

## Mining for Metal: Heavy Metal and the Music Library

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### **Abstract:**

Heavy metal, once considered an outlier among the popular music genres by music critics and scholars, has nonetheless consistently enjoyed a large and dedicated fanbase. In the twenty-first century, it has become an increasingly popular subject of music scholarship, which has led to an increase in the number and variety of metal resources available to and collected by libraries. This article will provide a basic introduction to heavy metal music and materials and some suggested best practices for working with these materials in a library or archival setting.

**Keywords:** heavy metal | music | libraries | resources

### **Article:**

Heavy metal (often referred to simply as metal) is a complex and sometimes controversial musical style and cultural movement. Once considered an outlier among popular music genres by music critics and scholars, metal has nonetheless consistently enjoyed a large and dedicated fanbase. In the twenty-first century, it has become an increasingly popular subject of music scholarship, which has led to a rise in the number and variety of metal resources available to and collected by libraries. However, some librarians have little more than a passing knowledge of the genre (though there are certainly several dedicated metal fans among the ranks, as evidenced by the formation of the Metal Music Librarians Facebook group). This article will provide a basic introduction to heavy metal music and materials and some suggested best practices for working with these materials in a library/archival setting.

### **What is heavy metal?**

Musically, heavy metal is an outgrowth of hard rock, and the similarities between the two can sometimes lead to confusion about whether a given performer is better classified as playing

metal or hard rock.<sup>1</sup> Thus, a clear, comprehensive definition of heavy metal is beneficial to anyone wishing to catalog, collect, or otherwise interact with metal in their collections. Unfortunately, as with any music genre, metal resists clean classification, bleeding into hard rock (and vice versa) and further splitting into multiple overlapping subgenres.

Metal music scholars have defined metal as a “cluster of rock music styles”<sup>2</sup> and a “bricolage.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, heavy metal boasts dozens, if not hundreds, of subgenres, perhaps matched only by electronic dance music for the number and variety of its offshoots.<sup>4</sup> Karson Jones writes that metal’s “subgenres stand at the peripheries of metal or at the intersection of metal and other genres of music, but maintain enough of the traditional heavy metal code to remain within the family—to be considered an offshoot rather than an entirely new genre.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, while heavy metal’s subgenres differ from one another in various ways, they also tend to share many similar features.

Heavy metal’s timbre is one of the first perceivable differences between it and other music genres. Wallach, Berger, and Greene describe “loud, distorted guitars; prominent and aggressive drums; and emotionally extreme singing techniques.”<sup>6</sup> Other scholars point to “thick sound [and] amplified distortion”<sup>7</sup> and “painfully high decibel levels”<sup>8</sup> in metal. By pushing volume levels to their extremes, musicians can overload amplifiers, creating distortion in the guitar(s) and bass. The vocalist may imitate this distortion through a variety of techniques, including screams and growls. The power chord is another important element of metal’s sonic characteristics. Consisting of an open fifth (e.g., C and G), the power chord sounds more “powerful” than the more traditional triad (e.g., C, E, and G), especially when played loudly and with distortion. The timbre of metal is further characterized by down-tuned guitars, which adds an additional layer of heaviness.

Heavy metal emphasizes virtuosity, especially for the guitar. This virtuosity is often matched by complex song forms and rhythmic patterns. Thus, as Deena Weinstein points out, “In heavy metal there is an intimate connection between the vocals and the instruments, with the voice participating as an equal, not as a privileged instrument.”<sup>9</sup> Andrew Cope, who has provided one of the most comprehensive definitions of metal’s sonic characteristics in his *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music*, goes further, describing heavy metal as having an instrumental rather than a vocal focus.<sup>10</sup> Cope explains that the complexity and virtuosity of metal emphasizes instruments, especially the guitar, over the voice. Further, the compositional structure of metal tends to favor multi-sectional over verse-chorus forms, again placing less emphasis on the vocalist and more on the instruments.

Heavy metal’s harmonic and melodic structures further differentiate it from many other popular music styles. Metal tends to be modal rather than diatonic and to emphasize dissonant intervals, such as the flat second and the tritone. Using these intervals contributes to what Cope refers to as “angular riffs,” which he defines as “riffs based on a high percentage of wide melodic intervals.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the traditional association of the sound of the tritone with the devil in Western musics can send a powerful subliminal message to many listeners, adding a sense of menace.

As with the musical style, the lyrics and visuals of heavy metal can vary from band to band, but there are generally some commonalities. Most subgenres of metal, with the notable exception of hair/glam/lite metal, focus less on themes of love than other rock music styles. Instead, the lyrics are about a wide range of topics, from apocalypse (both religious and man-made), to evil, to the occult. Additionally, band, album, and song names/titles serve as verbal signifiers of a band's identity and of their place in the metal culture.<sup>12</sup> Visuals are also important in metal. Album art, t-shirts, and posters present often elaborate artwork. Black and red are preferred colors, drawing upon many of the darker themes also found in bands' lyrics. How a band presents itself visually through paraphernalia, stage shows, and music videos, and how fans present themselves to the rest of the world, is central to the identities of performers and fans alike.

