

Keynote Talk 2

The Promise of Music Information Retrieval: Are we there yet?

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Abstract

In 1988, I needed to find some easy-to-play music for an upcoming flute performance exam. As a famously mediocre flute player, I was more than a little desperate to find something that would require the least amount of rehearsal time (and talent) to perform. I had previously played a baroque piece in the key of C that just might fit the bill. After too many hours of searching that included innumerable consultations with infinitely patient music librarians and fellow music students, we finally determined that the work in question was Bach's Flute Sonata in C, BWV 1033. This real-world use case inspired me to ask: "Why is it so difficult to identify, and then locate, a rather famous piece of music that I had actually played before?" In this talk, I reflect on just how far music information retrieval research (MIR) has come in the intervening 27 years in making access to music resources quick and simple. As I expound on my personal journey as an MIR researcher, I will note some of the twists in the road that I have surprised me. I will also offer up some commentary on lesser-travelled paths that we as community should explore.

Biography

J. Stephen Downie is the Associate Dean for Research and a Professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Downie is the Illinois Co-Director of the HathiTrust Research Center (HTRC). He is also Director of the International Music Information Retrieval Systems Evaluation Laboratory (IMIRSEL) and founder and ongoing director of the Music Information Retrieval Evaluation eXchange (MIREX). Stephen Downie was the Principal Investigator on the Networked Environment for Music Analysis (NEMA) project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Furthermore, he is Co-PI on the Structural Analysis of Large Amounts of Music Information (SALAMI) project, jointly funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the UK's Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Stephen Downie has been very active in the establishment of the Music Information Retrieval (MIR) community through his ongoing work with the International Society for Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR) conferences. He was ISMIR's founding President and now serves on the ISMIR board. Professor Downie holds a BA (Music Theory and Composition) along with a Master's and a PhD in Library and Information Science, all earned at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.