

An open web audio platform for ethnomusicological sound archives management and automatic analysis*

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ABSTRACT

The Archive CNRS-Musée de l'Homme is one of the most important collection of ethnomusicological recordings in Europe. Since 2007, ethnomusicologists and engineers have joint their effort to develop a scalable and collaborative web platform for managing and have a better access to these digital sound archives. This platform has been deployed since 2011 and hold the archives of CNRS-Musée de l'Homme managed by the *Research Center for Ethnomusicology*. This web platform is based on *Telemeta*, an open-source web audio framework dedicated to digital sound archives secure

storing, indexing and publishing. It focuses on the enhanced and collaborative user-experience in accessing audio items and their associated metadata and on the possibility for the expert users to further enrich those metadata. Telemeta architecture relies on *TimeSide*, an open audio processing framework mainly written in Python language which provides decoding, encoding and streaming methods for various formats together with a smart embeddable HTML audio player. TimeSide also includes a set of audio analysis plugins and additionally wraps several audio features extraction libraries to provide automatic annotation, segmentation and musicological analysis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Very large scientific databases in social sciences are increasingly available, and their treatment rises fundamental new questions as well as new research challenges. In anthropology, ethnomusicology and linguistics, researchers work on multiple types of multimedia documents such as photos, videos and sound recordings. The need to preserve and to easily access, visualize and annotate such materials is problematic given their diverse formats, sources and the increasing quantity of data. In the context of ethnomusicological research, the Research Center for Ethnomusicology (CREM) and Parisson, a company specialized in big music data projects, have been developing an innovative,

collaborative and interdisciplinary open-source web-based multimedia platform since 2007. This platform, *Telemeta* is designed to fit the professional requirements from both sound archivists, researchers and musicians to work together on huge amounts of music data. The first prototype of this platform has been online since 2010 and is now fully operational and used on a daily basis for ethnomusicological studies since 2011.

Recently, an open-source audio analysis framework, TimeSide, has been developed to bring automatic music analysis capabilities to the web platform and thus have turned Telemeta into a complete resource for *Computational Ethnomusicology* [14, 6]. The section 3 focuses on this framework.

The benefits of this collaborative platform for humanities and social sciences research apply to numerous aspects of the field of ethnomusicology, ranging from musical analysis to comparative history and anthropology of music, as well as to the fields of anthropology, linguistic and acoustic. Some of these benefits have been mentioned in several ethnomusicological publications [11, 7, 12]¹. The current and potential applications of such a platform thus raises the needs and challenges of implementing an online digital tool to support contemporary scientific research.

2. THE TELEMETA PLATFORM

2.1 Web audio content management features and architecture

The primary purpose of the project is to provide communities of researchers working on audio materials with a scalable system to access, preserve and share sound items along with associated metadata that provide key information on the context and significance of the recording. Telemeta², as a free and open source software³, is a unique scalable web audio platform for backuping, indexing, transcoding, analyzing, sharing and visualizing any digital audio or video file in accordance with open web standards. The time-based nature of such audio-visual materials and some associated metadata as annotations raises issues of access and visualization at a large scale. Easy and on demand access to these data, as you listen to the recording, represents a significant improvement. An overview of the Telemeta's web interface is illustrated in Figure 1. Its flexible and streaming safe architecture is represented in Figure 2. The main features of *Telemeta* are:

- Pure HTML5 web user interface including dynamical forms
- On the fly audio analyzing, transcoding and metadata embedding in various formats
- Social editing with semantic ontologies, smart workflows, realtime tools, human or automatic annotations and segmentations
- User management with individual desk, playlists, profiles and group access rights

¹TF : Est-ce OK ?

²<http://telemeta.org>

³Telemeta code is available under the CeCILL Free Software License Agreement

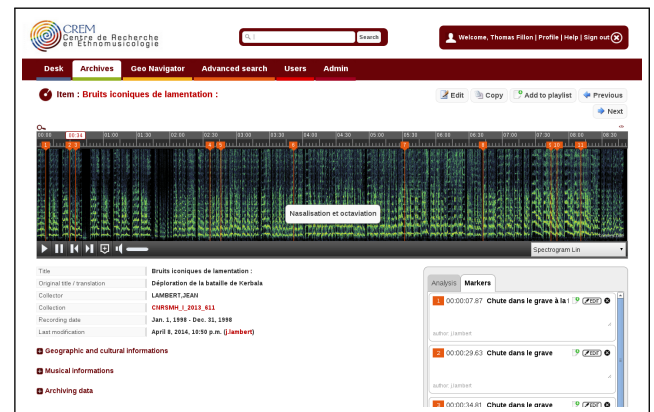


Figure 1: Screenshot excerpt of the Telemeta web interface

- High level search engine (geolocation, instruments, ethnic groups, etc...)
- Data providers : DublinCore, OAI-PMH, RSS, XML, JSON and other
- Multi-language support (now english and french)

