot of current students or recent graduates. However, of the people who selected "In a course," 76 have been using RISM for 6 years or more, and only 36 said that they are currently students. We suspect that the question was interpreted by some to mean "How did you first find out about RISM in general?" Despite this, we can nevertheless see the importance of courses in introducing RISM.

3. How often do you use the online catalog?

Frequency	Responses	%
Never	20	3.72
Occasionally (a few times a year)	149	27.70
Sometimes (once a month)	129	23.98
Often (several times a month)	238	44.24
Other	2	0.37

*538 valid responses; 1 discarded response; 12 blank.*

Most of the respondents seem to use the online catalog on a regular basis. A majority of respondents (68.22%, $n = 367$) visit the RISM online catalog at least once a month.
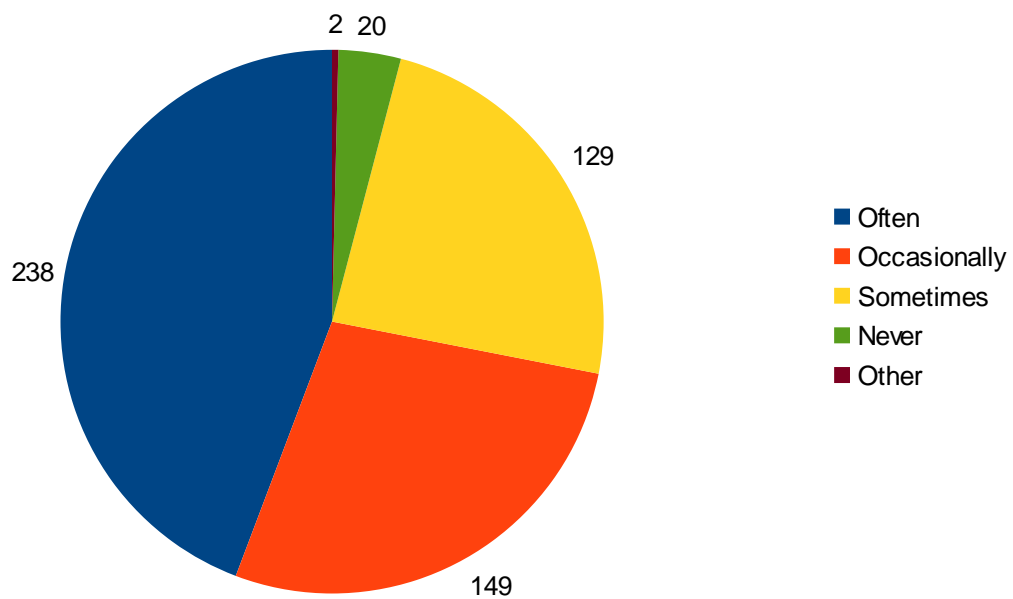
4. When is the last time you used the online catalog?

Last visit	Responses	%
Today	86	15.96
Yesterday	55	10.20
In the past week	124	23.01
In the past month	141	26.16
In the past year	95	17.63
Longer than a year ago	18	3.34
Never	20	3.71

539 responses; 12 blank.
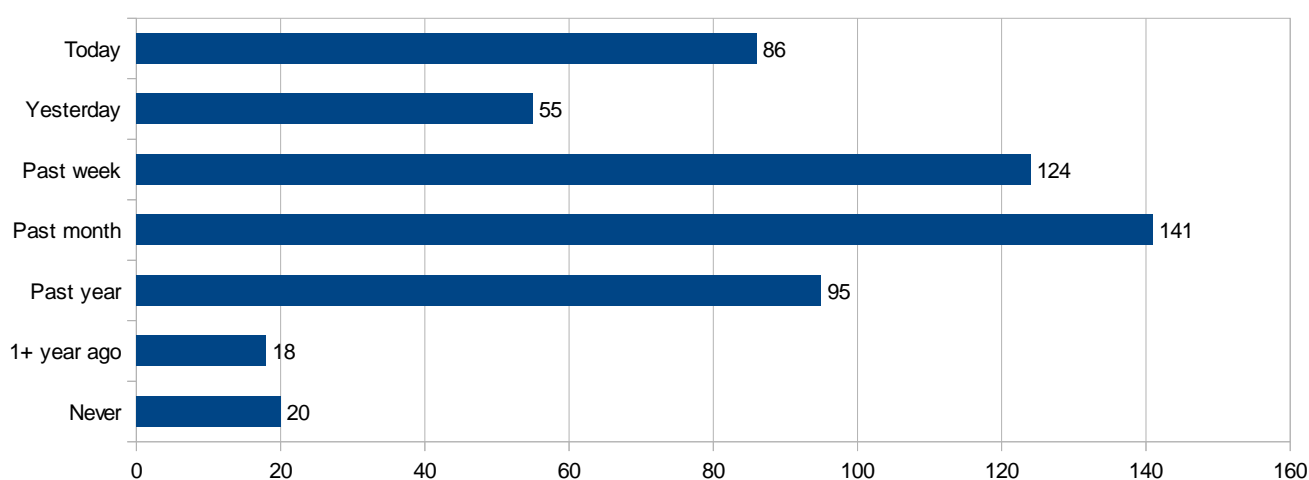
406 respondents (75.32%) have used the online catalog relatively recently: anywhere between today and the past month.

5. What do you mainly use the online catalog for?

Reason	Responses	%
For work	279	51.19
For my own research interests	173	31.74
For a course / for my studies	78	14.31
I've never used the online catalog.	12	2.20
Other	3	0.55

545 responses (from 537 respondents); 14 blank.

The online catalog is mainly consulted for work (51.19%, *n*=279) or for one's own research interests (31.74%, *n*=173). Some people wrote in that they use the catalog equally for different purposes, so their responses are counted in more than one category.

Experience with the online catalog

6. Where do you usually use the online catalog?

Location	Responses	%
At home	246	44.65
At the office	218	39.56
At the library	73	13.25
I've never used the online catalog	8	1.45
Other: Everywhere	5	0.91
Other	1	0.18

551 responses (from 537 respondents); 14 blank.

Most people use the online catalog from home (44.65%, *n*=246) or at the office (39.56%, *n*=218). Some people wrote in multiple responses. Responses to this question might have been complicated by cases of people who work from home or work at a library.

7. What do you usually use to access the online catalog?

Device	Responses	%
Desktop computer	316	58.96
Laptop computer	200	37.31
Other: Multiple	6	1.12
Tablet computer (iPad, Galaxy)	3	0.56
Mobile device (iPhone, Blackberry, smartphone)	1	0.19
I've never used the online catalog.	10	1.87

536 valid responses; 1 discarded; 14 blank.

Desktop and laptop computers are the preference. Mobile devices and tablets do not yet play a large role (the preference of 4 respondents), but a contributing factor might be that neither the online catalog nor the RISM website are (yet) optimized for mobile or tablet use.

8. Comments:
36 responses

- "I wish RISM had a more user-friendly mobile interface." (Respondent 82)
- "I'd love to use my mobile, but since most research requires using a laptop (and since the web page's user experience with mobile phones is much behind those of a laptop) I usually end up working on there." (Respondent 334)

- "My university library's website isn't reliably accessible off-campus or on mobile devices (issues of proxy settings, browser compatibility, firewalls), so I access RISM from my office on campus or in the library." (Respondent 78)

In the comments, nine people expressed a wish for a catalog app for mobile devices or a mobile-friendly interface. Three people commented that they do not have access to the catalog, or that they can only access it from campus, meaning that being on campus played a role in where they use the catalog or on what device. These respondents are undoubtedly referring to the EBSCO subscription service and not the free RISM catalog. Similar experiences of non access or campus-only access were voiced occasionally in other parts of the survey, so it seems that some people are not aware that RISM offers a free online catalog. One comment, "This survey has introduced me to your catalogue" (respondent 197), seems to echo this.

Searching

9. Do you use the Simple Search (left) or the Advanced Search (right)?
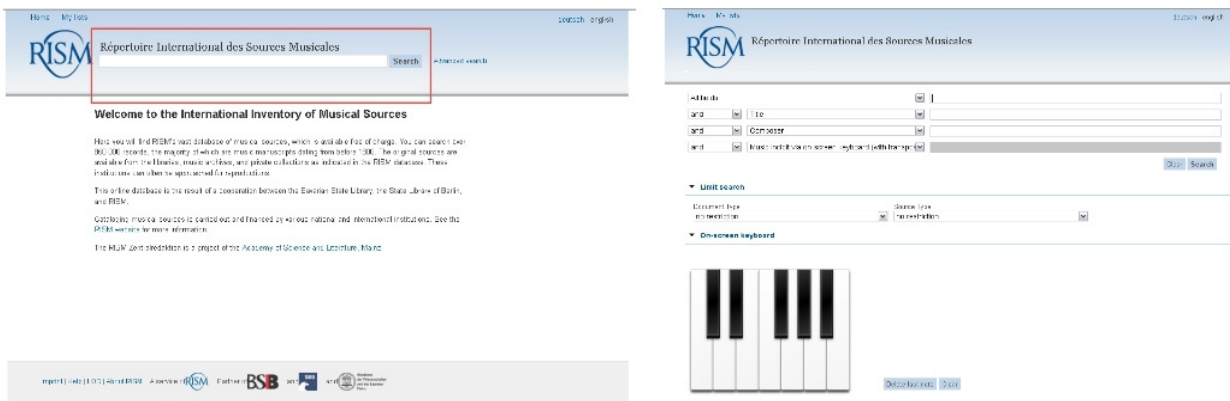
Type	Responses	%
Simple Search	63	11.75
Advanced Search	117	21.83
Both	343	63.99
I've never used the online catalog.	13	2.43

536 responses; 15 blank.

The majority of respondents (63.99%, *n*=343) reported using both the simple search and the advanced search. At the time of the survey, the simple search was the default search on both www.rism.info and opac.rism.info. A more balanced approach would offer both searches at the same time (see question 10).

10. Comments:
30 responses.

- "For generic titles (sonatas, quartets), I would start at the Advanced, for distinctive titles, and if the composer is not so prolific, I would start at the Simple search." (Respondent 44)

- "I try the simple search first, if I don't have any info from it, I try the advanced search." (Respondent 8)
- "I tend to refine searches in the left-hand column when I know what comes up." (Respondent 121)
- "We prefer the advanced search here at our library. It would be nice if there was a shorter URL that defaults to the advanced search." (Respondent 49)

Fifteen respondents (50%) gave examples of situations when one type of search was more appropriate than the other. Such real-life examples help us understand how the catalog is used.

In response to the suggestion to offer a user-friendly URL to directly access the advanced search, we added a direct link to the advanced search on www.rism.info. This URL can be bookmarked.

11. Do you use the on-screen piano keyboard (see picture below)?
This is available in the Advanced Search.

Answer	Responses	%
Yes, often	31	5.86
Yes, sometimes	83	15.69
Rarely	117	22.12
No	298	56.33

529 responses; 22 blank.

The keyboard is a tool that facilitates entering music incipits. Although 56.33% ($n=298$) of respondents reported not using the on-screen piano keyboard, over one fifth (21.55%, $n=114$) do use it sometimes or often. In question 25, 207 (41.15%) respondents rated this tool as "useful."

12. Comments:

50 responses.