### **A brief history of heavy metal**

Metal is a long-lived popular music genre, with roots in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Weinstein theorizes that metal's persistent popularity is due at least in part to "the growth of a subculture identified with the music."<sup>13</sup> Heavy metal has been traditionally associated with its ability to give "a voice to the voiceless."<sup>14</sup> Originally, metal's audience consisted primarily of young, working-class, white males. Metal's association with masculine power, rebellion, and misogyny further attracted this particular demographic.<sup>15</sup> However, the audience of heavy metal has changed over time, becoming far more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, and more. This broadening of appeal, due in part to the many different subgenres fans may enjoy, has contributed further to the longevity of heavy metal. That said, many people still see metal as a white male's music tied to violence and misogyny. This misconception can discourage librarians or archivists from collecting recordings of or resources about metal, leaving an important popular music genre out of our curated collections. Understanding more about metal's history can illuminate the more complicated and vibrant characteristics of the genre and its central place in popular music history.

Heavy metal's roots, as with any other rock music, are in African and African American musics. The blues and blues rock were especially influential, inspiring the basic song forms, harmonic progressions, guitar riffs, and guitar virtuosity of early heavy metal.<sup>16</sup> Psychedelic/acid rock of the 1960s also influenced the genre, especially its stage shows and emphasis on mysterious or mystical lyrical themes. The distorted, virtuosic guitar style of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Cream, the Kinks, and other hard rock bands of the 1960s had a profound influence on heavy metal, leading to the development of key aspects of the genre's signature sound.

The roots of the genre are found primarily in three British bands, each formed in 1968. Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple, while both hard rock bands, nonetheless codified key elements of the heavy metal sound in their eponymous 1970 albums, *Led Zeppelin II* and *Deep Purple*. In both albums, the bands utilize "distorted guitar 'power chords,' heavy riffs, wailing vocals, and virtuosic solos by guitarists and drummers."<sup>17</sup> That same year, Black Sabbath released two

albums that are generally considered to be the first heavy metal recordings: Black Sabbath and Paranoid. Along with Sabbath's 1971 album, *Master of Reality*, these albums defined the heavy metal style and established the band as "arguably the single most influential heavy metal band."<sup>18</sup> Musically, hard rock and heavy metal were still fairly similar, but Black Sabbath was already favoring more modal, distorted music than that of its hard rock contemporaries. Further, the band embraced an image and lyrical content that emphasized the occult to an extent that contemporaneous bands did not.

Other metal bands followed Black Sabbath in the 1970s, including Great Britain's Judas Priest and Motörhead. As the 1970s progressed, many metal bands were inspired more by heavy metal than by the blues/ blues rock from which Black Sabbath emerged.<sup>19</sup> Further, several hard rock bands in the United States, particularly KISS and Alice Cooper, drew huge numbers of fans who often embraced metal as well. These bands' elaborate stage shows, theatrical costuming, and makeup contributed greatly to the image metal bands were beginning to construct for the genre.

Early 1970s metal was incredibly popular with fans, who were, as mentioned previously, primarily young, male, white, and working-class, but it was not a favorite with critics, who often saw it as too commercially successful, and thus inauthentic.<sup>20</sup> In the late 1970s, record sales for heavy metal steeply declined, primarily because of the growing popularity of disco, punk, and some specific mainstream rock bands. However, metal regained commercial success in the 1980s with its first subgenres.

The New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) was led by bands like Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, Saxon, and Motörhead. These bands tended to play "shorter, catchier songs" in a more aggressive style than their predecessors, while incorporating new technologies and techniques that led to more sophisticated production values.<sup>21</sup> The commercial success achieved by NWOBHM bands rejuvenated metal in Great Britain, the United States, and beyond, benefiting both new acts and earlier bands (e.g., Black Sabbath, Judas Priest).

Another new subgenre, glam/hair metal, took root in Los Angeles, California, and quickly spread worldwide. Image was central to the glam/hair bands, like Mötley Crüe, Poison, and Ratt. They took the theatrical makeup and costuming introduced by bands like Alice Cooper and KISS and glamorized it, focusing on gender-bending and androgyny. The remarkable popularity of glam/hair metal and its closely related subgenre, lite metal, powered an increase in the diversity of metal fans, drawing more female, middle-class, and age-diverse (from preteens through late-twenties) listeners.<sup>22</sup> The glam bands were also custommade for the new MTV (Music Television) channel, which was changing the way popular music was being consumed in the 1980s. Two shows, *Heavy Metal Mania* (1985–1987) and *Headbanger's Ball* (1987–1995), consisted entirely of metal music videos and played a central role in introducing metal to audiences worldwide.

Thrash/speed metal offered an alternative to glam metal that was generally faster, more violent, and often considered more "authentic" by fans.<sup>23</sup> The San Francisco Bay Area was the center of the scene, spawning three of thrash's "Big Four" bands: Metallica, Slayer, and

Megadeth (the fourth band, Anthrax, was based in New York). Thrash incorporated punk through its often blindingly fast tempos, aggressive sound, sarcastic lyrics, and growling vocals, while taking heavy metal's virtuosity, especially guitar solos, to new extremes.

On the peripheries, more extreme subgenres of metal were emerging in the United States, Great Britain, Nordic countries, and elsewhere. Black metal, death metal, doom metal, and other "extreme metal" subgenres pushed the music to (over?) the edge of what some would consider music, incorporating increasing levels of distortion and volume, painfully fast or slow tempos, and extreme vocal techniques.<sup>24</sup> These subgenres also pushed the envelope when it came to imagery and lyrical subject matter, embracing satanic, anti-Christian, and pagan themes to a greater degree than earlier bands. Less commercially successful than many other metal subgenres, extreme metal subgenres nevertheless enjoy a dedicated fanbase and have been the subject of much scholarly investigation in the twenty-first century.