Beside database management, the audio support is mainly provided through an external component, TimeSide, which is described in Section 3.

2.2 Metadata

In addition to the audio data, an efficient and dynamic management of the associated metadata is also necessary. Consulting metadata provide both an exhaustive access to valuable information about the source of the data and to the related work of peer researchers. Dynamically handling metadata in a collaborative manner optimizes the continuous process of knowledge gathering and enrichment of the materials in the database. One of the major challenge is thus the standardization of audio and metadata formats with the aim of long-term preservation and usage of the different materials. The compatibility with other systems is facilitated by the integration of the metadata standards protocols *Dublin Core*⁴ and *OAI-PMH* (Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting)⁵. Metadata include two different kinds of information about the audio item: contextual information and analytical information of the audio content.

2.2.1 Contextual Information

In an ethnomusicological framework, contextual information may include details about the location where the recording has been made, the instruments, the population, the title of the musical piece, the cultural elements related to the musical item, the depositor, the collector, the year of the recording and the year of the publication. Through the platform, diverse materials related to the archives can be stored, such as iconographies (digitalized pictures, scans of booklet and field notes, and so on), hyperlinks and collectors' biographical information.

⁴Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, <http://dublincore.org/>

⁵<http://www.openarchives.org/pmh/>

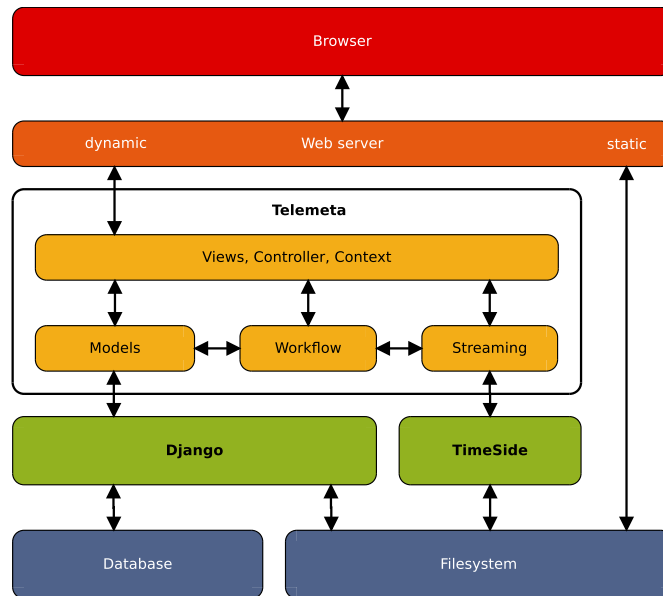


Figure 2: Telemeta architecture

2.2.2 Analytical information on the audio content

The second type of metadata includes information about the audio content itself. This includes temporally-indexed information such as a list of time-coded markers associated with text annotations and a list of time-segments associated with labels. The ontology for those labels is relevant for ethnomusicology (e.g. detection of spoken voice versus sang one, chorus, musical instrument categories, and so on)).⁶ Ethnomusicologists, archivists, as well as anthropologists, linguists and acousticians working on sound documents can create their own annotations and share them with colleagues. These annotations are accessible from the sound archive item web page and are indexed through the database. It should be noted that annotations and segmentation can also be produced by some automatic signal processing analysis (see Section 3).

3. TIMESIDE, AN AUDIO ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

One specificity of the Telemeta architecture is to rely on an external component, TimeSide⁷, that offers audio player web integration together with audio signal processing analysis capabilities. TimeSide is an audio analysis and visualization framework based on both python and javascript languages to provide state-of-the-art signal processing and machine learning algorithms together with web audio capabilities for display and streaming. Figure 3 illustrates the overall architecture of TimeSide together with the data flow between TimeSide and the Telemeta web-server.