- "I was not aware of the piano - that might be rather useful!" (Respondent 291)

- "I never knew this existed, but I still doubt I'd use it." (Respondent 55)

- "I believe it should be a two-octave keyboard...The enharmonic overlay needs to be identified and clearly explained." (Respondent 89)
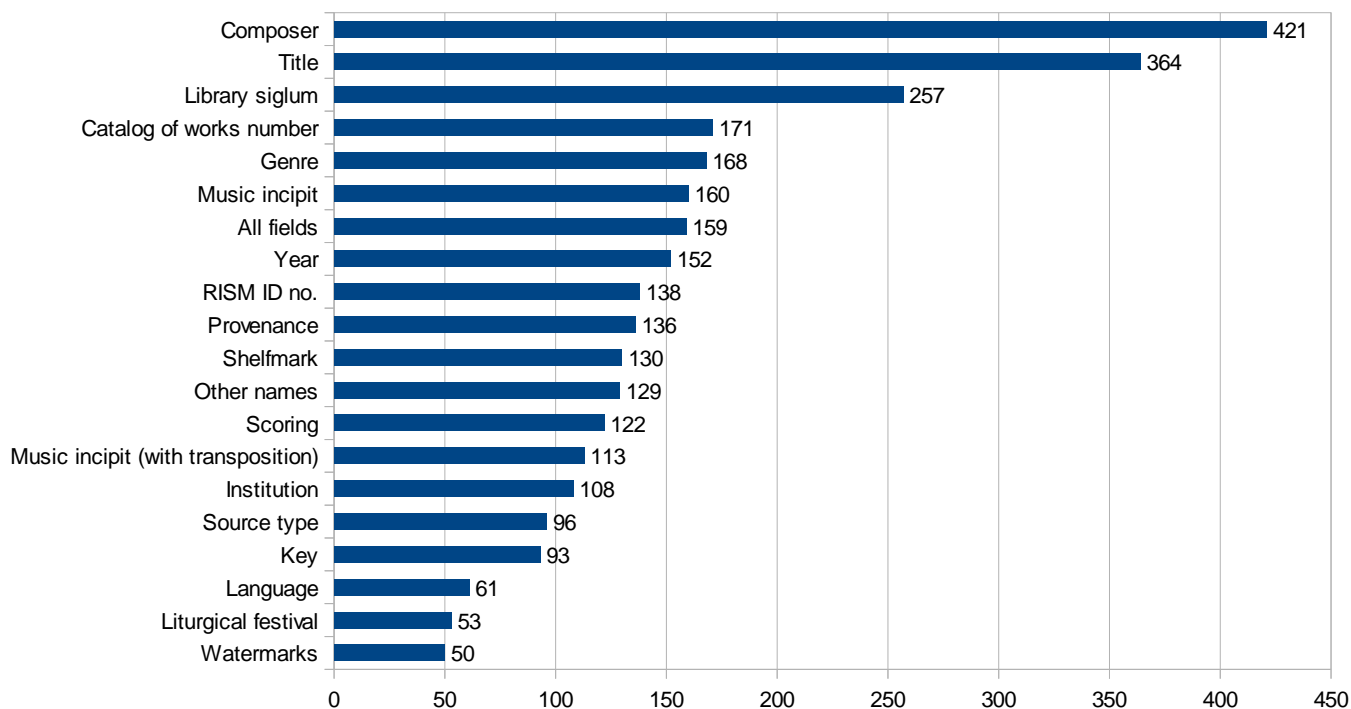
Twelve respondents wrote that they had never seen the keyboard before. It is helpful for us to know that the keyboard escapes the notice of some people so that we know to point it out in catalog demonstrations. We can imagine that the size of one's computer screen makes a difference, though personal preference could play a role. Some questions about the keyboard's search capabilities and accuracy were raised. As a result of the comments (see also questions 26-27), we improved our help texts for the incipit search and keyboard. A video tutorial is planned.

13. In the Advanced Search, you can search different fields (please see picture below). Which of these have you used before? (Check all that apply.)
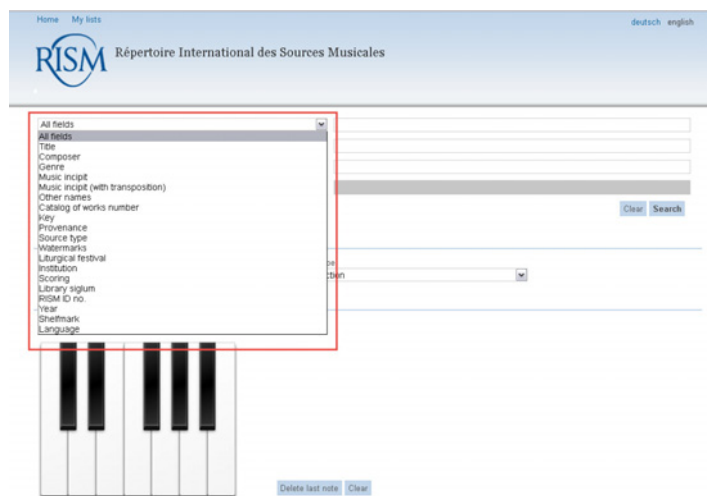
Fields (following order in catalog)	Responses	%
All fields	159	29.72
Title	364	68.04
Composer	421	78.69
Genre	168	31.40
Music incipit	160	29.91
Music incipit (with transposition)	113	21.12
Other names	129	24.11
Catalog of works number	171	31.96
Key	93	17.38
Provenance	136	25.42
Source type	96	17.94
Watermarks	50	9.35
Liturgical festival	53	9.91
Institution	108	20.19
Scoring	122	22.80
Library siglum	257	48.04
RISM ID no.	138	25.79
Year	152	28.41
Shelfmark	130	24.30
Language (of text)	61	11.40
I've never used the Advanced Search.	45	8.41

535 respondents (multiple responses possible); 16 blank.

Field	Value
Composer	421
Title	364
Library siglum	257
Catalog of works number	171
Genre	168
Music incipit	160
All fields	159
Year	152
RISM ID no.	138
Provenance	136
Shelfmark	130
Other names	129
Scoring	122
Music incipit (with transposition)	113
Institution	108
Source type	96
Key	93
Language	61
Liturgical festival	53
Watermarks	50

When one examines the distribution of the responses, it is evident that there are three fields that are used especially often, a broad middle range, and three at the bottom.

The top three selected answers were the fields "Composer" (selected 421 times by 78.69% of respondents), "Title" (364, 68.04% of respondents), and "Library siglum" (257, 48.04% of respondents). While we expected the first two, the frequent use of the field "Library siglum" is surprising in that it requires more effort to be able to use: a database of library sigla is offered on a separate webpage, www.rism.info/en/sigla, and they cannot be searched intuitively.

In the Advanced Search, three preset fields are available: "All fields" (ranked 7th), "Title," and "Composer," with the keyboard for the music incipit located at the bottom of the screen ("Music incipit" ranked 6th). A customizable interface, as suggested in some comments, would allow users to preselect the fields that they use the most.

Among the least-used fields, somewhat surprising is that "Language" (for vocal music) was not higher on the list (18th out of 20). The bottom two fields, "Liturgical festival" and "Watermarks," are typically of interest to specialists. We would have expected "Liturgical festival" to rank higher because it is a practical tool for church musicians. We suspect that the terminology used in this index, which is based on the *Liber usualis*, is not intuitive enough. Autocomplete and a multilingual thesaurus could help here.

14. What other fields would you like to be able to search in the Advanced Search?
79 responses.

Eight people said they are satisfied with the current arrangement.

Many fields were named that are already available. Examples were:
- Keyword: use "All Fields"
- RISM A/II numbers: use "RISM ID no."

- Text incipits: use "Title"
- Name and title variants: these are searched automatically
- Genre: use "Genre" or "Title"
- Music incipits: use "Music incipit" or the keyboard
- Provenance: use "Provenance"
- Searching by instrument: use "Scoring"
- Country: use "Library siglum"

Since the function of these fields is evidently not clear to all users, the help text was improved to offer better guidance. It is also possible that fields in the advanced search are not arranged in a way that lets people find what they need. Searching for instrument or country is admittedly difficult in the online catalog and technical improvements are needed in these areas.

Users would also like to see a differentiated search by function of person, such as copyist (mentioned 10 times), former owner (2x), performers, author of text (4x), and dedicatee. Persons with these functions can be searched in the field "Other names," but not by specific function.

New suggestions from our respondents are a search for roles, opus numbers, time signature, format (score, parts, etc.), date of premiere and other performance dates, date added to RISM, type of notation (such as tablature), references to first editions, names of publishers, and a search for solo instruments. In the summer of 2015, we introduced a search for publishers to the online catalog.

Improvements to the existing search fields were suggested, especially for the incipit search: a more comprehensive on-screen piano keyboard, rhythm search, and time signature search. Some also want to see more continuo incipits or a search by musical theme or phrase. While a search for a year is possible, users would like to search by date range.

15. Comments:
21 responses.

- "For my research I search on performer name or character name ('Other Names')." (Respondent 78)
- "Die Suche nach Besetzungen ist unbefriedigend." (Respondent 354)
- "I wish the shelfmark search was easier to use and/or more flexible. If a shelf number isn't entered *exactly* as it is in the record--including the placement or inclusion/exclusion of a space--the search is not successful." (Respondent 25)
- "Für weniger erfahrene Nutzer ist es sehr schwer im Bestand einer bestimmten Bibliothek zu suchen, da man zuerst das Sigel ermitteln muss." (Respondent 352)
- "It would help if the 'ground rules' of the on-screen keyboard were explained. Are tied notes treated in the same way as untied notes (i.e., with two entries)? Are grace notes treated like ordinary notes?" (Respondent 304)
- "Es ist schade, dass die gedruckten Werke (RISM A/I) noch nicht in derselben Weise integriert sind." (Respondent 512)

Many comments had to do with the shortcomings of various indexes. We were able to pass technical issues, such as issues with instrumentation, shelfmarks, and sigla, onto the catalog developers. Other comments called attention to where better help texts are required, and the help text for the incipit search has been improved. In 2015, a few months after the close of the survey, the printed editions described in A/I were added to the RISM online catalog.

Search results

16. Do you use the column "Narrow results"?
This is the left-hand column, marked in red below.

Usage	Responses	%
Yes, often	243	45.25
Yes, sometimes	162	30.17
Rarely	70	13.04
No	62	11.55

537 responses; 14 blank.

Refining the search results with filters is used by 75.42% of respondents (*n=* 405) at least sometimes. Respondents therefore find this feature useful, which is important because the usefulness of the filters varies depending on the type of search.

17. What other categories would you like to see in order to narrow down your search?
18. Comments:
93 responses total

- "As many as possible." (Respondent 306)
- "Sonstige Personen aufgeschlüsselt nach Textautor, Widmungsträger, Schreiber, Vorbesitzer." (Respondent 356)
- "Die Trefferanzeige für 'Datierung' ist fehlerhaft. Zum Beispiel werden für einen bestimmten Komponisten für den Zeitraum 1625-1749 723 Treffer angegeben. Möchte man sich diese ansehen, werden nur noch 411 Treffer angezeigt." (Respondent 466)

- "I find that this is more helpful than the advanced search when I don't know exactly what there is out there, as this gives more of an overview of what's in the database." (Respondent 121)
- "A short version of library names next to the sigla in the facet would be helpful." (Respondent 203)

In this section, respondents noted a large number of suggestions in addition to ideas and wishes for technical changes.

Technical suggestions include: filters for language of text, key, country, date added to RISM, physical presentation (score, parts, etc.), roles, liturgical festivals, arrangements, shelfmarks, tablatures, catalog of works, incipits, and previous owners. Additional refinement is desired for persons (author of text, previous owner, copyist, dedicatee, or also by nationality), instrumentation (differentiate between vocal and instrumental music, chamber and orchestra music, vocal solo and chorus, or for individual instruments), and date (exact year). A suggestion was made to enable users to exclude collections in the results list.

Most of the technical suggestions concern the link "Show more..." that appears at the end of every category in the filters. Respondents would rather see all results and arrange them alphabetically rather by quantity. After going from a catalog entry to the results list, the expanded "Show more..." filter is not retained. The quantity reported in the filters is sometimes incorrect or higher than the number of results, which leads to confusion. Some respondents would like to see the total number of results next to each type of filter, so that one can see, for example, that the results are distributed among 25 libraries.

A positive comment is that the filters are in some cases more useful than the advanced search.

19. Do you ever sort your results using the "Sort by" option?

Frequency	Responses	%
Yes, often	145	27.15
Yes, sometimes	167	31.27
Rarely	116	21.72
Never	52	9.74
I didn't know it existed.	54	10.11

534 responses; 17 blank.

More than half (58.43%, *n*=312) of survey participants sort the results list at least sometimes. We were surprised to note that 54 participants (10.11%) did not know this option existed.

20. Comments:
15 responses.

- "Very useful." (Respondents 89 and 296)
- "I sort by year ascending sometimes, but the dates are so broad it doesn't help very often." (Respondent 218)
- "Vor allem wenn man sich Suchergebnisse für eine bestimmte Bibliothek ansieht, wäre eine Sortiermöglichkeit nach Signatur sehr hilfreich." (Respondent 466)
- "Voreinstellung sollte nach Autor gehen, nicht nach Relevanz (ist sehr viel übersichtlicher)." (Respondent 365)

The default sort is "unsorted" but it is unclear to respondents what this means. The term "unsorted" is complicated by the fact that the default sort on the German version of the page is by "relevance" (an equally unclear term). It would make more sense to have a default sort by composer.

Sorting by date is not always useful. Some expressed the wish to be able to sort by library siglum, shelfmark, and genre.

Full record display

21. Which blue-linked information do you click on? Check all that apply.
For a clickable example, see: https://opac.rism.info/search?id=211011669

Links	Responses	%
Digital version	371	70.53
Library	337	64.07
People	313	59.51
Catalogs of works / Secondary literature	308	58.56
None of these	52	9.89

526 respondents (multiple answers possible); 25 blank.

The RISM records include links that lead to additional information: authority records with biographical information for persons, bibliographical information for secondary literature, contact information for libraries, and links to external digitized resources. On average, links to additional information are clicked on by around 63% of respondents. The most popular links are the links to digital versions of sources.

22. Comments:
20 responses.

- "The catalogs of works (and secondary literature) is very important for me in my work as I attempt to prepare my own thematic catalogue of a large historic collection and wish to sort out questions of attribution and become aware of literature pertaining to a given manuscript or piece." (Respondent 312)
- "Digital version and library links are extremely helpful." (Respondent 78)
- "It would be nice to have a way to contact the library: email, phone number, etc." (Respondent 323)

Respondents commented on the usefulness of these links. More information about the holding institutions is desirable because e-mail address, telephone number, and URL are currently missing. A few technical problems were reported: At one point during the time of the survey, links to secondary literature or persons did not work, but this technical issue was fixed promptly. In some browsers, the last line of the library information is cut off.

