Good afternoon! I’m delighted to have the opportunity to participate in this year’s CIC workshop on information fluency. I’d like to thank Susanne Woods for inviting me to participate, and also to thank Sherita Ashmon and Stephen Gibson for all of their work in organizing the event. I first got interested in information fluency when I attended a CIC workshop in 2013. That event really inspired me and I’ve had a lot of fun since then devising ways to teach information fluency at Colorado College. Through conversations with my colleagues, Jessy and Tamara, we’ve come to agree that information fluency in the fine and performing arts requires the ability to negotiate between physical media (including primary and secondary sources), digital media (including computers, software, and the internet), and what we call “slow” skills, or the techniques developed over time by the creators, practitioners, and scholars of music, art, and theatre. In this session, our purpose is to explore the intersections between these skill sets and their roles in developing information fluency among students in the arts. We argue that these skills are inseparable and provide some examples of how we activate them through strategically-planned course assignments. I’ll focus on the use of library resources to build information fluency in upper-division music courses, but I’ll begin with an introduction to our institutional context—Colorado College—and some general information on information fluency and what it might mean in fine and performing arts.

Colorado College is located in Colorado Springs about sixty miles due south of Denver. It’s a four-year residential liberal arts college with about 2,000 students. We operate on a schedule known as the “Block Plan,” in which each student takes, and each
professor teaches, one course at a time. Each course lasts eighteen days, so the plan requires immersion in the subject matter. It privileges seminars and experiential learning. We don’t have a widely-disseminated campus information fluency plan, and in fact our faculty rarely discusses this topic. Nonetheless, we teach information literacy in most general education courses and departmental core courses for majors. For example, first-year seminars and general education courses introduce students to our library and involve a substantial research project using secondary sources, including bibliography development and source citation. Core courses within the major develop discipline-specific research and writing skills and introduce the use of primary sources. In fine and performing arts, we also introduce interdisciplinary research skills, due to the interrelated nature of our fields. Then as seniors, students complete a capstone project demonstrating their ability to conjoin these skills to create and perform new works of art or to produce new knowledge. This is what we mean by information fluency.

[Slide 3] Information literacy is defined differently in different fields, but documents published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) are a good place to start (ACRL 2000, 2016). An ACRL report published in 2000 includes five instructional standards to achieve information literacy, with detailed performance indicators and outcomes. I’ve summarized the five standards on the slide. Students should be able to determine the nature and extent of the information needed to undertake a research project. Students should know how to access the necessary information effectively and efficiently. They should be able to evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into their knowledge base and value system. Either individually or as part of a group, students should be able to use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose. Students should understand many of
the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and students should access and use information ethically and legally.

[Slide 4] The ACRL instructional standards can be adapted to any discipline, including the fine and performing arts. In 2006 the Music Library Association (MLA) published information literacy outcomes for music students based on the ACRL document (Cary and Sampsel 2006). This slide shows a few of the suggested outcomes. The outcome for meeting the first standard—the ability to determine the nature and extent of the information needed for music research—is that students must know how to draw information from diverse sources. In music, sources include specialized reference works, books, articles, scores, critical performance editions, original compositions, arrangements, transcriptions, archival materials, sound recordings, video recordings, websites, and digital media such as CDs, MP3s, and YouTube videos. Students must learn the correct format for citing all these sources and must be able to interpret the information through performance, composition, or original research. Music students typically acquire information literacy skills in lower-division music history, popular music, and ethnomusicology courses, which require research and writing components. For example, as an ethnomusicologist I assign projects that teach students to use and cite specialized reference materials such as the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, to find peer-reviewed articles in ethnomusicology journals, and to locate relevant recordings, films, and other media. In first-year courses I’ve often worked with an embedded music librarian (Manus 2009). For all other courses, including core courses, our music librarians conduct in-class workshops on using library databases and provide online research guides tailored to specific assignments. Our librarians receive copies of our course syllabi and project assignments and thus are equipped to provide individualized library instruction outside of class. Our head music librarian attends all
department meetings so she knows about curriculum and program developments, which helps her manage acquisitions and instructional needs.