Still other subgenres, like progressive (a.k.a. prog) metal, combined elements of heavy metal with other rock genres, in this case progressive rock. The resultant subgenre incorporated the volume and guitar-centric elements of metal with the longer song lengths, use of keyboards and synthesizers, and distinct lyrical content of progressive rock.<sup>25</sup>

The importance of the 1980s in heavy metal history cannot be overstated. In fact, later in this article, you will find that most of this author's recommended recordings are from this decade. In addition to recordings, video from the time can be important parts of any metal collection, as they show the essential visual (e.g., fashion, iconography) differences between subgenres.

In the 1990s, metal suffered another slump, this time due in part to the emergence of grunge. Grunge was a more apt reflection of American society's rejection of 1980s materialism exemplified by the glam/hair bands.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, grunge departed from the flashy, virtuosic guitar solos so typical of heavy metal, leading to a change in taste that rejected much metal music. However, many older groups continued performing, and some, like Metallica, were happy to experiment with a slower "groove" metal, a key factor in the success of their 1991 self-titled album. New groups, such as Pantera, Tool, and Korn, began experimenting with new sounds, further increasing the numbers of subgenres (e.g., nü metal, rap metal).

The 2000s and 2010s saw a continued fragmentation of heavy metal into an increasing number of subgenres. As was the case earlier, this increased variety in the musical style contributed to an increased diversity in its fanbase. In the 2000s, critics and scholars also began to accept heavy metal as a popular music worthy of appreciation and study. While very few scholarly works were published about metal in the 1970s through the 1990s, hundreds have been produced since 2000. The increase in writing about metal creates new opportunities for those collecting materials about the genre, in no small part because the scholarly studies of metal come from a large variety of perspectives, as will be discussed later. This growth in literature about metal, in addition to the complex interlocking network of metal subgenres, makes it a field ripe for study but also sometimes intimidating to the uninitiated. Several authors have worked to

combat the intimidation factor of collecting and providing access to heavy metal and resources about heavy metal in libraries during the twenty-first century. A survey of their work follows.

## Literature Review

The most recent scholarly article about heavy metal resources in the library is Michael Pierry's "The LCC Number of the Beast."<sup>27</sup> The article focuses on resources, listing several key books, documentaries, and websites. The appendices are especially useful, providing a glossary of common metal terms, explanations of some of metal's major subgenres, and a bibliography.

Robert Freeborn's "Confronting the Dark Side of the Beat," like Pierry's work, provides "a basic guide to heavy metal music collection development."<sup>28</sup> Freeborn's clear introduction to metal and some of its main subgenres is augmented by a brief discussion of some of the major resources about metal. While the article was published nearly twenty years before this writing, it is still an excellent introduction for librarians looking to begin or expand a collection of heavy metal resources.

Freeborn's later article, "A Selective Discography of Scandinavian Heavy Metal Music," focuses on Scandinavian metal.<sup>29</sup> Freeborn again provides excellent historical background information in addition to descriptions of the musical styles of several subgenres and lists of important bands from different Scandinavian countries. The discography lists important recordings as well as key record companies, magazines, and websites.

Though very short, Matthew Moyer's 2008 article can help start a metal recording collection.<sup>30</sup> It lists seven important albums (though two—those by AC/DC and Guns N' Roses—are arguably hard rock, not heavy metal). A brief timeline from 1970 to 1996 provides a snapshot of important events in metal's history. The article cites a companion website with a longer list of recordings, but that website was no longer available at the time of this writing.

Karson Jones's "Collecting Heavy Metal Music" takes a different tack from the other articles mentioned here.<sup>31</sup> Jones begins by tracing the number of new records added to OCLC's database with the subject heading "Heavy metal (Music)" between 1980 and 2009, showing a marked increase in published materials on the topic. He then provides thorough explanations of several major subgenres, including thrash, doom, death, and black metal, discussing their history, sound, key bands, lyrics, and relationships to other subgenres. An appendix of recommended recordings is also subdivided by subgenre. Finally, Jones includes a short section on cataloging metal resources. Though arguably out of date, Jones does provide some helpful cataloging advice. For example, he cautions catalogers that they may often have to use multiple headings to reflect the complexity of metal subgenres (e.g., "Heavy metal (Music)" and "Gothic rock music" would both be assigned for a recording of Gothic metal).<sup>32</sup>

Finally, *Metaldata: A Bibliography of Heavy Metal Resources*, endeavors to provide a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of resources about metal, including books, articles, journals, websites, archives, and more.<sup>33</sup> The volume is designed to assist music librarians in collection development and researchers and fans as they search for useful resources.

