Overlapping Patterns: the Extant Late Georgian Copyright Music explored by Modern Research Networking

From 1710 to 1836, British copyright legislation required legal deposit of all publications to nine, and latterly eleven libraries. For music, the system worked – to a greater or lesser extent - for the last half-century of this period. However, the libraries were not always appreciative of the flood of sheet music that came their way; its survival and documentation in modern times is varied, to say the least.

After an initial study of the University of St Andrews’ Copyright Music Collection, the present author was awarded AHRC networking funding to extend the investigation to the late-Georgian music surviving UK-wide.

This paper will explore some of the interesting patterns of survival that emerge, from the borrowing habits of middle-class music-lovers in St Andrews, to the sales lists of the Edinburgh Advocates and the lists of rejected music at Oxbridge.

It will also describe the challenges of exploiting modern networking capabilities to achieve maximum traction, not to mention impact, and – at the end of the project’s funding period – will summarise what has been achieved, and what future directions the research might take.