[Slide 5] The MLA outcomes further state that music students must acquire discipline-specific skills in order to determine the nature and extent of the information needed for music research. Discipline-specific skills are what Tamara, Jessy, and I are referring to as slow skills, a term we’ve borrowed from the “slow food” movement to suggest the lengthy effort involved in acquiring this skill set. Slow skills include close listening and detailed observation—learning to see, handle, hear, evaluate, analyze, and interpret physical objects, sound, and movement, including live performance. Students develop these skills through repeated exposure over time. Music students acquire slow skills through classes in music theory, studio lessons, ensemble participation, and similar courses that extend across all four years of the undergraduate program. Music students make the transition from information literacy to information fluency when they learn to apply both slow skills and information literacy to studies that inform a performance, composition, or original research project. Since music students usually develop slow skills and information literacy separately, it can be hard for them to combine these proficiencies. My role as the professor is to devise project assignments for core courses that support the transition.

[Slide 6] One example of this kind of assignment comes from an upper-level core course titled “Comparative Music Theory,” which is an advanced seminar that music majors take in the junior year. The learning goals for the class appear on the slide. Students complete several reading, listening, and discussion assignments for the class, but most pertinent here are the transcription and analysis projects. Each student transcribes at least three Spanish New Mexican songs from a sound archive housed in the Special Collections department of Colorado College’s
Tutt Library. The collection was compiled between 1944 and 1974 by Rubén Cobos, a professor of Spanish at the University of New Mexico. Working closely with library professionals such as Jessy Randall, we made the 950 song recordings accessible as primary source material for students in music and other disciplines. In Comparative Theory, I use the Cobos Collection to help students connect library research, slow skills in music, and digital media. Each student transcribes three songs from the collection. The assignment requires them to use analog recording media to access the song, music dictation skills to transcribe it, notation software to present it, analytical skills to describe it, and library skills to contextualize it. Students search for concordances to their transcriptions in other print and digital collections of Spanish New Mexican music and write a brief paper analyzing each song, comparing the variant versions and citing all sources correctly. Here is an example of one student’s transcription, which I’m using with her permission.

[Slide 7] [Play audio] After transcribing, researching, and writing about songs from the Cobos Collection, students undertake a larger-scale project, transcribing and analyzing a monophonic or two-voice piece from a traditional repertory of their choice, accompanied by a fifteen-page research paper that places the piece in its cultural, social, and historical context. Taken together, the projects in this course help students achieve information fluency in music and provide a scaffold for the capstone projects they undertake as seniors. Working closely with the Special Collections curator helps music students know how and where to find primary source materials not housed in the music library.

[Slide 8] Beyond discipline-based research, students in the fine and performing arts also need interdisciplinary research skills. For example, opera students may need information on scenic, costume, and stage design, as well as literary sources, historical contexts, and
biographical data on composers and librettists (Abromett and Vaughan 2004). One way to achieve interdisciplinary information literacy is through team-taught courses. A course I teach with Tamara Bentley, titled “Experiencing Asia through Music and Art,” provides an example. We address music, visual arts, theatre, and dance from South Asia, Indonesia, China, and Japan. We limit the course design to three historical moments, which permits us to delve deeply into specific topics. For example, in discussing South Asia during the early modern era, we can explore Mughal miniatures like the one on this slide in relation to music at Akbar’s court, demonstrating how aesthetic concepts permeate all modes of expressive culture being produced in a certain time and place. Tamara will talk about the assignment we designed for the course to combine information fluency with digital humanities, and will explain how we worked with our visual resources curator and other information technology professionals.

The relatively slim literature available on information literacy in music offers examples of collaborative initiatives undertaken at St. Olaf’s, Oberlin, the University of the Pacific, and the University of Wyoming; I made a handout of these sources for anyone who would like it. The sources agree that the key for faculty is to collaborate with library and information technology professionals in the strategic design of course assignments.

[Slide 9] Administrators can support information fluency initiatives by encouraging workshops and interdisciplinary collaboration and by offering funds to provide research assistance and course release. Making financial resources available is key. Our work in developing the Cobos Collection for student use, and creating the Asian music and art class, was supported by grants from numerous campus sources. Due to time constraints and competing demands, curricular and pedagogical change happens slowly. It took seven years to make the Cobos Collection accessible for student use, and it took a year to develop the digital humanities
assignment for Asian music and art. We continue to work on each of these projects. However, for me the effort has been rewarding, and I look forward to learning about the projects underway at your campuses over the next couple of days.

Thank you!