## Resource in the library

When collecting materials about Western art music, librarians can generally depend to a large extent (especially when it comes to books and journal articles) on systems of peer review. While there is certainly some variety in who writes or records these materials, one can usually depend upon the majority of authors being musicologists specifically or scholars generally. This is not the case with materials about heavy metal. As a popular music genre, it has been written about by scholars, journalists, and fans alike. There are patterns to authorship based on the discipline of study. Books about specific performers are most often by music journalists or fans, while studies of the music or culture of heavy metal tend to be written by scholars. Histories of heavy metal and its subgenres are more unpredictable in their authorship. This does not take into account the large number of websites about metal, its subgenres, and its performers, which are created and maintained (one hopes) by a wide variety of individuals and organizations. Additionally, it is important to realize that many scholarly studies of heavy metal have taken place outside the musicology/ethnomusicology/music theory silo. Studies of metal's lyrics, philosophy, fans, and fashion, and its use in movies, television, and culture abound, and many never mention the actual sound of the music. What follows is this author's recommendations for basic resources. For a more in-depth annotated bibliography, see *Metaldata*, mentioned above. All resources discussed in this section, plus a few extras, are listed in Appendix A.

### Books

While there are numerous high-quality books about many different aspects of metal, this article will endeavor to narrow that list down to a few especially important ones. Two of the most important early studies of metal culture are Deena Weinstein's *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (1991) and Robert Walser's *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993). Both studies incorporate elements of musicology, ethnomusicology, and sociology to study metal music and metal culture in a way that had not been done before. Both volumes have since been revised. Weinstein's book's latest edition, titled *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, was published in 2000. Walser's book was most recently rereleased in 2014. Both new editions incorporate new information.

Ian Christe's *Sound of the Beast* (2004) offers a comprehensive history of heavy metal in easy-to-understand language. While not a scholarly work featuring bibliography and citations, it is nonetheless authoritative, as Christe is a well-known author about metal and runs Bazillion Points Publishing, which publishes many important metal books. Several other metal histories are worth exploring, including Philip Bashe's *Heavy Metal Thunder* (1985), Kory Grow's *Heavy Metal* (2012), David Konow's *Bang Your Head* (2002), and Axl Rosenberg and Christopher Krovatin's *Hellraisers* (2017).

A new crop of metal scholars began publishing in the 2000s, becoming increasingly prolific. Most tend to focus on the sociological aspects of metal culture, but a few write about the

music itself. One notable resource in this vein is Andrew L. Cope's *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music* (2010), which, as mentioned earlier, provides what I consider to be the most comprehensive explanation of heavy metal's sound (and how it differs from hard rock) available. A different, but no less interesting, study of metal is provided by Michelle Phillipov in her *Death Metal and Music Criticism: Analysis at the Limits* (2012), which explores how and why metal has traditionally received less attention and positive coverage in critical discourse about popular music styles. Focusing on extreme metal, Keith Kahn-Harris's *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (2007) provides an in-depth exploration of several metal subgenres and the cultures they are a part of.

Numerous essay collections provide a way to explore metal from multiple angles. Among this author's favorites are *Global Metal Music and Culture* (2016), edited by Andy R. Brown, Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris, and Niall W. R. Scott; *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures* (2013), edited by Titus Hjelm, Keith Kahn-Harris, and Mark LeVine; *Metal Rules the Globe* (2011), edited by Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene; and *Heavy Metal Music in Britain* (2016), edited by Gerd Bayer.

Discographies and listening guides are an important resource for metal fans and librarians trying to curate a collection of important recordings. Among the most comprehensive and detailed discographies are those by Martin Popoff, especially his *The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal*, a four volume (for now) listing by decade of heavy metal recordings from the 1970s through the 2000s. A number of discographies/listening guides focus on specific bands or performers. Of these, Nolan Stolz's *Experiencing Black Sabbath* (2017) is notable for its detailed explanations of the constants and changes in Black Sabbath's musical style. The works of Alan Burridge focusing on the music of Motörhead, and those of Malcolm Dome and Mick Wall about Metallica's music are also worth noting.

## Encyclopedias

There are numerous encyclopedias about metal, perhaps because metal fans and writers seem to love creating lists. Some of the most up-to-date encyclopedias are in the form of websites. "Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives" (<https://www.metal-archives.com>) and "Spirit of Metal" (<https://www.spirit-of-metal.com>) provide two of the best search experiences for well- and lesser-known musicians and bands. Garry Sharpe-Young's numerous encyclopedias for performers of various metal subgenres allow the reader to focus their search based on musical style. Similarly, Malcolm Dome's *The N.W.O.B.H.M. Encyclopedia* (2019), now in its fifth edition, focuses on bands belonging to that subgenre of metal, and Janne Stark's comprehensive encyclopedia of Swedish metal and hard rock performers, *The Heaviest Encyclopedia of Swedish Hard Rock and Heavy Metal Ever!* (2013), focuses on bands from Sweden.

## Journals



Metal Music Studies is the peer-reviewed journal of the International Society of Metal Music Studies (ISMMS) and the best place to find the most recent scholarly research on metal. Other scholarly journals from a variety of fields of study have increasingly featured articles, or even entire issues, on heavy metal. Additionally, the popular press can be an excellent resource for casual fans and music scholars alike. Decibel, Kerrang!, Metal Forces, Metal Hammer, and Revolver are all still in publication with well-developed websites. Metal Edge was an important metal magazine published between 1985 and 2009.

## Videos

For a summary of metal, *Metal Evolution* (2012) and *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part II: The Metal Years* (1988) provide the most comprehensive coverage. *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* (1986) is an excellent sociological portrait of metal culture in the 1980s. The films of Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn, *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (2005), *Global Metal* (2009), and *Iron Maiden: Flight 666* (2009), are all thorough and enjoyable. There are numerous videos about individual bands; among these, two stand out: *Heavy Metal in Baghdad* (2008) follows Iraqi band Acrassicauda, while *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* (2004) focuses on Metallica between 2001 and 2003. All videos are available as DVDs, while some are also available as Blu-rays or streaming. The available formats for each are listed in Appendix A.

