

Musings on the Importance of Harnessing the Power of the Internet to Improve Access to Soundtracks

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In the last century, information creation has exploded; more books, newspapers, magazines than ever before; radio shows, recorded music, movies, TV shows, continuous live news, user generated web content, 3D, virtual reality, games, hybrid media types mixing genres and recycling older data, and the list goes on and on. With the digital revolution, this phenomenon of information creation, mixing, recycling, and sharing is ever expanding. Because of the power of the Internet, it has never been so easy to create, save, and share information that will seemingly last forever.

The major engines that engender such proliferation of digital content on the Internet are the emerging digital technologies that thrive from: volume, variety, velocity, value, and veracity, all of which converge to generate big data.

This proliferation of information, created or digitized each day, must be subjected to security procedures to ensure its authenticity, integrity, and, more importantly, its accessibility as it flows into archives.¹

The challenge to capture and describe, in a standard and efficient way, all relevant material in this sea of available digital information has never been so great. The multimedia nature of cinema and new media forms, which reuse older content, only adds to the complexity of the already daunting task. For example, cross-referencing exhaustively the use of a historical musical piece in film and TV should be easy to do but the data is often unorganized or unavailable. The archivist or researcher finds themselves digging deep in user generated content databases such as IMDB, Wikipedia, and others² for information, or even in some commercial ventures such as Spotify.

Archiving venues could greatly benefit from harnessing the power of the web to better organize and to categorize this flow of data as other fields have done. In astronomy, for example, big data has also become a challenge. Astronomers now receive many more images from the cosmos than they can study. To address this onslaught of images, astronomers have shared these images with the world, and now a great community of enthusiasts of the stars has emerged to assist in the classification of stars/galaxies in the same way one might contribute to Wikipedia. This is a great example of the successes of crowdsourcing. Archiving venues can learn from these experiments. Inserting existing standards for classification, metadata, and cross-referencing³, archives could then invite users to assist with ongoing description of the immense caches of digital content amassing in all corners of the archive. This collaborative and collective approach may be the only way we can address our growing collections in this age of constant live data creation.

1 Niederhäuser, Yves. (2017). L'archivage numérique des films et vidéos: fondements et orientations. http://memoriav.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Empfehlungen_Digitale-Archivierung_Version1.1_FR.pdf

2 For example, see the lists here in Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:Search&search=movie+database&fulltext=1&profile=default&searchToken=d0pv35nimbfko7iph7n387tj4>; and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_online_music_databases.

3 For example, see this resource regarding digital curation metadata standards : <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/briefing-papers/standards-watch-papers/using-metadata-standards>. Additionally, see Lyons and Van Malssen's work on Bibframe metadata standards for audiovisual materials here : <https://www.loc.gov/bibframe/docs/pdf/bf-avtechstudy-01-04-2016.pdf>.

From the author's perspectives, soundtrack research remains specifically difficult due to the phenomenal growth and production of TV series and new films. In the case of a film such as *Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 2*, the soundtrack gives new life to music of the 70s, such as Blue Swede's "Hooked on a Feeling," and Aliotta Haynes Jeremiah's "Lake Shore Drive." Today, it is rare to know the all the music in a soundtrack unless it was created by a well-known composer, such as Hans Zimmer. The adoption of a metadata scheme that links songs and composers to soundtracks would save valuable time and make research faster and more relevant.

The adoption of five simple research criteria data elements could serve to aid the archivist's work, especially if crowdsourced help can be acquired: name of production company; date of publication; title of TV series or film; soundtrack listing (song titles, artists); soundtrack producer.

This work will require collaboration between archivists, computer scientists, and the public, while respecting national and international legal frameworks to preserve human history and the memory of the world. Thanks to the evolution of digital information, it will be possible, working smarter and in collaboration with the public, to preserve a tsunami of high definition audiovisual content.