23. After you click on a link, is the information you see helpful?

Helpfulness	Responses	%
1 (Helpful)	155	39.95
2	125	32.22
3	81	20.88
4	23	5.93
5 (Useless)	4	1.03

388 responses; 163 blank.
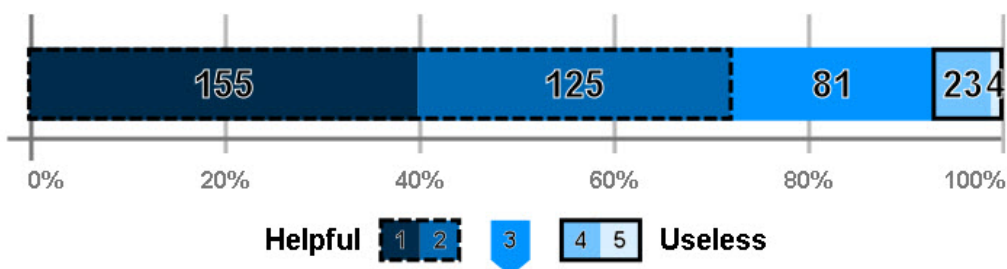
72.16% of respondents (*n*=280) rate the helpfulness as 1 or 2.[2]

More people skipped this question than any other question in the survey, even though in question 21, 52 people responded that they do not use any of the blue links. Excluding the comment fields, the average number of people who skipped any given question was 35.88.

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[2] Likert scales were created using www.likertplot.com.

24. Comments:
24 responses.

- "The RDF links are very helpful!" (Respondent 49)
- "Keep up the excellent work of incorporating linked data." (Respondent 14)
- "Bei den Personen sind die Angaben zu den Lexika für mich überaus nützlich (ich weiß, in welchen Lexika nichts steht, ich mir also das Nachschlagen sparen kann; und umgekehrt); ebenso die jetzt hinzugefügten Links auf Schriftproben." (Respondent 354)
- "This tends to depend upon the amount of information provided by the home library, and that varies." (Respondent 102)

Most comments regarding links had to do with digital copies, secondary literature, and libraries. Links to digital copies are very useful but one person pointed out that some links lead to libretti rather than to the manuscript being described. Information about secondary literature is useful for researchers.

Some criticized the facts that not all cataloged information is displayed in the online catalog and that literature citations are not up-to-date. Respondents wish to see links to library websites (echoed elsewhere in the survey comments). For biographical information about persons, information from reference works and handwriting samples were rated positively. A suggestion was made to include lifedates in the full record display.

New catalog features

As you might know, RISM released a new version of the online catalog in April.

25. How useful are the following new catalog features? (*Percentage is in terms of total responses received for each feature.*)

	Useful		Neutral		Useless		I don't know.		I've never used this.		No answer	Total responses received
Access to temporary lists under "My lists"	197	39.40%	95	19.00%	12	2.40%	31	6.20%	165	33.00%	51	500
Access to your search history under "Previous searches"	224	44.80%	119	23.80%	13	2.60%	24	4.80%	120	24.00%	51	500
Atom feed	30	6.12%	67	13.67%	15	3.06%	135	27.55%	243	49.59%	61	490
Autocomplete in the search fields	152	30.46%	199	39.88%	28	5.61%	41	8.22%	79	15.83%	52	499
Boolean search operators (and, or, not)	270	54.11%	93	18.64%	6	1.20%	28	5.61%	102	20.44%	52	499
Entering incipits using the on- screen piano keyboard	207	41.15%	93	18.49%	23	4.57%	24	4.77%	156	31.01%	48	503
More precise display of composer attributions (verified, ascertained, alleged, conjectural, misattributed)	350	68.63%	63	12.35%	5	0.98%	23	4.51%	69	13.53%	41	510
Save/send/print entries	289	57.57%	67	13.35%	10	1.99%	19	3.78%	117	23.31%	49	502
Search for digitized music	373	72.71%	39	7.60%	3	0.58%	12	2.34%	86	16.76%	38	513
Sorting the search results by year, title, or composer	398	78.19%	54	10.61%	3	0.59%	5	0.98%	49	9.63%	42	509
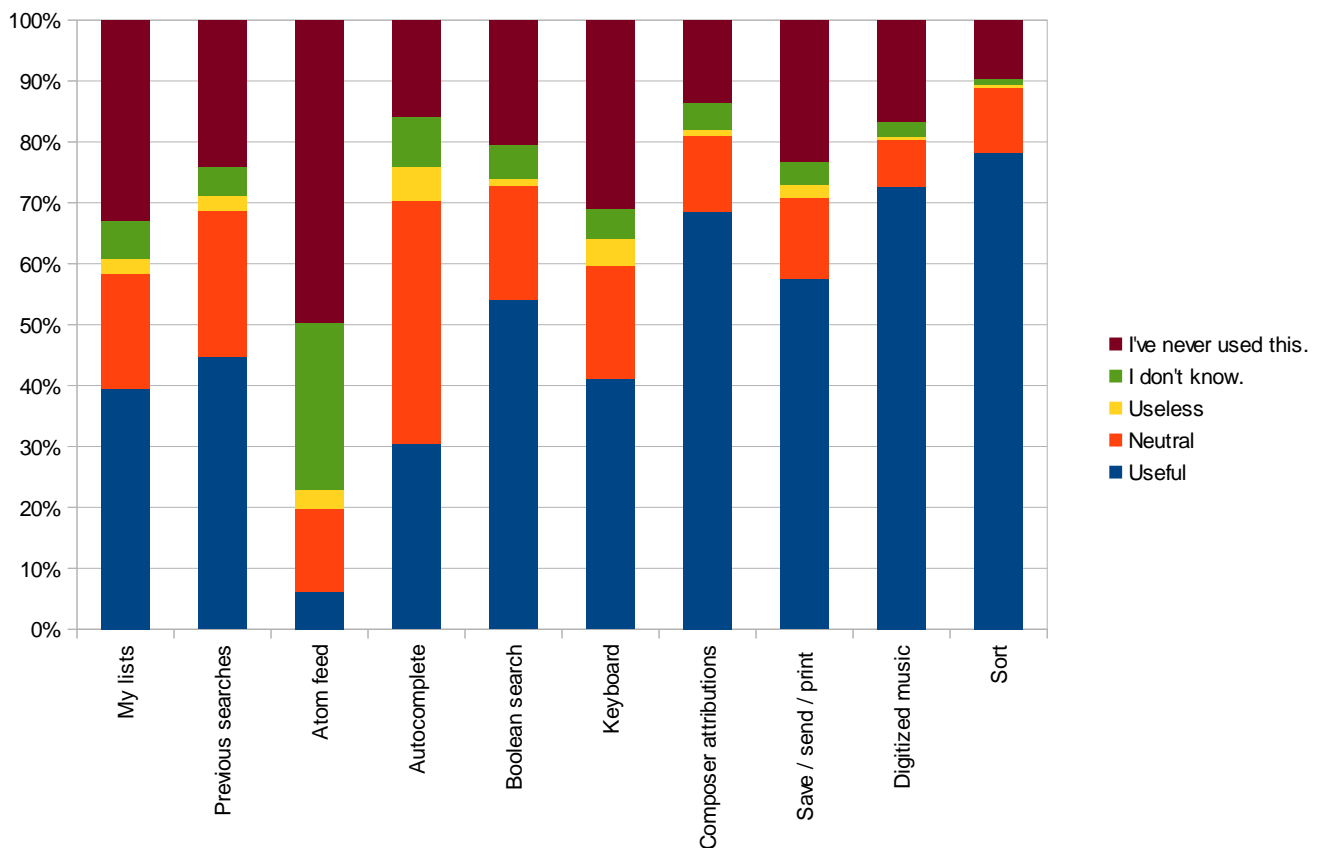
The three most useful new features are the ability to sort results, the search for digitized music, and the more precise display of composer attributions. Each one of these was selected by more than 68% of respondents. The area where the most users were uncertain ("I don't know") about the utility of a new feature was by far the atom feed (a web feed to deliver updates), which also scored the lowest in terms of being useful. The atom feed is a problematic feature because it does not work and is not explained in the help text.

The tools to save/send/print entries, access search history, and access to temporary lists were also rated useful overall (if underutilized), but these are additional features that are also somewhat problematic because their functionality is not ideal. Help texts are needed for these areas.

No new feature was rated overwhelmingly useless, but the new feature rated the highest in terms of being useless is the autocomplete. However, this only reflects the opinion of 5.61% of respondents.

26. What other features would you like to see?
27. Comments:
94 responses total.

- "Direktere Möglichkeit, Kommentare einzugeben; z.B. Konkordanzen etc." (Respondent 512)
- "Is it possible to share record links on social media? There are moments when this would be a great way of promoting my own research, the resource, and associated libraries." (Respondent 102)

- "The ability to send links to colleagues - when one does that now, because the search is Session ID'd the link is dead... although I have now taken to sending RISM ID numbers, the link is more internet intuitive." (Respondent 297)

- "A way to save searches and "My list" across sessions (currently only good for current session)." (Respondent 40)

- "Bei der Funktion versenden, speichern, drucken etc. würde ich mir wünschen, dass man stehts alle Informationen erhält und das Ausdrucken eines gesamten Eintrages (auch mit vielen Incipits) funktioniert. Auch wünsche ich mir, dass man eine pdf des betreffenden Eintrages erzeugen kann." (Respondent 359)

The comments included suggestions for new features and improvements to existing ones.

A few new tools were suggested: highlighting the search term in the full records, a translation tool in the full records, the ability to add comments to records, the ability to share links on social media, and stable URLs to search strings.

For existing features, most often mentioned (11x) was a better way to print, send, or export records or lists; currently, even the "full record" option only delivers a portion of the fields. Access to search history, while helpful, should be saved across sessions. One user commented that this survey called their attention to helpful features for the first time.

A couple of commenters pointed out that the autocomplete function is distracting in some cases, such as when searching for texts. The ability to turn autocomplete off was suggested, as was the ability to perform a fuzzy search.

The following improvements were suggested for the on-screen piano keyboard: display notes on a staff, acoustic playback, search by octave, display number of hits during input (so that the number of hits goes down with each additional note).

More complex sorting capabilities were suggested, such as by composer and then by title. Several people (throughout the survey) pointed to the Oskar Kolberg collected works catalog, which allows you to sort by melodic similarity.

Overall opinion

28. Please rate the overall look of a catalog entry.

Level of clarity	Responses	%
1 (Clear)	166	31.92
2	225	43.27
3	93	17.88
4	28	5.38
5 (Confusing)	8	1.54

520 responses received; 31 blank.
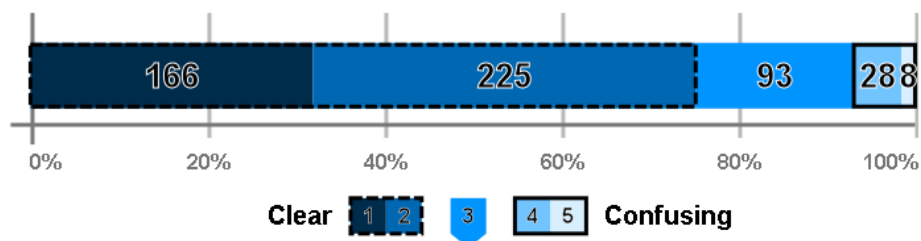
75.19% of respondents (*n*=391) rate the overall look of a catalog entry as clear (1 or 2).

29. Comments:
33 responses.

- "Die aktuelle Lösung finde ich sehr zweckorientiert und übersichtlich. Ich würde mir wünschen, dass sich da nicht allzu viel ändert." (Respondent 497)
- "Entries are a bit confusing." (Respondent 7)
- "I think the display should be much more compact." (Respondent 167)
- "It is not always immediately clear if an entry is a single manuscript or part of a larger collection. Sometimes one must go all the way to the bottom of the page and even then this information isn't always intuitive." (Respondent 48)

Although users by and large found catalog entries to be clear overall, suggestions were made in the comments that would optimize the layout. Five commenters would like to see certain elements moved to the top of the record: library, shelfmark, RISM number, and link to main collection records. Two people think that the music incipits are too large and the rest of the entry too small. Some commented on the use of space and wondered whether certain sections or section headings are necessary. Two respondents acknowledged that the quality of the data can have an effect on the clarity of a record.

One comment came up in this section that was repeated by a few others throughout the survey: the embedded catalog that is displayed when accessing through www.rism.info (which uses frames) is clumsy and the double scroll bars inhibit navigation.

Other individuals commented on not understanding certain catalog conventions (abbreviations for dating and instruments, the atom-like symbol next to linked data elements), some catalog elements being too close to one another, and titles of opera arias being named only in the incipits and not in the filing title.