## On the Web

Several of the resources already mentioned are available partially or exclusively online, and this is no accident. As a popular music style, metal is constantly changing, and its performers and advocates frequently look for new ways to capture and remain in the spotlight, which the web offers. Thus, some of the most up-to-date information, especially about lesser-known performers, is found only on the internet. In addition to those resources already listed, there are several others that offer (often free) access to high-quality information. Among these, “Blabbermouth” (<http://www.blabbermouth.net>), the websites of ISMMS ([www.metalstudies.org](http://www.metalstudies.org)), “Metal Blade” ([https://www.metalblade.com /us](https://www.metalblade.com/us)), “Metal-Fi” (<https://metal-fi.com>), “Metal Injection” ([http://www .metalinjection.net](http://www.metalinjection.net)), “Metal Storm” ([www.metalstorm.net](http://www.metalstorm.net)), and “Spirit of Metal” (<https://www.spirit-of-metal.com>) stand out, but are far from the only high-quality sources of information about metal on the web. Additionally, the websites of individual bands and performers are often an excellent source of information that cannot be found elsewhere.

## The music

As a genre of popular music, metal can be difficult to collect for libraries. Albums can be expensive and may not even be released on a physical medium. The streaming services typically

used by academic music libraries, such as Alexander Street or Naxos, provide few, if any, metal recordings. Instead, we find ourselves relying on popular streaming services, like Spotify. However, we are not limited to these services. Many metal websites will provide free access to at least a limited number of recordings of lesser-known bands or concert performances, and some performers' websites or YouTube channels feature free streaming of select songs or videos.

Consulting discographies, like those listed above, can help librarians choose which albums are worth purchasing to ensure that they remain permanently part of the collection. Basic albums that appear in most lists include Black Sabbath's *Black Box: The Complete Original Black Sabbath (1970–1978)* (2004), Judas Priest's *British Steel* (1980), Ozzy Osbourne's *Blizzard of Ozz* (1980), Iron Maiden's *The Number of the Beast* (1982), Metallica's *Master of Puppets* (1986), Slayer's *Reign in Blood* (1986), Megadeth's *Peace Sells . . . but Who's Buying?* (1986), and Pantera's *Vulgar Display of Power* (1992). You may notice that all of these recordings predate the mid-1990s. This is in large part due to the fact that in the 1990s, the number of metal subgenres began growing exponentially, making it nearly impossible for fans, critics, or scholars to agree on essential bands or albums.

## Archives

Archival collections of heavy metal music, ephemera, and other resources exist at several institutions. Cornell University Library holds three such collections: "Black Metal Music Collections, 1985–2008," which includes magazines, recordings, photographs, and posters focusing on black metal; "Underground Metal Music Advertising," a collection of flyers, handbills, and other advertising materials produced between the mid-1990s and early-2000s; and "Metal Zines and Flyers," featuring copies of metal magazines, plus flyers for the band Witch and the metal magazine *Metal Rules*. Stanford University Libraries, Archives of Recorded Sound holds the misleadingly named "Scandinavian Death Metal Collection," which includes recordings by Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian performers of death metal and other subgenres. Stanford's collection is still being cataloged but has the potential to be of interest to a variety of researchers and fans. The "Collection of Heavy Metal Music Material, 1964–2016" at the University of California, Los Angeles Library includes books, films, recordings, magazines, flyers, and more.

## Organizing and finding metal

Popular music resources, especially recordings, are notoriously difficult to organize and classify, often making searching for them in the library or archive a challenge. Metal has been the subject of intensive interdisciplinary study, which adds to the complexity. The variety of perspectives this brings to metal music studies is invaluable, but it also means that works about metal will be classified in a wide variety of places in the library, from music, to religion, to

sociology, and beyond. Thus, the controlled vocabularies we use to cross-reference our heavy metal resources become essential for ensuring access.

Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) feature several headings for resources about metal. A complete list can be found in Appendix B. “Heavy metal (Music)” provides a way to describe the genre as a whole, but headings for several different subgenres, like “Extreme metal (Music)” and “Thrash metal (Music),” can allow for more specificity. There are also several headings for music for guitar, including “Electric guitar – Studies and exercises (Heavy metal),” “Electric guitar music (Heavy metal),” and “Guitar music (Heavy metal).” At this time, there are not similar headings for music or studies written for drum set, bass guitar, or voice, but using a combination of Library of Congress Genre/ Form Terms (LCGFT) and Library of Congress Medium of Performance Terms (LCMPT) can allow for accurate searching and browsing by genre (e.g., Heavy metal [Music]), form (e.g., Studies [Music]), and instrumentation (e.g., bass guitar).

The creation and continued development of the LCGFT vocabulary has done much to make describing, classifying, and finding heavy metal recordings (and scores) easier. The broad term “Heavy metal (Music)” can be subdivided into multiple different subgenre terms, such as “Black metal (Music)” and “Glam metal (Music).” A full list of LCGFT terms for metal can be found in Appendix B.