3.1 Audio management

TimeSide provides the following main features:

- Secure archiving, editing and publishing of audio files over internet.
- Smart audio player with enhanced visualisation (waveform, spectrogram)
- Multi-format support: reads all available audio and video formats through Gstreamer, transcoding with smart streaming and caching methods
- "On the fly" audio analyzing, transcoding and metadata embedding based on an easy plugin architecture

3.2 Audio features extraction

In order to provide Music Information Retrieval analysis methods to be implemented over a large corpus for ethnomusicological studies, TimeSide incorporates some state-of-the-art audio feature extraction libraries such as Aubio⁸ [3], Yaafe⁹ [9] and Vamp plugins¹⁰. As an open-source framework and given its architecture and the flexibility provided by Python, the implementation of any audio and music analysis algorithm can be considered. Thus, it makes it a very convenient framework for researchers in computational ethnomusicology to develop and evaluate their algorithms. Given the extracted features, every sound item in a given collection can be automatically analyzed. The results of this analysis can be stored in a scientific file format like Numpy and HDF5, exported to sound visualization and annotation softwares like sonic visualizer [4], or serialized to the web browser through common markup languages: XML, JSON and YAML.

4. SOUND ARCHIVES OF THE CNRS - MUSÉE DE L'HOMME

⁶[MM2]je ne comprends pas à quoi cela renvoie : à l'annotation automatique? quelle différence faites vous entre "annotations" and "labels"?

⁷<https://github.com/yomguy/TimeSide>

⁸<http://aubio.org/>

⁹<https://github.com/Yaafe/Yaafe>

¹⁰<http://www.vamp-plugins.org>

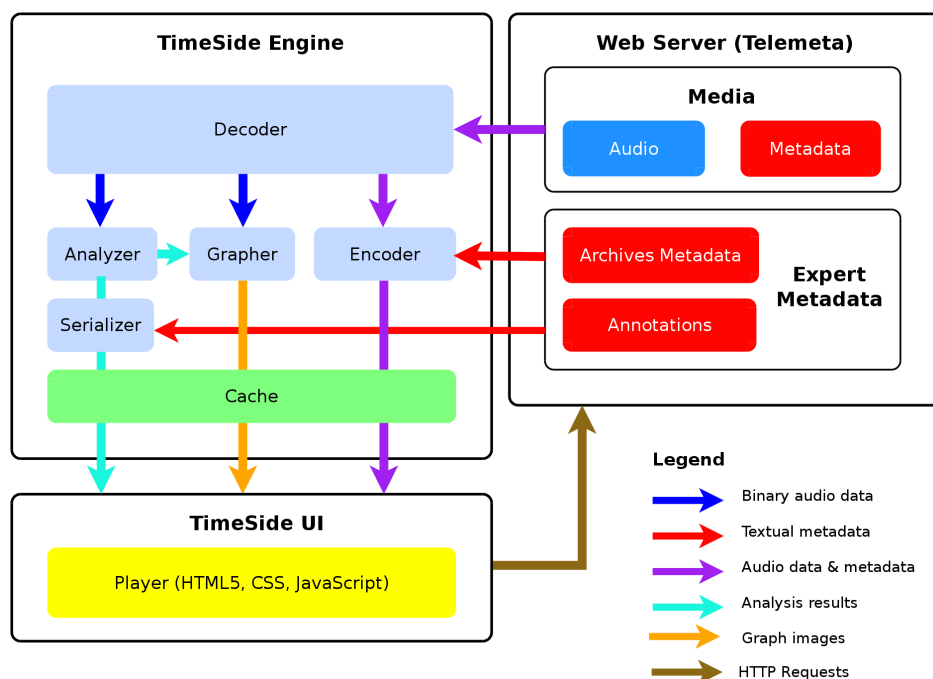


Figure 3: TimeSide engine architecture and data flow with Telemeta web-server

Since June 2011, the Telemeta platform is used by the *Sound archives of the CNRS - Musée de l'Homme*¹¹ and managed by the CREM (Research Center for Ethnomusicology). According to the CREM specific aims, the Telemeta platform makes these archives available for researchers, students and, when copyright allows it, to a broader audience. Through this platform, these archives can be shared, discussed and worked on.