30. How easy is it to use the online catalog?

Ease of use	Responses	%
1 (Easy)	151	29.32
2	215	41.75
3	99	19.22
4	45	8.74
5 (Difficult)	5	0.97

515 responses; 36 blank.
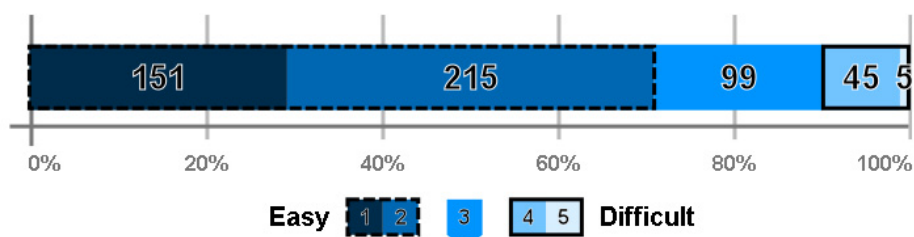
The ease of use of the online catalog is rated positively and 71.07% (*n*=366) rated this aspect with a 1 or 2. However, when taken together with question 28, approximately 61% of respondents in each question rate the catalog at a 2 or a 3, signifying that improvements can be made.

31. Comments:
43 responses.

- "I find that searches frequently time out too soon, leading me to an error page, and I must go back and reenter the search." (Respondent 96)

- "The website clearly has not been tested properly and intermittently times out. The quality of the website is embarrassing for an organisation such as RISM." (Respondent 174)

- "It would be so helpful to have the sigla catalog accessible without having to go to the rism.info site and hunt for it." (Respondent 25)

- "It has lots of good features, and it's fairly similar to a library discovery layer so most people can probably figure out how to use it." (Respondent 16)

Different search strategies lead to different results, impacting the perception of the catalog to various users. But as shown in question 28, the catalog may overall be comfortable and intuitive, but there are many ways that RISM can improve. The issue of the catalog timing out too quickly (after about 5 minutes of inactivity) was brought up here (11x) and throughout the survey; this often-heard complaint has been forwarded to the catalog host. Three people would like the catalog to be more intuitive and two people would like to see better navigation within a collection. Navigation from entry to entry, particularly at the bottom of the screen, should also be enabled. Awkward navigation of the on-screen piano keyboard was also mentioned here (2x). All of these issues were also echoed elsewhere in the survey.

Several people praised the importance of the online catalog for research.

32. Would you recommend the RISM online catalog to others?

Option	Responses	%
Yes	494	93.38
Maybe	28	5.29
No	7	1.32

529 responses; 22 blank.

93.38% of respondents indicated that they would recommend the online catalog.

The RISM online catalog

33. In what language do you usually use the RISM online catalog?

Language	Responses	%
English	239	44.67
German	188	35.14
Both about the same	94	17.57
I don't know	5	0.93
I've never used the online catalog.	9	1.68

535 responses; 16 blank.

The online catalog is offered in English and German. Taken together with questions 57 and 58 (in which we ask for the respondent's native language), we know that 162 people (30.51%) use the catalog in a foreign language.

239 people usually use the catalog in English. For 109 (45.61%) of these people, English is not their native language. Native languages of people in this group that were indicated five or more times are: Italian (31x), Spanish (14x), Polish (13x), French (9x), Portuguese (7x), and Dutch (5x).

188 people usually use the catalog in German. For 25 (13.30%) of these people, German is not their native language. No native language of people in this group was named more than five times.

94 people use the catalog in both languages. For 28 (29.79%) of these people, neither English nor German is their native language. No native language of people in this group was named more than five times.

It is helpful to know that, in this survey sample at least, nearly 1 in 3 people are not native speakers of either of the languages that the catalog is offered in. This can help us as we construct our help texts and tutorials and try to be understandable and clear for non-native speakers.

34. Would you rather use the online catalog in a different language?

Opinion	Responses	%
Yes	71	13.79
No	444	86.21

515 responses; 36 blank.

86.21% of respondents, a clear majority, are satisfied with the current offerings and 13.79% would like to see additional languages offered.

35. If so, what language would you like to see?
70 responses.

The following languages were named:
- Italian (24x)
- French (16x)
- Spanish (16x)
- Polish (8x)
- Less than 5x each: Catalan, Czech, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian

The top four languages listed here are in line with the native languages of people who use the catalog in a foreign language (question 33).

Other databases

36. How would you rate your experience with other databases?

Level	Responses	%
Beginner	31	5.84
Intermediate	222	41.80
Advanced	278	52.35

531 responses; 20 blank.

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of our respondents (94.16%, *n*=500) consider themselves to be intermediate or advanced users of databases in general.

37. What other websites do you use when you search for musical sources? (Check all that apply.)

Website	Responses	%
Amazon	214	40.07
Choral Public Domain Library	199	37.27
Europeana	137	25.66
Google	343	64.23
Google Books	359	67.23
International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP/Petrucci)	483	90.45
Internet Archive	241	45.13
Library portals (Gallica, British Library, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Library of Congress)	478	89.51
Project Gutenberg	230	43.07
Wikipedia	337	63.11
Other: Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music (DIAMM)	7	
Other: Internet culturale	11	
Other: Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog (KVK)	20	
Other: SBN musica	5	
Other: ViFaMusik	6	
Other: Worldcat	14	
Other	54	

534 respondents (multiple responses possible); 17 blank.
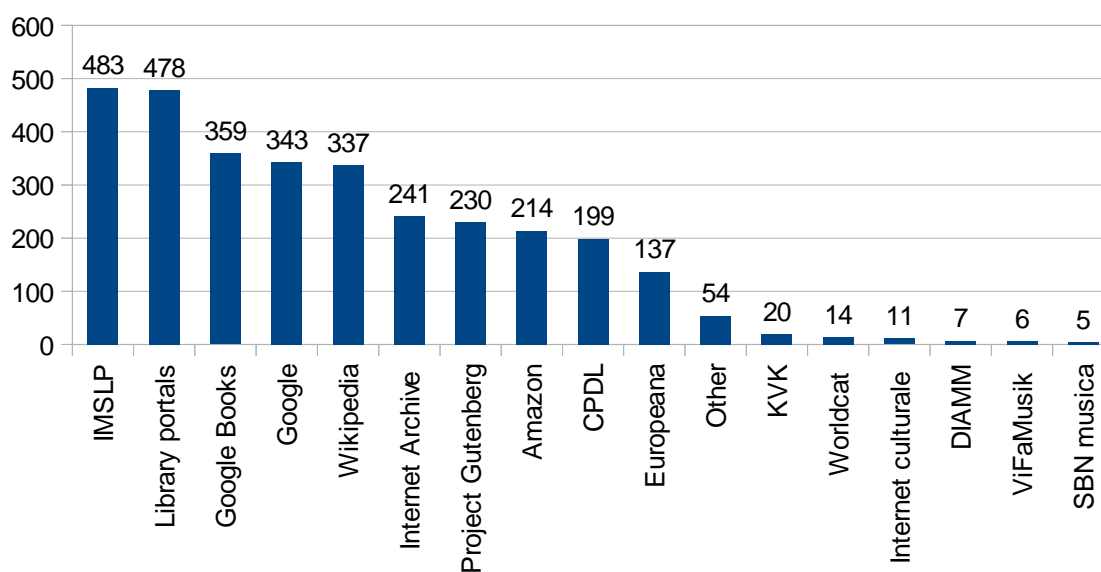
We asked this question to find out about what other resources are used when looking for musical sources. This gives insight into the types of interfaces that users are used to and possible expectations from a resource such as RISM in terms of navigation and access to materials. It is also good to have a list of helpful resources on hand in case users cannot find what they need in RISM.

In the field "other," we received 103 responses, which sometimes named multiple resources. We can roughly divide these up into digital projects/databases (45 resources named), library union catalogs (42), subscription databases (11), commercial products (6), and other (10). Resources named 5 or more times are listed in the charts.

38. How would you rate the RISM online catalog compared to these websites in terms of the following?

(*Percentage is in terms of total responses received for each aspect.*)

	RISM is better	RISM is similar	RISM is worse	Depends	I don't know	No answer	Total responses
Access to sources	154 31.43%	142 28.98%	60 12.24%	90 18.37%	44 8.98%	61	490
General design and layout	104 20.97%	222 44.76%	56 11.29%	66 13.31%	48 9.68%	55	496
Navigation	104 21.05%	232 46.96%	39 7.89%	71 14.37%	48 9.72%	57	494
Reputation	280 56.80%	91 18.46%	10 2.03%	34 6.90%	78 15.82%	58	493
Search options	187 38.00%	180 36.59%	18 3.66%	70 14.23%	37 7.52%	59	492
Trustworthiness of content	288 58.06%	112 22.58%	9 1.81%	48 9.68%	39 7.86%	55	496
Usefulness of content	226 45.75%	157 31.78%	11 2.23%	66 13.36%	34 6.88%	57	494
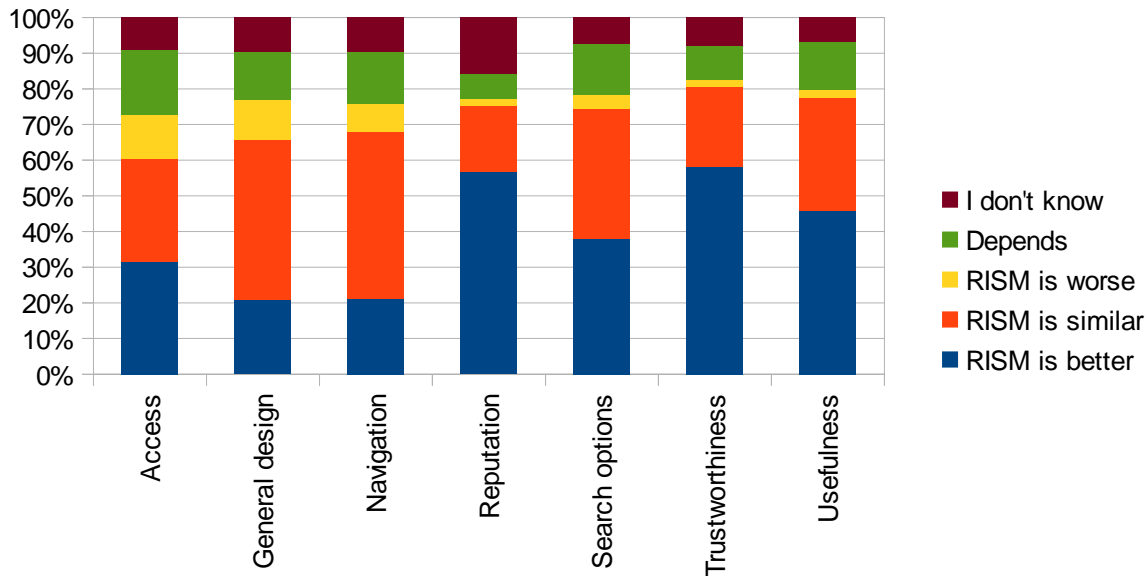
Of course we understand - as was pointed out in the comments - that each resource that we named in question 37 is different and it can be difficult to make generalized comparisons. However, we are pleased that we received the highest marks in the category "RISM is better" in "Trustworthiness of content" and "Reputation," so we know our project is well-esteemed, even when compared to other scholarly initiatives. Our marks slipped in the categories "Navigation" and "General design and layout," which is evident in other parts of the survey, and we are trying to improve these.

39. Comments:
52 responses.

- "You can't really compare RISM to those other databases as the content behind them is all different. I use different databases for different reasons." (Respondent 50)
- "Die Frage ist bis zu einem gewissen Punkt absurd." (Respondent 365)
- "It's difficult to compare, because all sources offer a different content and have different intentions and results. I like to use a combination of all sources to come to a better result." (Respondent 200)
- "I think of RISM as the gold standard for academic research. For some purposes I go to a more accessible open site like IMSLP and CPDL and Google Books for a 'quick and dirty' look - e.g. if I'm not looking for a specific edition, or don't need to know the provenance, or don't need to see a complete set of sources." (Respondent 78)

Almost half of the comments reported that it was difficult to compare the various resources. 12 people pointed out problems with the RISM database. However, it was useful to gain insights into how people actually use the catalog alongside other resources, as seen in the comment from respondent 78. We will revisit the answers to questions 38 and 39 in a later analysis when we compare different kinds of users and user groups.

Your impressions of RISM

What do you know about RISM off the top of your head?

40. How often do you think the RISM online catalog is updated?

Frequency	Responses	%
1x a day	87	17.03
1x a month	230	45.01
3-4x a year	123	24.07
1-2x a year	66	12.92
Never	5	0.98

511 responses; 40 blank.