Even with the best organization in place, some music librarians will still find searching for metal resources challenging, particularly if they lack basic subject knowledge of the genre. For those who wish to learn more about metal, many of the resources listed in this article can provide a starting place, as can reading the excellent entries for heavy metal and some of its subgenres and performers in Grove Music Online.

Librarians and archivists have another tool at their disposal, though: the patrons themselves. Heavy metal fans are often passionate and knowledgeable about their favorite genre, and that knowledge can augment the searching and research expertise of the librarian to power high quality information discovery. This can also come in handy when you find yourself pointing researchers toward resources outside the library. The researcher may be able to find what they think they want, but the librarian can help them determine if it is truly what they need.

Using patrons’ expertise to also drive collection development in the realm of heavy metal is a good strategy for libraries and archives. The resources listed in this article can provide a starting place, but there are many more out there. Metaldatabase provides a guide to many of the materials about heavy metal available in the United States as of early 2020, but patrons can help direct the prioritization of resources about specific performers, subgenres, or locales. Similarly, drawing upon patrons’ passion for the genre as fans or performers can lead to new collection opportunities for local music repositories and archives.

## **Conclusion**

This article focuses primarily on the physical materials that can comprise a basic heavy metal collection in a library, leaving many areas for further research of metal in libraries and archives unexplored. There are currently few studies of archival acquisition or development practices for music and none for heavy metal. Archival collection development in music can utilize many tools, including community partnerships, local music repositories, and more, which could be translated to metal-specific collections.<sup>34</sup> However, the unique challenges archivists might face when acquiring, organizing, and promoting metal collections and working with musicians and collectors warrant further study. How music can be used for patron outreach and engagement for libraries and archives has been covered in several publications.<sup>35</sup> A directed study of how metal collections can be used to engage with patrons directly or indirectly in a variety of institutions would be a welcome addition to the literature.

While working with heavy metal materials in libraries and archives can feel daunting for some, it does not have to be. With a few key resources handy, even those librarians who know little about metal can gain a cursory knowledge of the genre, begin to build a collection of high-quality resources, and work with patrons to take advantage of that collection. By using controlled vocabularies consistently, catalogers can create cross reference networks that can span multiple disciplines and libraries, enhancing access to materials that, while they all cover heavy metal, may be housed in very different sections of the library. The growing body of research on metal during the twenty-first century provides an opportunity for metal music scholars to explore their chosen genre in new and creative ways and for librarians and archivists to assist them in this quest.

## Notes

1. Grove Music Online defines hard rock as “an imprecise term, partly co-extensive with heavy metal, referring to a group of styles originating in the late 1960s as a response to and development of the prevailing counter-culture. Dominant techniques include deep-tuned drums and ringing cymbals played with a marked absence of local syncopation, and declamatory vocals inherited from Mick Jagger. . . . The subject matter of the songs emphasizes a misogynistic, macho sexuality and an unfocussed but often environmentally aware liberal politics. Hard rock, however, avoids metal’s leanings toward madness, violence and the occult.” Allan F. Moore, “Hard Rock,” Grove Music Online, 2001, accessed 19 March 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46249>.
2. Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene, “Affective Overdrive, Scene Dynamics, and Identity in the Global Metal Scene,” in *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music Around the World*, ed. Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.
3. Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), 22.

4. Karson Jones, "Collecting Heavy Metal Music," *CAML Review* 39, no. 1 (2011): 8.
5. Jones, "Collecting Heavy Metal Music," 10.
6. Wallach, Berger, and Greene, "Affective Overdrive, Scene Dynamics, and Identity in the Global Metal Scene," 4.
7. Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone, *Queerness in Heavy Metal Music: Metal Bent* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 4.
8. Mark Hale, *HeadBangers: The Worldwide MegaBook of Heavy Metal Bands* (Ann Arbor, MI: Popular Culture, 1993), xiv.
9. Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 25.
10. Andrew L. Cope, *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 66–69.
11. Cope, *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music*, 20.
12. Robert Walser cites a number of different categories of metal band names, including those that "align themselves with electrical and mechanical power . . . dangerous or unpleasant animals," mysticism, death, and more. Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music Around the World* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 2.
13. Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 7.
14. Laina Dawes, *What Are You Doing Here? A Black Woman's Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal* (Brooklyn: Bazillion Points Books, 2012), 17.
15. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 1.
16. Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 16.
17. Robert Walser, "Heavy Metal," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 19 March 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49140>.
18. Robert Walser, "Black Sabbath," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 19 March 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49143>.
19. Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2007), 2.
20. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 11.
21. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 12.
22. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 12–13.
23. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 14–15.
24. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, 5.
25. Robert Freeborn, "Confronting the Dark Side of the Beat," *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2002): 32..
26. Robert Walser, "Grunge," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 19 March 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49139>.
27. Michael Pierry, "The LCC Number of the Beast: A Guide to Metal Music and Resources for Libraries," *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2013): 141–59.