4.1 Archiving research materials

The Sound archives of the CNRS - Musée de l'Homme is one of the most important in Europe and gather commercial as well as unpublished recordings of music and oral traditions from around the world, collected by researchers attached to numerous research institutions across the world, among which some prominent figures of the field of ethnomusicology (among which Brailoiu, Lomax, Shaeffner, Rouget and Elkin).

The platform offers access to records collection (nearly 3700 hours, e.g. more than 5000 discs, many of which are very rare) and to 4000 hours of unpublished recordings, as early expeditions (e.g. Dakar-Djibouti (1932), Ogooué-Congo (1946)). Most of the recordings comes from the field-work of researchers in all the continents. More than 110 years of the world's oral culture are now available online, from the 1900 Universal Exhibition of Paris up to the recent digital recordings. The sharing of data allows many people to collaborate to the enrichment of the database. Today, 47,200 items are in the database, and more than 26,000 sound files have been included (12 000 sounds on free access in Mai 2014). Recently, the CREM has decided to give full access to the records published by the CNRS-Musée de

l'Homme (Chant du Monde/Harmonia Mundi)¹² which distribution stopped ten years ago. As a web platform, this tool is also a way to cross borders, to get local populations involved in their own cultural heritage and to offer resources to researchers from all over the world.

4.2 Uses and users of digital sound archives

Through the few years since the sound archive platform had been released, it appears to support three main activities: archive, research and education (academic or not). These usages are those of archivists, researchers (ethnomusicologists, anthropologists and linguists), students and professors of these disciplines. Nonetheless, a qualitative survey showed that other disciplines (such as art history) found some use of the platform to foster and/or deepen individual research. The unexpectedly broad uses of the sound archives once digitalised and accessible emphasise the necessity and the benefits of such database. From an archive stand, the long-term preservation of the archives is ensured while, thanks to the collaborative nature of the platform, users can cooperate to continuously enrich metadata associated to a sound document and submit their own archives to protect them. Furthermore, it allows fulfilling the ethical task of returning the recorded music to the communities who produced it. Researchers from different institutions can work together on specific audio materials as well as conduct individual research in both synchronic and diachronic perspective, on their own material, others' material or both. When use for education, the platform provides a wide array of teaching material to illustrate students' work as well as support teaching curricula.¹³

¹²http://archives.crem-cnrs.fr/archives/fonds/CNRSMH_Editions/

¹³TF : On ne parle plus d'Europeana ?

¹¹<http://archives.crem-cnrs.fr>

5. EXPANDING DEVELOPMENT: THE DIADEMS PROJECT

The goals and expectations of the platform are of many kinds and expand through time, as users experience new ways to work with the archives database and request new tools to broaden the scope of their research activities linked to it. The reflexion collectively engaged by engineers and researchers on the use of the sound archives database led us to set up a large scale project called DIADEMS (*Description, Indexation, Access to Ethnomusicological and Sound Documents*). Started in January 2013, the French national research program DIADEMS is a multi-disciplinary program whose consortium includes research laboratories from both *Science and Technology of Information and Communication*¹⁴ domain and *Musicology and Ethnomusicology*¹⁵ domain and Parisson, a company involved in the development of Telemeta..

The goal of Diadems project¹⁶ is to propose a set of tools for automatic analysis of audio documents which may contain fields recordings: speech, singing voice, instrumental music, technical noises, natural sounds, etc. The innovation is to automatize the indexation of audio recordings directly from the audio signal itself, in order to improve the access and indexation of anthropological archives. Ongoing works consist in implementing advanced classification, segmentation and similarity analysis methods, specially suitable to ethnomusicological sound archives. The aim is also to propose tools to analyse musical components and musical structure.

5.1 The method of a new interdisciplinary research

In this research program, groups from different backgrounds are working together to specify the automatic analysis tools : IT developers, humanities researchers (anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, ethnolinguists) , and specialists on speech and Music Information Retrieval (MIR) . The first challenge was to initiate a common interest and a mutual understanding. In this process, DIADEMS gave us the opportunity to improve our understanding on the link between the semantics and acoustics of voice production. As a preliminary work we attempted to define vocal categories with a particular interest for liminal oral productions. At the border between speech and song, utterances such as psalmody or recitation are at the center of an old debate in ethnomusicology¹⁷. Gathering specialists from various fields, Diadems project goes well beyond the usual disciplinary boundaries. Our aim, through the study of a large range of audio compo-

nents (pitch range, syllabic flow, metric, polyphonic and so on) is to define and characterize the variability of vocal productions, keeping in mind the semantic aspects. By doing so, we wish to overcross the traditional separation in academic studies between sounds and semantics and to propose combined analytical tools for the study of vocal production¹⁸.