45.01% (*n*=230) of respondents are well informed and know that the online catalog is updated once a month. We try to advertise the monthly updates on social media to help counter the perception of 37.96% of respondents (*n*=194) that the online catalog is updated only rarely or worse, never.
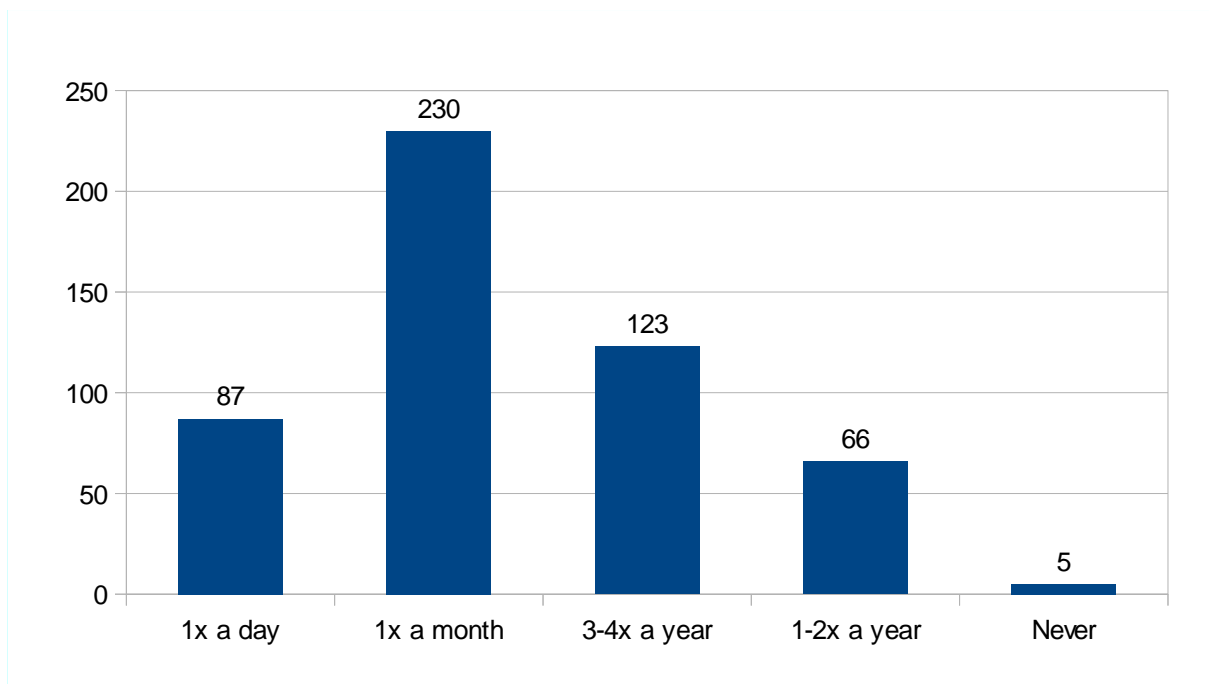
41. In your opinion, how would you rate the accuracy of the data in the online catalog?

Accuracy	Responses	%
1 (Perfect)	44	8.63
2	330	64.71
3	112	21.96
4	20	3.92
5 (Full of mistakes)	4	0.78

510 responses; 41 blank.

Perfect [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] **Full of mistakes**
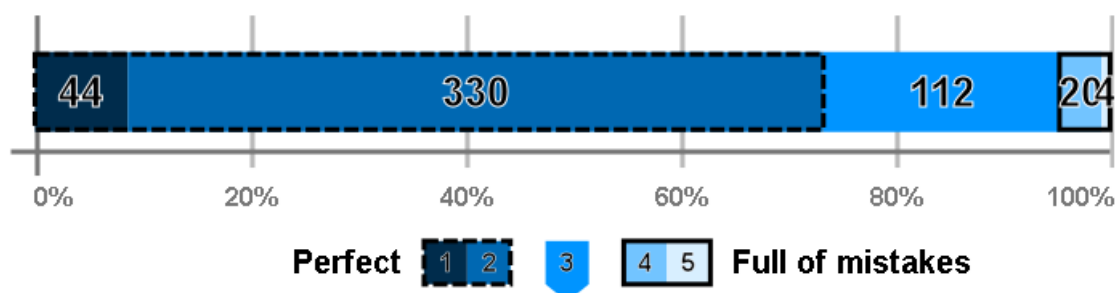
We would like to clearly point out that we know that there are errors in the online catalog and we do our best to fix them when we notice them.

The majority of respondents (64.71%; *n*=330) rate the accuracy of the RISM online catalog with a 2. In comments elsewhere, errors were pointed out in specific cases as well as in a more general way, such as this comment from question 39: "Unfortunately, I come across questionable or incorrect entries in RISM on an almost daily basis in the course of my work" (respondent 528). We corrected the errors that were pointed out and created a form to make it easier to report errors (see question 42).

42. In your opinion, how easy is it to report errors?

Ease	Responses	%
Easy	91	17.84
Intermediate	89	17.45
Difficult	25	4.90
I don't know how to report errors	305	59.80

510 responses received; 41 blank.

The vast majority of respondents (59.80%, *n*=305) do not know how to report errors. To alleviate this problem, we created a form for people to easily report errors to us and linked it from the RISM website, the bottom of the embedded catalog on www.rism.info, and the help page on opac.rism.info. It would be better to have the error submission form visible on every page in the catalog.

We are open to corrections in the online catalog and are happy to be notified of errors or mistakes.

43. In your opinion, which 3 words describe RISM the best?
(Check all that apply.)

Word	Responses	%
Attractive	43	8.35
Awesome	37	7.18
Boring	3	0.58
Cluttered	14	2.72
Complicated	56	10.87
Fun	5	0.97
Important	391	75.92
Interesting	261	50.68
Irrelevant	4	0.78
Old-fashioned	19	3.69
Scholarly	434	84.27
Simple	36	6.99
Straightforward	137	26.60
Stupid	1	0.19
Weak	5	0.97
Other: Useful	11	2.14
Other	25	4.85

515 total respondents (multiple answers possible); 36 blank.
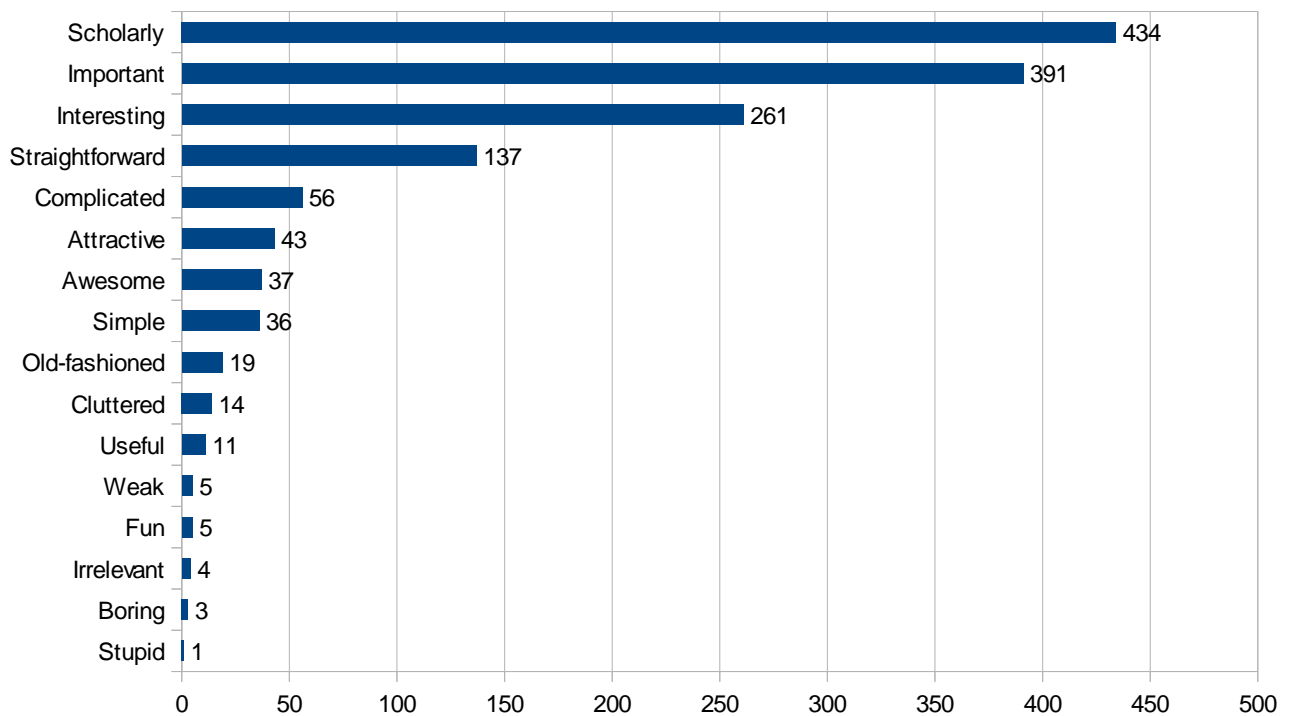
In this question, we were curious to learn what words people associate with RISM. Those of us who use RISM on a daily basis certainly have our own impression of RISM, and this is sure to differ from users who are less experienced with RISM or who have different backgrounds and interests. This helps us get to know our users better. Some respondents were (somewhat surprisingly, but perhaps understandably) disconcerted to varying degrees by the fact that we had asked this question at all (see question 44).

Nevertheless, we find it constructive to learn that the top three responses to this question are "scholarly," "important," and "interesting," which is a good place to hold within the RISM community; in fact, 140 people (27.18%) selected exactly those three words. The word combinations that were selected by more than 10 people are:

- Interesting, Scholarly, Important: 140 (27.18%)
- Straightforward, Scholarly, Important: 62 (12.04%)
- Straightforward, Scholarly, Interesting: 29 (5.63%)
- Scholarly, Awesome, Important: 16 (3.12%)
- Scholarly, Important, Complicated: 16 (3.12%)
- Interesting, Attractive, Important: 11 (2.14%)

As we continue to evaluate the responses to this question, we will especially keep in mind the negative perceptions of RISM that were expressed in the responses (such as complicated, old-fashioned, cluttered), including the written-in responses (counter-intuitive, inconsistent, unclear). We will consider how negative perceptions of the catalog correlate with experience with RISM and try to determine what aspects make the catalog "complicated" (as indicated by 10.87% of respondents). Luckily, "complicated" was also selected in combination with other more positive adjectives, such as "scholarly" and "important."

44. Comments:
44 responses.

- "Was sind das für idiotische Kriterien?" (Respondent 506)
- "RISM is a fantastic research tool, with an incomparable scope and surprising accuracy considering the size of the project." (Respondent 121)
- "The RISM online catalogue is the single most useful research tool for musicology that I know, and discoveries in it have stimulated or enriched countless books and articles I have written." (Respondent 304)
- "It would be extremely helpful were there an easy online form for reporting errors and additions to entries! I have a pile." (Respondent 40)

Although this usefulness of question 43 was doubted and misinterpreted by some, from others we reaped praise. Some of these positive comments have been added to the page Who uses RISM? on the RISM website. The difficulty of reporting errors was discussed in question 42.

45. The online catalog documents the present locations of musical sources. Which continents does this include?
(Check all that apply.)

Continent	Responses	%
Africa	88	17.09
Asia	168	32.62
Australia / Oceania	180	34.95
Europe	510	99.03
North America	460	89.32
South America	200	38.83

515 respondents (multiple responses possible); 36 blank.
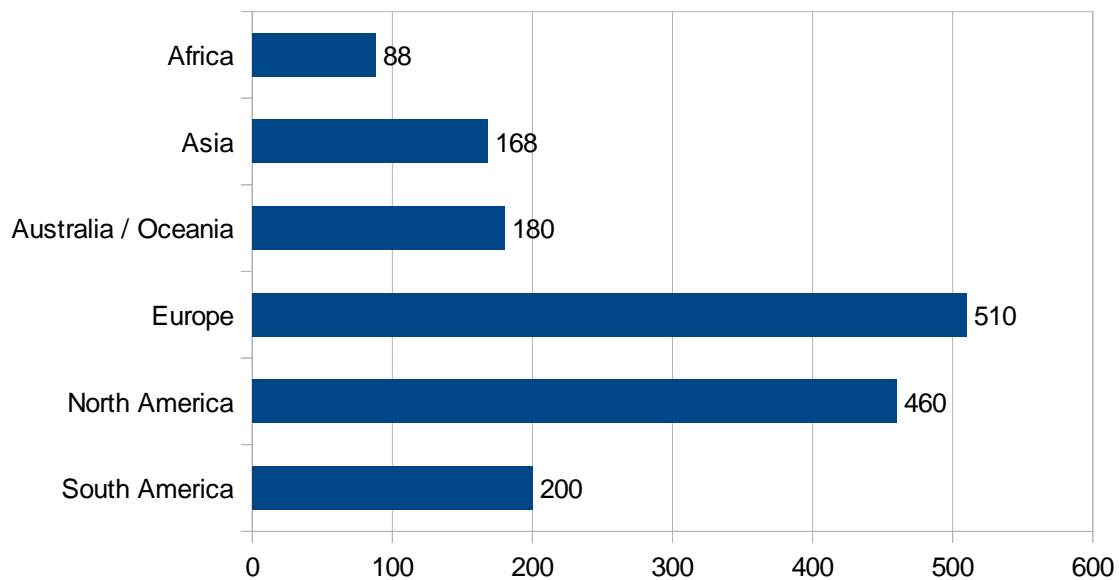
The online catalog contains sources from Asia, Australia/Oceania, Europe, North America, and South America. There are currently no sources from Africa in the catalog.