28. Robert Freeborn, "Confronting the Dark Side of the Beat," *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2002): 25–37.
29. Robert Freeborn, "A Selective Discography of Scandinavian Heavy Metal Music," *Notes* 66, no. 4 (2010): 840–50.
30. Matthew Moyer, "Metal: Headbang for Your Buck," *Library Journal* 133, no. 20 (December 2008): 90.
31. Karson Jones, "Collecting Heavy Metal Music," *CAML Review* 39, no. 1 (2011): 6–25.
32. In cases where a genre/form term does not exist for the metal subgenre covered in the resource, consider proposing a new term to the SACO Music Funnel Project at [http://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/Music\\_Funnel.html](http://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/Music_Funnel.html)
33. Sonia Archer-Capuzzo and Guy Capuzzo, *Metaldata: A Bibliography of Heavy Metal Resources, Music Library Association Index and Bibliography Series* (Middleton, WI: Music Library Association and A-R Editions, 2021).
34. Articles about music archive development include Sarah Baker, Peter Doyle, and Shane Homan, "Historical Records, National Constructions: The Contemporary Popular Music Archive," *Popular Music and Society* 39, no. 1 (2016): 8–27, which explores popular music archives; Sophia Maalsen and Jessica McLean, "Record Collections as Musical Archives: Gender, Record Collecting, and Whose Music is Heard," *Journal of Material Culture* 23, no. 1 (2018): 39–57, which addresses representation of diverse collection creators in sound recording collections; William Mac Nelson and Stacey Krim, "Hitting the Right Notes: Cataloging, Collections, and Collaborative Communication," *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 23, nos. 3–4 (2020): 99–112, which focuses on the importance of collaboration among librarians, archivists, and donors when developing music archival collections; John Vallier, "Sound Archiving Close to Home: Why Community Partnerships Matter," *Notes* 67, no. 1 (September 2010): 39–49, discusses community involvement in a sound archive.
35. Some notable examples include: Matthew Cook, "Build It and They Will Come: Integrating Unique Collections and Undergraduate Research," *Collection Building* 34, no. 4 (2015): 128–33; Jessica Haglund, "Rock-n-Roll Libraries: Marketing Through Music Concerts and Festivals," *Public Libraries* 48, no. 1 (January/February 2009): 8–10; Jennifer Cheney Laski, "Student Engagement through Programming in the Music Library" (PowerPoint presentation, SEMLA Annual Meeting, Durham, NC, October 22, 2016), <http://semla.musiclibraryassoc.org/semla2016/program.html>; Jonathan Saucedo, "Arranging 'The Library of Babel': Special Collections, Undergraduate Research, and Librarian Engagement," *Portal: Library and the Academy* 18, no. 2 (April 2018): 391–408.

## **Appendix A: Recommended Resources**

### Books

- Bashe, Philip. *Heavy Metal Thunder: The Music, Its History, Its Heroes*. New York: Doubleday, 1985.
- Bayer, Gerd, ed. *Heavy Metal Music in Britain*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Brown, Andy R., Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris, and Niall W. R. Scott, eds. *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Burridge, Alan. *Collateral Damage—Lemmy Kilmister: Life Beyond Motörhead*. Foreword by Doro Pesch. Berlin: I. P. Verlag Jeske, 2016.
- Burridge, Alan, with Mick Stevenson. *The Illustrated Collector's Guide to Motörhead*. Burlington, Ontario: Collector's Guide Publishing, 1994.
- Christe, Ian. *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*. New York: HarperEntertainment, 2004.
- Cope, Andrew L. *Black Sabbath and the Rise of Heavy Metal Music*. Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010.
- Dome, Malcolm, and Mick Wall. *Metallica: The Complete Guide to Their Music*. With additional material by Martin Power. London: Omnibus, 2005.
- Hjelm, Titus, Keith Kahn-Harris, and Mark LeVine, eds. *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures*. Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2013.
- Kahn-Harris, Keith. *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2007.
- Konow, David. *Bang Your Head: The Rise and Fall of Heavy Metal*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002.
- Phillipov, Michelle. *Death Metal and Music Criticism: Analysis at the Limits*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012.
- Popoff, Martin. *The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal*. Vols. 1–4. Toronto: Collector's Guide Publishing, 2003–2011. Includes CDs.
- Popoff, Martin. *The Top 500 Heavy Metal Albums of All Time*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2004.
- Popoff, Martin. *The Top 500 Heavy Metal Songs of All Time*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2003.
- Rosenberg, Axl, and Christopher Krovatin. *Hellraisers: A Complete Visual History of Heavy Metal Mayhem*. Foreword by Matt Heafy. New York: Race Point Publishing, 2017.
- Stolz, Nolan. *Experiencing Black Sabbath: A Listener's Companion*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Wallach, Jeremy, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene, eds. *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music Around the World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Walser, Robert. *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. Foreword by Harris M. Berger. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014.
- Weinstein, Deena. *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000.

## Encyclopedias

“Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives.” <https://www.metal-archives.com>.

- MacMillan, Malc. *The N.W.O.B.H.M. Encyclopedia*. 5th ed. Prologues by Paul Di'Anno, Brian Tatler, and Fess Cox. Berlin: Iron Pages Books, 2019.
- Sharpe-Young, Garry. *A–Z of Black Metal*. London: Cherry Red, 2001.
- Sharpe-Young, Garry. *A–Z of Doom, Gothic & Stoner Metal*. London: Cherry Red, 2003. Includes CD.
- Sharpe-Young, Garry. *A–Z of Thrash Metal*. London: Cherry Red, 2002. Includes CD.
- Sharpe-Young, Garry. *Death Metal*. New Plymouth, New Zealand: Zonda Books, 2008.
- Sharpe-Young, Garry. *New Wave of American Heavy Metal*. 1st ed. New Plymouth, New Zealand: Zonda Books, 2005.
- Stark, Janne. *The Heaviest Encyclopedia of Swedish Hard Rock and Heavy Metal Ever!* Stockholm: Premium Publishing, 2013.