The study follow three steps :

1. The development of tools and selection of a representative corpus for each tool,
2. The evaluation of the proposed automatic analysis, in addition to the man-led (human) evaluations carried on the corpus selected,
3. The development of a visual interface with an ergonomic access and import of the results in the database.

5.2 Automatic Analysis of ethnomusicological sound archives

The goal of Diadems project (adresse web) is to develop computer tools to automatically index the recording content directly from the audio signal to improve the access and indexation of this vast ethnomusicological archive. The innovation of this project is to automatize the indexation of the audio recordings directly from their content, from the recorded sound itself. Ongoing works consist in implementing advanced classification, indexation, segmentation and similarity analysis methods dedicated to ethnomusicological sound archives. numerous ethnomusicological recordings contain speech and other types of sounds that we categorized as sounds from the environment (such as rain, insect or animal sounds, engine noise, ...) and sounds generated by the recording (such as sound produced by the wind in the microphone or sounds resulting from the defect of the recording medium). Besides music analysis, such automatic tools also deal with speech and other types of sounds classification and segmentation to enable a most exhaustive annotation of the audio materials. Automatic analysis of ethnomusicological sound archives is considered as a challenging task. Field recordings generally contain more sound sources, noise, and recording artefacts than those obtained in studio conditions. Automatic analysis of these recordings requires methods having a stronger robustness. Preliminary Implementations of speech detection models, and speaker diarisation methods, based on [2] have been integrated to timeside. While these models are well suited to radio-news recordings, the current developpement tasks consist to adapt these methods to the particular case of ethnographic archives.

In the context of this project, both researchers from Ethnomusicological, Speech and Music Information Retrieval communities are working together to specify the tasks to be addressed by automatic analysis tools.

5.3 The tools for assisting indexation and annotation of audio documents

At first, a primary component annotation in Speech, Music and Singing Voice is consolidated. Speech and music detection is generally studied in rather different contexts –

¹⁴IRIT(Institute of research in computing science of Toulouse), LABRI(Bordeaux laboratory of research in computer science), LIMSI(Laboratory of computing and mechanics for engineering sciences), LAM (String instruments - Acoustic - Music, Institute of Jean Le Rond d'Alembert)

¹⁵LESC (Laboratory of Ethnology and Comparative Sociology), MNHM (National Museum of Natural History)

¹⁶<http://www.irit.fr/recherches/SAMOVA/DIADEMS/en/welcome/>

¹⁷A colloquium on liminal utterances between speech and song will be organised by the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) in May 2015 and hosted by the Centre of research in Ethnomusicology (CREM). A round table will be dedicated to the presentation of the main results and findings of the ANR project Diadems

¹⁸As an example, research will be conducted on the recognition of "icons of crying" in lamented utterances. As defined by Urban in [15], "icons of crying" include cry break, voice inhalation, creaky voice and falsetto vowels.

Figure 4: Detection of spoken voices in a song

usually broadcast data. The diversity of available recordings implies the introduction of new acoustic features and a priori knowledge coming from content descriptions. Singing voice detection is emerging and a genuine research effort is needed. Exploiting the complementarity of the three approaches – speech, music, singing voice – will provide robust means to detect other components, such as speech, speech over music, overlap speech, instrumental music, a cappella voice, singing voice with music, etc.

Analysis of recordings sessions.

- Detection of start and stop of the magnetic recorder
- Detection of start and stop of the mechanic recorder
- Detection of start and stop of the digital recorder

Analysis of speech and singing voice segments.

- Speech detection in a recording with music and speech alternation
- Speech detection in a recording with one speaker and group of speaker
- Speech detection in a recording with speaker and music mixed
- Segmentation in speaker turns for speech or singing voice
- Analysis of the syllabic flow and the prosody of the speech in a ritual context
- Detection of speakers overlap
- Detection of other categories of speaking voice: recitation, told, psalmody, back channel...

Analysis of music segments.