46. Where are the most sources in the online catalog currently located?

Continent	Responses	%
Africa	0	0.0
Asia	0	0.0
Australia / Oceania	2	0.39
Europe	482	92.87
North America	34	6.55
South America	1	0.19

519 responses; 32 blank.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (92.87%, *n*=482) are correct in thinking that most sources in the online catalog are currently located in Europe.

47. How many countries do you think currently contribute new information about sources to RISM?

Number	Responses	%
1-5	6	1.18
6-10	34	6.68
11-30	157	30.84
31-50	166	32.61
More than 50	146	28.68

509 responses received; 42 blank.

The correct response is between 31 and 50 countries, which is what the most respondents thought (32.61%, *n*=166). Our worldwide working groups and partners are listed on the RISM website.

48. How many people do you think currently contribute to RISM worldwide?

Contributors	Responses	%
1-10	2	0.40
11-20	5	1.00
20-50	31	6.21
50-100	74	14.83
100-200	113	22.65
200-500	107	21.44
500-1,000	95	19.04
More than 1,000	72	14.43

499 responses; 52 blank.

With this question, we wanted to know how big of an organization our users think RISM is. 14.83% of respondents (*n*=72) think that over 1,000 people contribute to RISM; this is a dream that will probably never come true. Having 500-1,000 participants (as believed by 19.04% of respondents, *n*=95) would advance the project by leaps and bounds, but we do not even have 200-500 participants (21.44% of respondents, n=107). Since many RISM projects are grant funded and are subject to fixed term limitations, the correct answer lies between 100 and 200 people (22.65% of respondents, n=113). Of course, the RISM project has benefited from the cumulative efforts of the hundreds of people who came before us and have contributed to RISM since its foundation in 1952.

49. What kinds of sources do you think are in the online catalog?
(Check all that apply.)

Source type	Responses	%
Correspondence	45	8.69
Dissertations	53	10.23
Libretti	167	32.24
Manuscripts (including autograph manuscripts)	507	97.88
Music journals / magazines	52	10.04
Photographs	36	6.95
Printed music	340	65.64
Sound recordings	31	5.98
Treatises	125	24.13
Videos	9	1.74
Other	2	0.39

518 respondents (multiple responses possible); 33 blank.
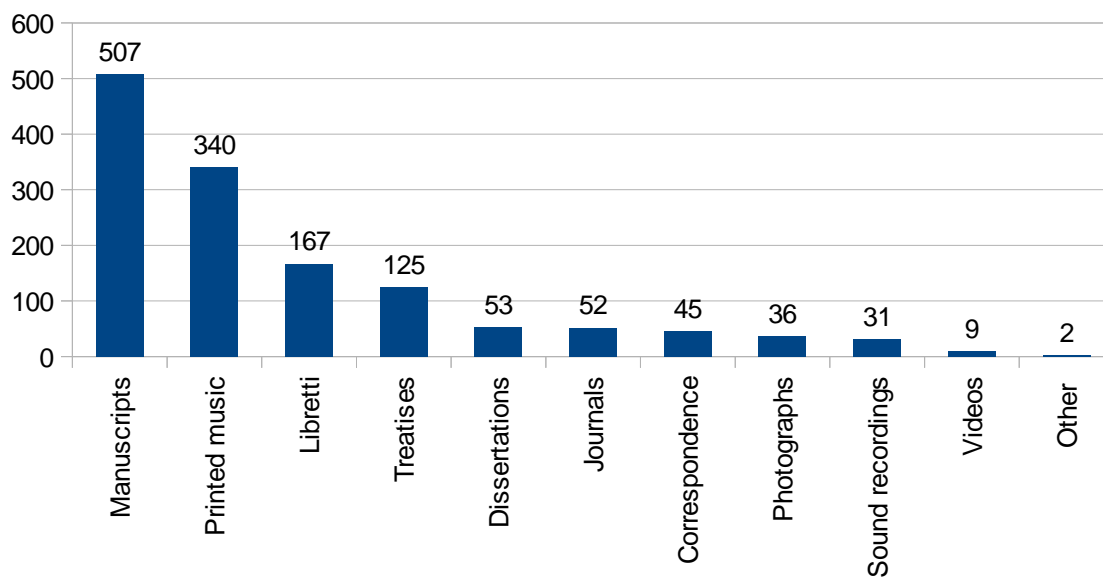
This question gave us insight into the expectations that users have of the online catalog's contents, which currently number over 1,043,000 sources (May 2016). The classic four RISM sources are manuscripts, printed music editions, libretti, and treatises; the last two are found in relatively low numbers. Since the two main components of the online catalog are music manuscripts and prints, we can be satisfied that most respondents know that this is the case.

More cause for concern is the perception that users might go to the catalog thinking they will find a reliable source for correspondence, dissertations, music journals, photographs, sound recordings, and videos. These are not sources that RISM documents.

50. Which eras do you think are represented in the online catalog?
(Check all that apply.)

Era	Responses	%
Antiquity	120	23.30
Middle ages / medieval	272	52.82
Renaissance	409	79.42
Baroque	499	96.89
Classical	479	93.01
Romantic	377	73.20
20th century	228	44.27
21st century	102	19.81

515 respondents (multiple responses possible); 36 blank.
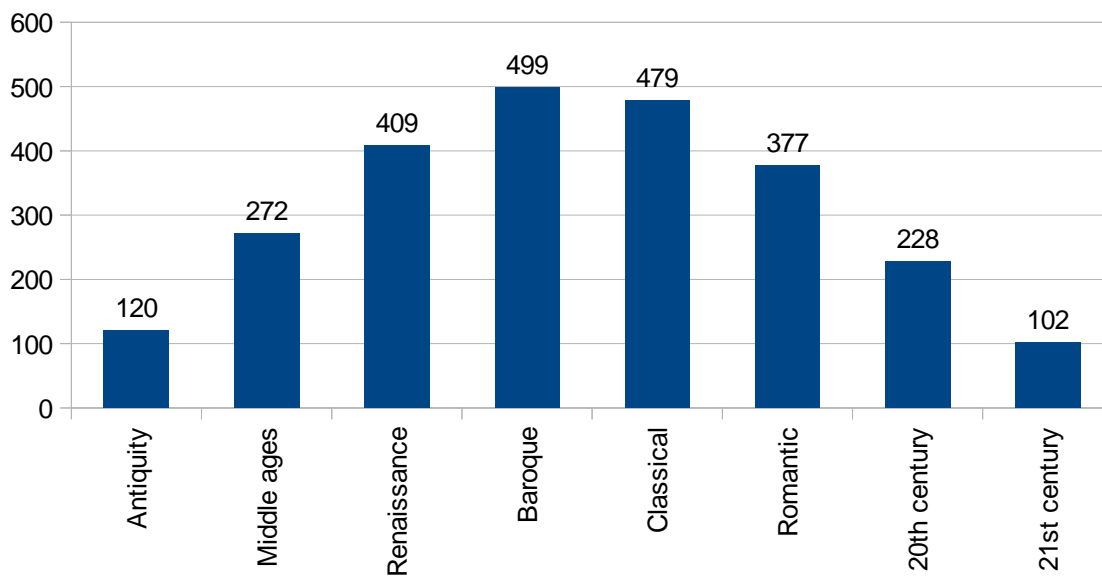
Most people know what time periods are represented in the online catalog. There is just a small handful of medieval sources and a few sources from the 21st century. There are no sources from antiquity in the catalog.

51. Which era do you think has the most sources in the online catalog?

Era	Responses	%
Antiquity	0	0.00
Middle ages / medieval	9	1.77
Renaissance	44	8.66
Baroque	193	37.99
Classical	173	34.06
Romantic	80	15.75
20th century	7	1.38
21st century	2	0.39

508 responses; 43 blank.

The online catalog indeed mostly contains sources spanning the years 1600 - 1850, though users will also find some from before and after this period. Several RISM groups and contributors regularly input sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

52. Comments:
31 responses.

- "Epocheneinteilung zweifelhaft (lieber nach Jahrhunderten einteilen)." (Respondent 409)
- "RISM ist eine wissenschaftliche Datenbank und sollte es bleiben. Derartig absurde Fragen schwächen das Ansehen von RISM entscheidend." (Respondent 365)
- "I've been using RISM in one form or another since the 1970s (graduate school), and I don't have a clear idea of what is represented now, as opposed to at some past time." (Respondent 29)
- "It's manuscripts post 1600 for the online version. Isn't it?? I have found some earlier ones, though." (Respondent 218)
- "Es wäre auf lange Sicht sinnvoll, mehr Handschriften des 19. und 20. Jh. aufsuchen zu können, allerdings müsste man dann vielleicht sogar eine Epochentrennung einführen." (Respondent 428)

Some people criticized our terminology in questions 50-51 and would have rather seen division by century (and we certainly understand this point), but it was interesting to notice that this criticism came from people in academia; musicians who commented seemed to be more comfortable with the names. There was also some vocal criticism of this section of the survey, the relevance of which seemed to be unclear to some people.

Such disapproval aside, this section served to teach us what expectations users have when they approach the RISM online catalog: What can be found? From which countries? And what time periods? While only a relatively small number of participants think that, for example, RISM documents correspondence or music from the ancient past, there will be RISM users - as many as 10% in this sample - who go to the catalog expecting to find certain sources but come out empty. Users then do not know if they searched incorrectly or if the source is in fact not in the database. This uncertainty leads to frustration and giving up.

Other users are surprised when they find sources in the database that date from outside their perceived RISM time frame, as in the comment from respondent 218 above (who responded in question 51 that the database contains sources from the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras). This particular respondent is a librarian and professor and thus in contact with students, so this uncertainty is a potential hindrance to accurately conveying the scope of the RISM database to researchers-in-training and potential new RISM users.

We want our users to be well informed and confident about what they are searching, though we certainly understand why there is some confusion. RISM's partnerships have increased in recent years to include more partners in Asia and South America, and improved technology has made it easier to bring in data from outside projects. Working groups are also free to determine their own chronological scope, resulting in more post-1850 sources in some cases. The result is a different RISM than our more experienced users might be familiar with, especially those who encountered RISM before the release of the free, online catalog in 2010.

While some boundaries necessarily remain fuzzy in order to leave room for growth and expansion, we have tried to better document the scope and content of RISM. We clarified the text on the catalog website and help page, and we updated the FAQ section on the main RISM website. Through social media, we have tried to communicate and highlight the chronologically varied nature of RISM sources and we published information about the new data on printed music on professional listservs and in publications. Even in the short time that has passed since these initiatives, we have still heard inaccurate comments from people who assume that certain material is or is not in RISM. It will remain our task for a long time to clarify the nature of the project.

Tell us about yourself!

53. Age:

Age range	Responses	%
Under 18	1 [3]	0.19
19-24	32	5.95
25-40	197	36.62
41-64	238	44.24
65+	70	13.01

538 responses; 13 blank.
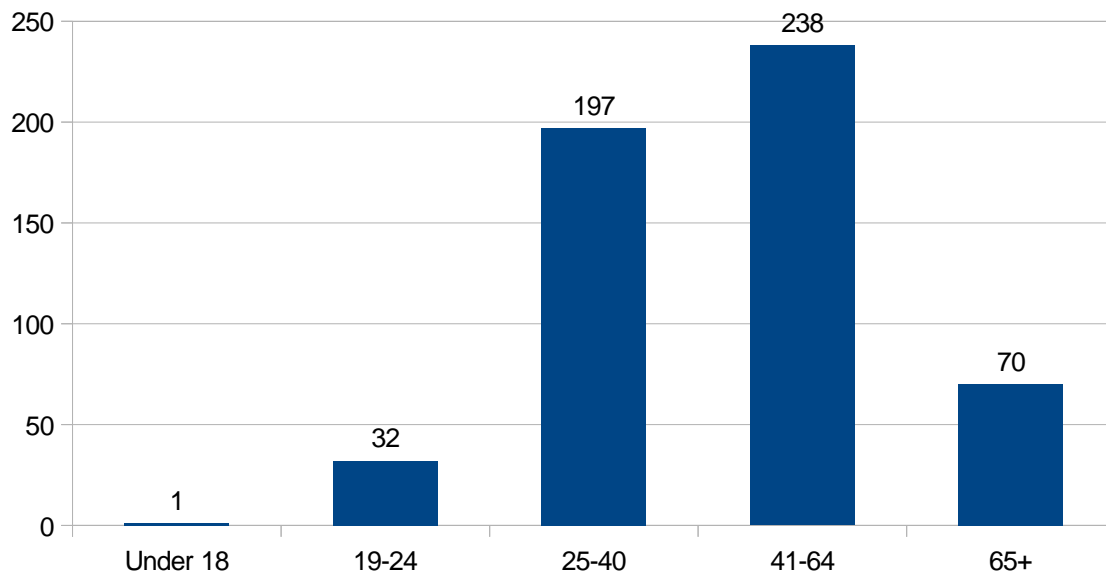
Most respondents are between 41 and 64 years of age (44.24%, *n*=238), followed by the 25-40 age group (36.62%, *n*=197). In short, this survey was filled out mostly (80.86%, *n*=435) by people in the workforce (after university but before retirement).

