

The 2011 Franz Liszt Complete Correspondence Project

is a proposal to make the correspondence of Franz Liszt integrally accessible in a scholarly, digital edition.

1. A digital edition

This paper is intended for Liszt researchers worldwide. For this readership it will not be necessary to stress the importance and value of a complete edition of the Liszt correspondence.

Plans for such an edition have been launched on the occasion of previous centenary celebrations (1936, 1986). Unfortunately, these plans have not been realized. Several publications of individual corpora of Liszt letters have since appeared. These are a valuable and much appreciated addition. However, we signal two major negative points for Liszt research and scholarship in general:

(1) From the user's viewpoint, multiple sources (which are often not easily accessible) must be consulted and cross-referenced, with considerable overlay. The bibliographical apparatus is continually growing. As knowledge increases, it also becomes increasingly difficult to manage.

(2) From the editorial viewpoint, a lot of double work is being done, every editor reduplicating the work of others and rewriting portions of the Liszt biography for her/his particular project.

Minor, but not negligible complaints are: the letters are rarely shown as images beside the transcription (and then in many cases of poor quality); these editions are costly.

This situation is highly undesirable for contemporary and future scholarship.

We will not go into the causes of the failure of the last (1986) initiative. Instead, we want to point out the new chances that digital developments of the past quarter century offer us.

Main points of this new proposal:

1. The edition will be exclusively digital;
2. The organizational structure will be composed in a broad and largely decentralized way.

Since digital sources are by now well integrated into musicological research, no argument will be needed for point (1). We merely want to stress the following advantages:

- (1) The original documents may be reproduced as images in high resolution;
- (2) The transcribed texts are searchable;

- (3) Data in annotation (names, titles, chronology etc.) may be saved in one central database and accessed from any related document;
- (4) Links to external sources may be included;
- (5) Collections may be made available quickly in a step by step fashion, while new discoveries may be integrated without delay.

Online communication will enable editors to collaborate and exchange information efficiently.

Access to the publication will be provided online by subscription and sold on CD/DVD.

2. Scope and editorial practice

The total number of letters has been estimated 6000; the total number written 10.000-12.000. To be included are however also letters from other correspondents to Liszt, inasmuch as they are part of an exchange or make a contribution to the Liszt biography. The mode of presentation should be no different from that of Liszt's own letters. Only in cases where sheer quantity might create an insurmountable obstacle to completion of the project compromise will be unavoidable (we can very well imagine that the voluminous and nearly illegible output of Princess Carolyne would be such an obstacle!). The total number of letters *to and from* still has to be estimated.

3. Organization

We imagine the organizational structure to be largely decentralized. We hope for the cooperation of all Liszt societies and archives with Liszt holdings. Cooperation may take two forms: (1) making available high quality scans (according to uniform standards) of the letters; (2) making available a number of expert editors-transcribers and staff members to manage the project. Though part of the project will depend on central financing, this need not necessarily extend to the editorial work and digitalization.

Material production and marketing should be relegated to a joint venture of publishers.

The Netherlands Music Institute will make its Liszt holdings available for this project. The undersigned will attempt to help guide this project through its first, exploratory phase.

4. Sequence of events

- (1) Creating a Liszt Correspondence Project mailing list, which will function as a permanent platform for discussion of the project; it should include all Liszt organizations, archives and individual scholars.
- (2) Creating an Executive Committee and Recommending Committee.
- (3) Making an inventory of all known archives and collections holding Liszt correspondence.
- (4) Creating a collaboration platform for all these organizations.
- (5) Creating a financial-organizational structure, and finding publishers.
- (6) Creating an editorial staff, which (a) makes a preliminary inventory of the total correspondence, (b) defines the editorial policy, (c) makes a publication timeline, (d) divides the work among editors.

This preparative stage might be completed in the Liszt year 2011. With the launching of a pilot 2011 Franz Liszt Complete Correspondence website the project would effectively commence.

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Appendix: Sample Digital Correspondence Projects

Darwin	http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/darwin/search/advanced/
Dickinson	http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu:8080/edc/
Linnaeus	http://linnaeus.c18.net/
Schenker	http://www.mus.cam.ac.uk/schenker/
Van Gogh	http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters.html
Various	http://www.unesco.org/webworld/digicol/Type_of_Material/Text/Letters__Correspondence/
Wallace	http://wallacefund.info/en/announcing-wallace-correspondence-project
Whistler	http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/