

IAML 2006

Are you interactive? Enhancing access to music.

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Abstract

Over the last ten years FNB have been active in several European music projects with a special focus on accessibility issues. These projects have covered a range of topics; from access to catalogues and archives (HARMONICA); through music encoding issues (CANTATE); to specific solutions for visually impaired people (WEDELMUSIC, MIRACLE, PLAY, CONTRAPUNCTUS). People with visual impairments have very specific needs when it comes to accessing music scores and several projects have been set up on a European level to try to meet these needs, with varying degrees of success.

As accessibility moves closer to general usability, more attention is being paid to the lessons we can learn from the accessibility domain when it comes to enhancing general user interaction with musical content. In particular, this is seen in the work of the Interactive Music Network and the ad hoc MPEG group on Symbolic Music Representation, which seeks to embed music scores within the MPEG standard for the first time. This convergence of interests is also mirrored in the general publishing world, which is now trying to mainstream accessibility components in the content production process itself. In other words, if you can structure your digital information in a sophisticated manner, everyone, regardless of their impairments, can use that content. And in this way a more sophisticated user interaction with the content is possible.

By way of illustration, the recently established i-Maestro project will be presented. i-Maestro explores novel solutions for music training in both theory and performance, in order to develop interactive multimedia environments for technology enhanced music education. It builds on recent innovations from the development of computer and information technologies, and exploits new pedagogical paradigms with co-operative and interactive self-learning environments, gesture interfaces, and augmented instruments.