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[3] This respondent probably reported this age in error; this person also reported having a master's degree and experience with RISM for 6-10 years.

54. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Education	Responses	%
Still in school (middle / high school)	0	0.00
School certification / diploma	8	1.49
Still in college / university / training	23	4.29
Apprenticeship	2	0.37
College / University / Technical college degree (Bachelor's degree)	99	18.47
Master's degree	173	32.28
PhD	209	38.99
Habilitation	20	3.73
Other	2	0.37

536 responses; 15 blank.

RISM reached a well-educated survey base. The majority of respondents (75.00%, *n*=402) holds a master's degree or above; most have a PhD or Habilitation. We did not reach as many students as we thought we would (4.29%, *n*=23). We tried to reach students through student mailing lists or by asking professors to forward the e-mail (see also question 61) but we were apparently not successful.

55. What country do you live in?
56. If your country does not appear above, please enter it here.

Country	Responses	%	Country	Responses	%
Armenia	1	0.19	Lithuania	1	0.19
Australia	9	1.69	Malta	1	0.19
Austria	14	2.63	Mexico	3	0.56
Belgium	5	0.94	Netherlands	9	1.69
Brazil	3	0.56	New Zealand	3	0.56
Canada	13	2.44	Philippines	1	0.19
Colombia	1	0.19	Poland	16	3.01
Cyprus	1	0.19	Portugal	3	0.56
Czech Republic	3	0.56	Russia	4	0.75
Denmark	4	0.75	Slovakia	2	0.38
Finland	4	0.75	Slovenia	3	0.56
France	11	2.07	South Africa	1	0.19
Germany	182	34.21	South Korea	2	0.38
Hong Kong	1	0.19	Spain	9	1.69
Iceland	1	0.19	Sweden	4	0.75
Ireland	2	0.38	Switzerland	19	3.57
Italy	36	6.77	United Kingdom	30	5.64
Japan	1	0.19	United States	129	24.25

532 responses total.

Countries with 5 or more responses:
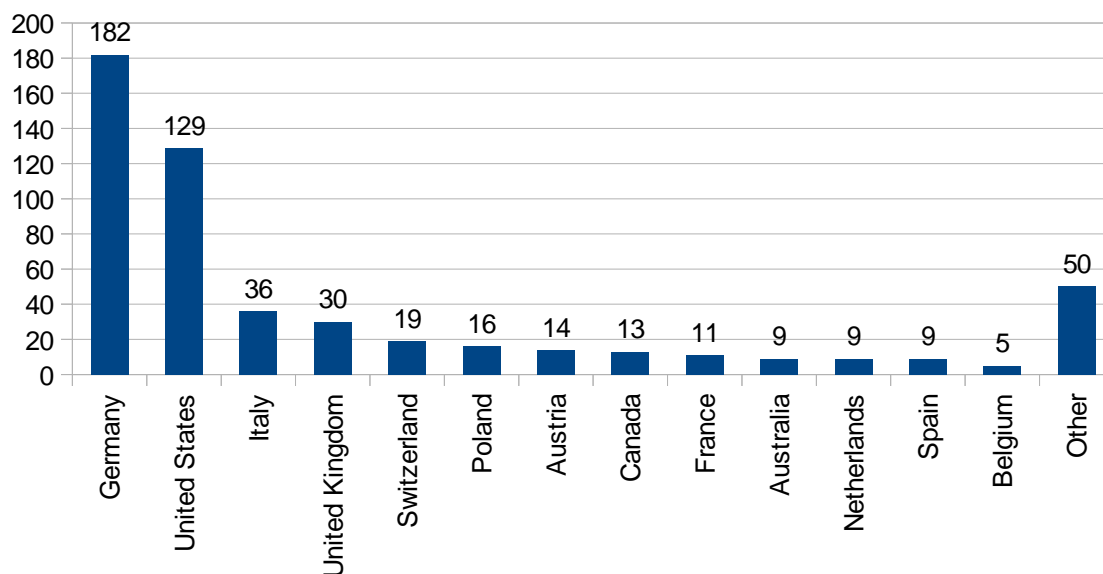
In total, 532 people named 36 countries. 21 responses in question 55 were blank and 2 marked "other." 4 people filled in question 56.

We were pleased to receive responses from people all around the globe, even from countries without sources represented in the RISM database (such as Armenia, Iceland, Malta, the Philippines, and South Africa: perhaps we can work with you in the future!).

Though the survey was available in English and German, responses came from 123 people who do not live in a country where either of these languages is an official language. As we saw in question 33, many people use and interact with RISM in a foreign language. This helps us as we consider ways to make RISM understandable to people from a variety of cultural and language backgrounds.

57. What is your native language?

58. If your native language is not on the list, or if you have multiple native languages, please specify here.

Language	Responses	%	Language	Responses	%
Afrikaans	1	0.19	Icelandic	1	0.19
Basque	2	0.38	Italian	39	7.34
Catalan	4	0.75	Japanese	2	0.38
Chinese	1	0.19	Korean	2	0.38
Croatian	2	0.38	Lithuanian	1	0.19
Czech	4	0.75	Norwegian	1	0.19
Danish	3	0.56	Polish	16	3.01
Dutch	7	1.32	Portuguese	7	1.32
English	176	33.15	Russian	7	1.32
Filipino	1	0.19	Slovakian	2	0.38
Finnish	2	0.38	Slovenian	3	0.56
French	14	2.64	Spanish	24	4.52
German	204	38.42	Swedish	3	0.56
Greek	2	0.38			

531 responses total.

Languages with 5 or more responses:
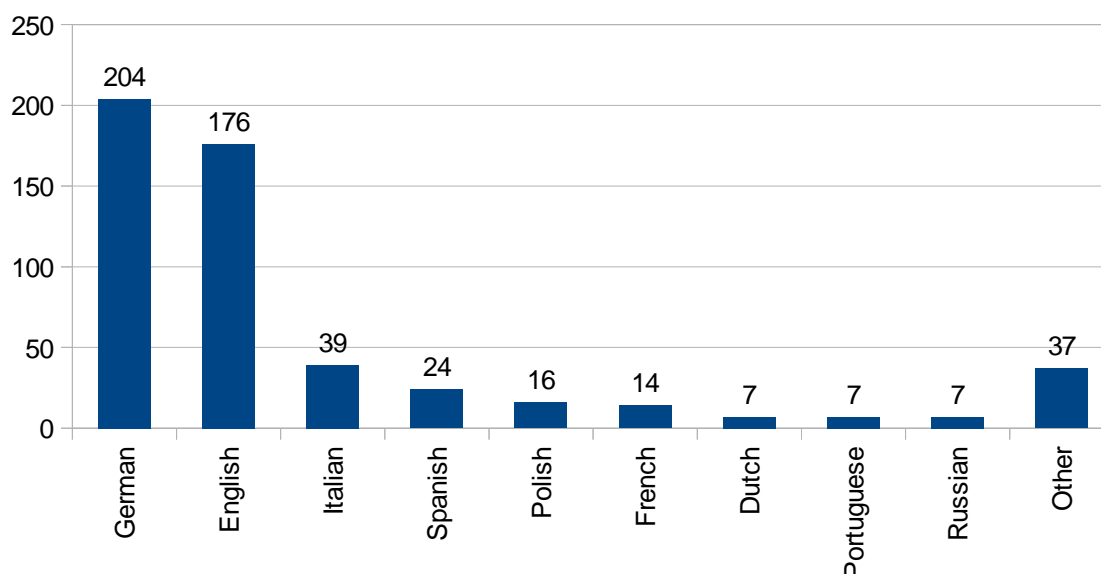
In total, 525 people named 27 languages. 37 responses in question 57 were blank and 2 marked "multiple/other." 13 people filled in question 58. 5 people indicated multiple native languages.

German (38.42%, *n*=204) and English (33.15%, *n*=176) were the most common languages. This is unsurprising given the two languages that the RISM catalog is offered in and the nationalities of RISM staff and the professional networks at our disposal. We were happy to reach an international audience with this survey.

59. Which of the following groups would you put yourself in?

(Check all that apply.)

Group	Responses	%
Archivist	34	6.36
Librarian	144	26.92
Music antiquarian	11	2.06
Musician	156	29.16
Musicologist	375	70.09
Student/trainee/pupil	63	11.78
Professor/teacher	149	27.85
RISM staff/contributor	26	4.86
None of the above	19	3.55

535 respondents (multiple responses possible); 16 blank.
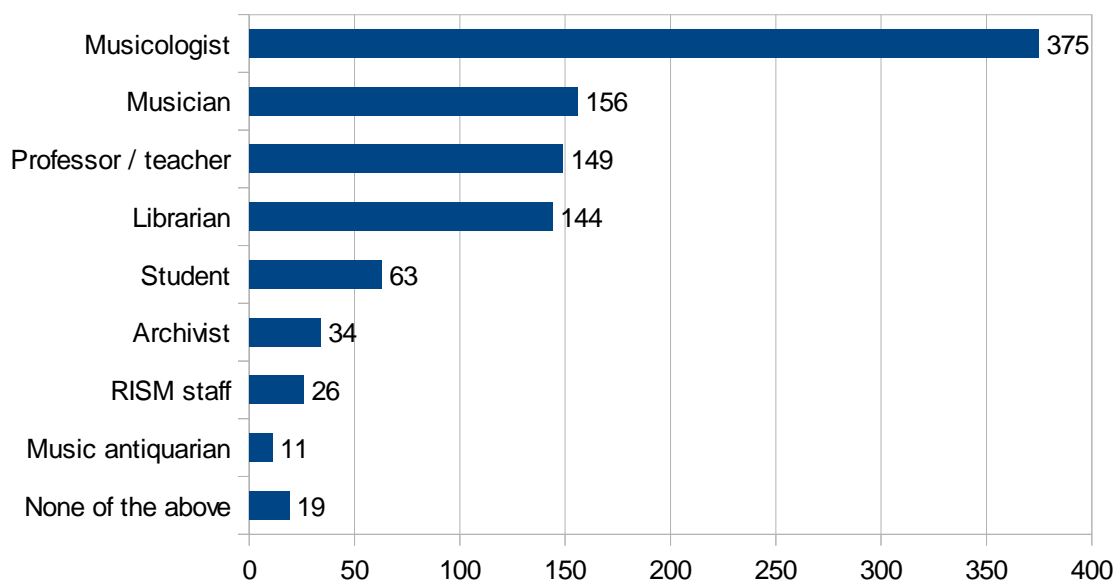
RISM has traditionally considered its main users to be librarians, music antiquarians, musicians, musicologists, and students. We try to plan our projects and services based on these potential user groups. This question has by and large confirmed these categories but we also see a number of archivists, which we had not previously specifically considered. And of course, our users include our own RISM contributors.

We had a small number (*n*=4) of people who indicated other music-related professions: composer, concert organizer, critic, publisher. It was interesting to see the small amount (*n*=8) of non-music professions indicated: art historian (2), computer programmer, dentist, journalist (2), lawyer, museum director. Even this small sampling reminds us of the fact that non-specialists make use of our database.

We will also use the responses from this question to comb the data for insights on how different user groups use the database and how we can steer our services towards different user needs.

60. How would you describe your place of employment?

Employer	Responses	%
University	223	41.68
Library / Museum / Archive	100	18.69
Research institute	48	8.97
Self-employed	46	8.60
Retired	39	7.29
Musical ensemble, professional	19	3.55
School	18	3.36
Business / Commercial	17	3.18
Not working currently	10	1.87
Government institution	8	1.50
Other	7	1.30

535 responses; 16 blank.

Most of our users come from universities (41.68%, *n*=223) or libraries/museums/archives (18.69%, *n*=100). Surprisingly, we reached more retirees than professional musicians. Since we consider musicians to be one of our main user groups, we need to think of ways to reach more musicians and music ensembles.

We admit this question is complicated by the fact that some institutions could fall under multiple categories, such as a university library or a federal museum.

61. How did you find out about this survey?

Source	Responses	%
E-mail	319	59.51
Someone sent me a link	99	18.47
RISM website	44	8.21
Twitter/Facebook	41	7.65
RISM online catalog	29	5.41
Other	4	0.75

536 responses received; 15 blank.

We are unable to estimate a response rate to this survey.