DIADEMS wishes to provide useful tools for musical analysis musicologists and music teachers:

- Detection of instrumental music
- Analysis of musical information (tonal, metric and rhythmic features)
- Musical excerpts characterisation using similarity measures (melody, harmony, rhythm,)
- Navigation inside a document using a structural analysis (chorus localisation, musical pattern replications)
- Musical instrument family recognition

Figure 5: Detection solo and duo parts

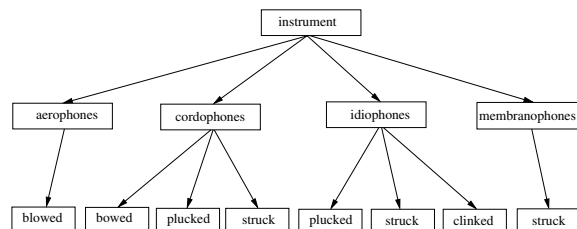


Figure 6: Musical instrument families

5.4 Firsts results

Some tools implemented are being evaluated by ethnomusicologist and ethnolinguists and we have already interesting results:

- Sessions recordings
- Speech recognition
- Singing voice recognition

The tools implemented not only detect the four musical instrument families (cordophones, aerophones, idiophones, membranophones), but also refine subdivisions related to the playing techniques, identifying whether each instrument is blowed, bowed, plucked, struck or clinked.

The robustness of all these processing are assessed using criteria defined by the final users: teachers, students, researchers or musicians. Annotation tools, as well as the provided annotations, will be integrated in the digitalized database. Results visualised thanks to the Telemeta platform will be evaluated by the humanities community involved, through a collaborative work on line. One of the issues is to develop tools to generate results on line with the server processor, according to the capacities of the internet navigators. An other challenge is to manage the workflow, according to the users' expectations about their annotations. The validated tools will be integrated with a new design in the platform Telemeta.

5.5 Automatic segmentation

- Speech segmentation, with 2 features: 4 Hz modulation energy and entropy modulation. Speech signal has a characteristic energy modulation peak around the 4 Hertz syllabic rate [13]. In order to model this property, the signal is filtered with a FIR band pass filter, centred on 4 Hertz. Entropy modulation is dedicated to identify speech from music [10]. We first evaluate the signal entropy ($H = \sum_{i=1}^k -p_i \log_2 p_i$, with p_i =proba. of event i). This measure is used to compute the entropy modulation on one segment. Entropy modulation is higher for speech than for music.
- Music segmentation, with 2 features based in segmentation algorithm. This segmentation is provided by the Forward-Backward Divergence algorithm, which is based on a statistical study of the acoustic signal [1]. Assuming that speech signal is described by a string of quasi-stationary units, each one is characterized by an

Auto Regressive (AR) Gaussian model. The method consists in performing a detection of changes in AR models. The speech signal is composed of alternate periods of transient and steady parts (steady parts are mainly vowels). Meanwhile, music is more constant, that is to say the number of changes (segments) will be greater for speech than for music. To estimate this feature, we compute the number of segments on one second of signal. The segments given by the segmentation algorithm are generally longer for music than for speech. We have decided to model the segment duration by a Gaussian Inverse law (Wald law).

- Monophony / Polyphony segmentation. A "monophonic" sound is defined as one note played at a time (either played by an instrument or sung by a singer), while a "polyphonic" sound is defined as several notes played simultaneously. The parameters extracted from the signal come from the YIN algorithm, a well known pitch estimator [5]. This estimator gives a value which can be interpreted as the inverse of a confidence indicator: the lower the value is, the more reliable the estimated pitch is. Considering that when there is one note, the estimated pitch is reliable, and that when there is several notes, the estimated pitch is not, we take as parameters the short term mean and the short term variance of this "confidence indicator". The bivariate distribution of these two parameters is then modelled using Weibull bivariate distributions [8].

6. CONCLUSION

The Telemeta open-source framework provides the researchers in musicology with a new platform to efficiently distribute, share and work on their research materials. The platform has been deployed since 2011 to manage the *Sound archives of the CNRS - Musée de l'Homme* which is the most important european collection of ethnomusicological resources. Furthermore, this platform is offered automatic music analysis capabilities through an external component, TimeSide that provides a flexible computational analysis engine together with web serialization and visualization capabilities. As an open-source framework TimeSide could be an appropriate platform for researchers in computational ethnomusicology to develop and evaluate their algorithms Further works on the user interface will enhance the visualization experience with time and frequency zooming capabilities and will thus improve the accuracy and the quality of time-segment base annotations.

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