### Journal & Magazines

- Decibel. Philadelphia: Red Flag Media, 2004–.
- Kerrang! London: Wasted Talent, 1981–.
- Metal Edge. New York: Zenbu Media, 1985–2009.
- Metal Forces. Herts, UK: Metal Forces, 1983–.
- Metal Hammer. Bath, UK: Future Publishing, 1983–.
- Metal Music Studies. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2014–.
- Revolver. New York: Project M Group, 2000–.

### Videos

- Alvi, Suroosh, and Eddy Moretti, dirs. *Heavy Metal in Baghdad*. New York: VBS.tv, 2008. DVD.
- Berlinger, Joe, and Bruce Sinofsky, dirs. *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*. New York: Radical Media Company, 2004. DVD, Blu-ray.
- Dunn, Sam, and Scot McFadyen, dirs. *Iron Maiden: Flight 666*. Canada: Banger Films, 2009. DVD, Blu-ray.
- Dunn, Sam, Scot McFadyen, and Jessica Joy Wise, dirs. *Metal: A Head banger's Journey*. Toronto: Banger Films, 2005. DVD.
- Heyn, John, and Jeff Krulik, dirs. *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*. USA: Pirate Video, 1986. Rereleased 2005 by Factory 515. DVD.
- McFadyen, Scot, and Sam Dunn, dirs. *Global Metal*. Los Angeles: Warner Brothers Studios, 2009. 2-DVD set, streaming on Kanopy.
- McFadyen, Scot, and Sam Dunn, dirs. *Metal Evolution*. Toronto: Banger Films, 2012. 3-DVD set.



Spheeris, Penelope, dir. *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part II: The Metal Years*. Los Angeles: Shout! Factory, 1988. Rereleased 2015. DVD, Blu-Ray, streaming on Alexander Street Academic Video Online.

## Websites

“Blabbermouth.net.” <http://www.blabbermouth.net>.  
International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS). “Metalstudies.”  
<https://www.metalstudies.org>.  
“Metal Blade.” <https://www.metalblade.com/us>.  
“Metal-Fi.” <http://metal-fi.com>.  
“Metal Injection.” <http://www.metalinjection.net>.  
“Metal Storm.” <https://www.metalstorm.net>.  
“Spirit of Metal.” <https://www.spirit-of-metal.com>.

## Audio Recordings

Black Sabbath. *Black Box: The Complete Original Black Sabbath (1970–1978)*. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros./Rhino, 2004.  
Iron Maiden. *The Number of the Beast*. UK: EMI, 1982.  
Judas Priest. *British Steel*. New York: Columbia, 1980.  
Megadeth. *Peace Sells . . . but Who’s Buying?* Hollywood, CA: Capitol, 1986.  
Metallica. *Master of Puppets*. New York: Elektra/Asylum, 1986.  
Osbourne, Ozzy. *Blizzard of Ozz*. London: Jet, 1980. Reissued New York: Epic, 2002.  
Pantera. *Vulgar Display of Power*. New York: Atco, 1992.  
Slayer. *Reign in Blood*. New York: Def Jam, 1986.

## Archives

Cornell University Library. “Black Metal Music Collection, 1985–2008.” Archives 8031.  
Finding aid available at <https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/RMM08031.html>.  
Cornell University Library. “Metal Zines and Flyers.” Archives 8113.  
<https://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/9529593>.  
Cornell University Library. “Underground Metal Music Advertising.” Archives 8110.  
<https://newcatalog.library.cornell.edu/catalog/9254231>.  
Stanford University Libraries, Archives of Recorded Sound. “Scandinavian Death Metal Collection,” ARS0142.  
University of California Los Angeles Library. “Collection of Heavy Metal Music Material, 1964–2016.” Collection LSC.2269. Finding aid available at  
<https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8h135d3>.

## Appendix B: Vocabularies

### Library of Congress Subject Headings

#### Heavy metal (Music)

- Alternative metal (Music)
- Black metal (Music)
- Death metal (Music)
- Doom metal (Music)
- Drone metal (Music)
- Electric guitar – Studies and exercises (Heavy metal)
- Electric guitar music (Heavy metal)
- Extreme metal (Music)
- Glam metal (Music)
- Guitar music (Heavy metal)
- Power metal (Music)
- Progressive metal (Music)
- Sludge metal (Music)
- Thrash metal (Music)
  - Grindcore (Music)

### Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms

#### Heavy metal (Music)

- Alternative metal (Music)
- Black metal (Music)
- Death metal (Music)
- Doom metal (Music)
- Drone metal (Music)
- Extreme metal (Music)
  - Crust (Music)
- Glam metal (Music)
- Power metal (Music)
- Progressive metal (Music)
- Sludge metal (Music)
- Stoner rock (Music)
- Thrash metal (Music)
  - Grindcore (Music)

## Abstract

Heavy metal, once considered an outlier among the popular music genres by music critics and scholars, has nonetheless consistently enjoyed a large and dedicated fanbase. In the twenty-first century, it has become an increasingly popular subject of music scholarship, which has led to an increase in the number and variety of metal resources available to and collected by libraries. This article will provide a basic introduction to heavy metal music and materials and some suggested best practices for working with these materials in a library or archival setting.