We reached the most people (59.51%, *n*=319) through e-mailed invitations (see Appendix). We sent announcements about the survey to our e-mail list of people registered on the RISM website and other interested parties (RISM contributors, the board of directors, the RISM Association, the Coordinating Committee, and other friends and colleagues), a total of 959 people. We also sent the announcement to around 200 mailing lists worldwide (professional associations, musicology groups, associations of musicians or specific instrumentalists, student groups) with the request to forward the announcement to their subscribers. Given our outreach efforts, it is unsurprising that e-mail was the most successful way to find survey participants.

A direct link to the survey was available on www.rism.info for a total of four months. A direct link on the website of the online catalog (opac.rism.info) was available for a total of about 2.5 weeks. Only 13.62% of respondents (*n*=73) reported hearing about the survey through these means.

The link was posted to two Facebook groups and on the RISM Facebook page. A link was also available on Twitter. Social media resulted in responses from 7.65% (*n*=41) of respondents.

Comments

62. Please write any comments, suggestions, or criticism below.
147 responses.

This last question was an opportunity for any final comments to be recorded. At the end of the survey, 26.68% of respondents took the time to write something.

In this section of the report, we will summarize the comments taken as a whole from throughout the survey.

Evaluation process
Taking all comment fields together, we received 620 comments.[4] To evaluate the comments, we created a spreadsheet divided into categories based on different areas of the online catalog as well as other topics that came up during the survey, for a total of 39 categories:

Issues related to search and display	Other issues
Layout	General
	Ease of use
Search	Errors
Advanced search	Help texts
On-screen keyboard	Quality of information
	Technical issues
Search results	
Results list	Additional features
Search filters	Autocomplete
"Show more..."	Atom feed
	Digitized music
Full record display	Languages of catalog
	Linking
Catalog of works	Mobile devices
Composers	Send/save/print
Dating	
Genres	General praise
Incipits	
Institutions	
Instrumentation	
Keys	
Library sigla	
Personal names	
RISM ID number	
Secondary literature	
Shelfmarks	
Standardized titles and texts	
Watermarks	

Each comment was sorted into a category. Comments that addressed different categories were split and assigned to relevant categories.

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[4] We reserved the right to disregard irrelevant or unhelpful comments.

Comments within each category were sorted into four areas: criticism, user suggestions, questions, and praise. Unclear comments were put into a separate pile and sorted during the course of evaluation, with ultimately only 4 comments for which we could not find an appropriate reaction. Similar comments were summarized and tallies were kept to identify the issues that were addressed the most.

At the end of this sorting process, a final column was created for proposed solutions. Types of solutions included: improve instruction (tutorials, help texts, in-person instruction), better publicity to explain policies and services, fix errors in the data, clarify cataloging guidelines for contributors, edit and consolidate terminology in indexes, propose technical improvements (either from RISM's IT department or from the catalog development team at our partner institution, the Bavarian State Library), and explore partnerships with external music specialists.

Criticism

In this section we attempt to summarize the problems with the RISM online catalog as reported in the survey comments. Unfortunately, we cannot promise that a solution can be implemented for every issue, but we have tried to find a solution for everything addressed here by applying one of the methods listed above. Solutions that have already been implemented are noted below.

Technical issues

- Print/save/send (22x)
  The ability of the catalog to print, save, or send catalog entries (or lists of entries) is woefully inadequate. The information provided - in both the "short form" and the "long form" options given - are insufficient to allow meaningful use.

- Short timeout of catalog sessions (21x)
  The problem of the catalog timing out too quickly was by far commented upon with the strongest language. The catalog timeout is universally criticized as presenting users with a serious hindrance to research.

- Show more... (11x)
  The button "Show more..." that reveals the next five elements at the end of filters is taxing for the users, particularly when they have to click dozens of times to reach the end of the list. Furthermore, these expanded lists are not retained when users click on an entry and then return to the search results.

- Mobile use of catalog (9x)
  Neither the catalog nor the RISM website are optimized for mobile use. A mobile-friendly interface and catalog app are needed.

Searching in general

Users find searching difficult for various reasons:

- Instrumentation varies: "strings" vs. "vl (2), vla, b" or "V (4)" vs. "Coro"

- Instrumentation codes, library abbreviations, and abbreviations for secondary literature not easily understood

- Not all instruments are listed in the "Scoring abbreviations" pop-up window

- No flexibility in search for shelfmark

- Difficult to search for a range of years

- Searching in general is perceived as complicated and not user friendly

Library sigla

The unique RISM library sigla (abbreviations used to identify institutions) are difficult to use:

- The catalog assumes a familiarity with the sigla

- Library sigla should be written out

- Some institutions are missing or collections have changed hands

    - If you notice an institution is missing, or our information is outdated, please let us know: contact@rism.info

- The database of library sigla is not directly accessible from the online catalog

- Information provided about institutions is inadequate. Missing are: e-mail address, phone number, URL

Errors and mistakes

- Individual entries without collection records

- Mistakes in instrumentation abbreviations

- Unclear how to report errors

    - A form is available here: www.rism.info/en/service/feedback.html Contact us at any time: contact@rism.info

User suggestions

Many suggestions can be inferred from the criticism. Apart from the issues named there, we received many new ideas from respondents.

Personalized search

The ability to log in and set preferences would have a number of advantages, including:

- Save preferences for filters and sorting

- Save search history and lists across sessions

Sort

In the results list, you can sort by author or title. Users also want to sort by:

- Shelfmark, especially when one is searching the holdings of a particular library

- Melodic similarity

Work level

The idea of a work level comes from the library science concept of FRBR and in the RISM context refers to separating the source itself from the work that it (and other similar sources) represents (for example, many manuscript copies of the same symphony). Advantages would be:

- Improved linking of manuscript sources to the same copies. On the search results page, it would be clear what copies are of the same work rather than requiring the user to click through each source for comparison.

- Easier searching

Other features/technical improvements

- Make autocomplete optional
- Allow fuzzy and exact searching
- Allow comments on records, such as to note concordant sources
- Search only authority files
- Differentiated search for function of authors, such as dedicatee, author of text, etc.
- Offer help texts directly in search interface and display
- Easily identify what records are new to the database
- Specify and allow search by type of lute tablature (French, Italian, German)
- Highlight search terms, such as text or music incipit, in the records
- Offer drop-down menu for searching by key
- Improve navigation within a collection
- Clarify identification of excerpts within a collection
- Sharing links through e-mail and social networks

More data in the catalog

Users understandably want to see additional data in the online catalog:

- All RISM printed volumes
  - A/I and a portion of B/I were added in 2015; more from B/I is in the process of being converted
- Libraries currently not in RISM
- Music from all time periods and countries
- More links to digitized music

Questions

In the course of the survey, it became clear that various aspects about RISM are unclear.

Improved help and assistance

Improved help texts, instruction, and an FAQ section are needed to address the following areas:

- An introduction to the catalog (see instructional videos) plus how to perform certain searches (including how to search a particular library)
- Terminology needs to be clarified: autocomplete, atom feed, "unsorted" in search results, digitized music, "verified" and "ascertained" in composer attributions, RTF, symbols on the interface
- Excluding certain things from searches
- Searching by key
- Particularities of the incipit search (such as searching for tied notes)
- Finding name variants
- How the catalog does searches (i.e., why a particular record comes up if the composer's name is not in the record)
- Creating lists
- Accessing search history
- Reporting errors

- Using RISM data in different formats
- Access to the online catalog (hint: it's free)

Clarification of the RISM project

Commenters throughout the survey expressed confusion about certain aspects of the RISM project, which requires better communication from the Central Office about the following points:
- Scope and chronological limits of RISM
  - o See a clearer introductory text on the Help page and this article we published on the website about chronological limits
- What information is freely available online
  - See RISM's Publications page
- Why certain libraries are in RISM and others are not
  - See this article published on the website about libraries, coverage, and completeness

Clarification of RISM cataloging procedures

There are some instances where people commented on the inadequacy of data in certain areas, but oftentimes this resulted from a misunderstanding of how RISM data are created. We encourage working groups to catalog musical sources as thoroughly as possible, but at the same time we understand that time, budget, and project constraints cause working groups to make decisions that affect the depth of cataloging. This is why some records lack incipits, some incipits are only for the text and not music, some records are very basic, or references to secondary literature are not always included. All this leads to the impression from the user's perspective that the quality of data varies from record to record.

Moreover, RISM uses its own description guidelines. This is why you might see "v" in a title instead of "u," or a "j" instead of an "i": we record titles exactly as they appear on sources, archaic spellings and all. Dates for sources are recorded as accurately as possible, but sometimes caution is required to prevent a false impression, so a broad date range is entered instead. It is also RISM's policy to link to digitized music directly from the holding institution, so even if the source is available in a digital portal elsewhere, we will still link to the original library.

The RISM project dates from 1952, so decades of participation by hundreds of contributors have shaped the data to the way it is now. There is variation in the data, but this is inevitable with a project of this scope and size. We hope that offering a robust search interface and various ways to approach the data lead to different avenues of discovery.

Praise

Finally, to end with something positive, many users from all over the world took the time to tell us how valuable RISM has been for them. We have added the following remarks to the RISM website under "Comments from RISM users":

- "A powerful tool for research." (Respondent 96, United States)

- "Einfach die 'erste Adresse'." (Respondent 367, Germany)

- "Scholarly gold standard." (Respondent 78, United States)

- "The RISM online catalogue is the single most useful research tool for musicology that I know, and discoveries in it have stimulated or enriched countless books and articles I have written." (Respondent 304, United Kingdom)

- "Unentbehrlich für Wissenschaft und Praxis." (Respondent 410, Switzerland)

- "An awesome, monumental project." (Respondent 207, United States)

- "Hervorragendes Werkzeug in der Musikbibliothek." (Respondent 472, Germany)

- "I use RISM on a daily basis, wouldn't know what to do without it!" (Respondent 120, Netherlands)

- "I have found both the catalogue and the personnel very helpful to my work." (Respondent 195, Malta)
- "A true gift for scholars!" (Respondent 277, Italy)
- "I think that RISM is one of the most important things for research in music sources." (Respondent 300, Russia)
- "I value the amount of scholarly research available to me via RISM." (Respondent 161, Australia)
- "Weiter so! Die Arbeit ist unglaublich wichtig und bedeutend!!!" (Respondent 423, Germany)
- "RISM is a very important and fundamental resource for music scholars." (Respondent 141, Italy)
- "RISM is one of the most amazing initiatives in musicological research. Simplicity, scholarly thoroughness and ambition put together." (Respondent 299, Switzerland)
- "RISM ist großartig! Es ist ein unentbehrliches Werkzeug, das mir schon viel Nutzen gebracht hat. Machen Sie weiter so!" (Respondent 370, Germany)

Conclusion

This survey was the first survey that RISM has ever carried out. Having received 551 responses from users around the world, we were pleasantly surprised by the resonance of the survey and the care people took in recording their opinions. The survey offered insight into the people who use the online catalog and provided feedback on both the catalog and the services RISM provides in relation to it.

To our dear catalog users: we learned more about who you are and what your experiences and expectations are. We implemented many of your suggestions immediately, from simple adjustments to the help text to correcting errors that were reported. Your feedback is steering the next development of the online catalog (which is underway at the time of writing) and helping to develop a comprehensive set of tutorials and other instructional aids to help you make the most of the RISM online catalog. The data in this survey will be analyzed further to ensure that we offer optimal services for different types of users.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to fill out the survey. If you ever have any questions or comments about RISM or this survey, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us: contact@rism.info.

Image: Recueil d'Airs sérieux et à boire de différents auteurs*, Chez Christophe Ballard (A Paris), 1713, p.20. Via* [Gallica]*. RISM B/II: p.313.*

Appendix

E-mail announcement to participate in the online survey

Dear RISM website users,

The RISM Central Office is carrying out a survey about our online catalog, which is available free of charge at www.rism.info and opac.rism.info.

We would like to find out who our users are, what their expectations are, and how they use the catalog. No identifying information will be collected. Responses will help us as we continue to develop our services and the online catalog.

You can access the survey at: http://goo.gl/forms/p40bcrZcJI
It will remain open through February 28, 2015.

The survey is also available in German: http://goo.gl/forms/02VLj4tSEj

Please let us know if you have any questions: contact@rism.info

We are looking forward to your responses.

+++++

Liebe RISM-Website-Nutzer,

Die RISM Zentralredaktion führt eine Nutzerumfrage zu unserem kostenlosen Online-Katalog (www.rism.info und opac.rism.info) durch.

Wir möchten herausfinden, wer unsere Nutzer sind, was sie erwarten und wie sie den Online-Katalog verwenden. Die Umfrage erfolgt anonym, die Antworten helfen uns bei der Weiterentwicklung unserer Datenbank sowie weiterer Angebote.

Sie können hier an der Umfrage teilnehmen: http://goo.gl/forms/02VLj4tSEj

Eine Teilnahme ist bis zum 28. Februar 2015 möglich.

Eine englische Version der Umfrage finden Sie hier: http://goo.gl/forms/p40bcrZcJI

Wir freuen uns über eine rege Teilnahme.