The European Music Navigator:
To Build Bridges Between Local, National and Global Cultures
Using the Ontology Based Search Technology Melvil™

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1. Introduction

There are millions of web sites, thousands of them deal with music. The project European Music Navigator (EMN) aims to build a destination site covering information on the European musical life. The EMN is implemented by the international umbrella organization IAMIC (International Association of Music Information Centres), under the project leadership of mica – music information center austria and is supported by the European Union’s funding program Culture 2000.

On their own, cultural organizations are often unable to tackle the monetary and informational necessities arising from the strife for attention and technical equipment in today's flow of information. The EMN project approaches the problem from this very perspective: 80% of the market-share of the revenue-driven part of the musical field is divided only between 4 global players. It has become increasingly difficult for artists to address new audiences for new works. Therefore, it is important to create communication-structures for those within the musical field which are strongly devoted to new works and new ways of creativity.

2. The European Music Navigator (EMN)

The content basis of the European Music Navigator project is the comprehensive documentation of musical activity that has been gathered by the members of the IAMIC and which is updated continuously. The project group connects this existing networking to other multinational umbrella organizations such as the European Music Council (EMC), the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM), the International Music Centre (IMC), and the European Festival Association (EFA). The participating group represents only the status quo and is not meant to be the final member situation – true to the idea of a "network of networks", the number of participating institutions will increase during the three-year implementation phase. The European Music Navigator is actively inviting new cooperation partners.

3. Using the Ontology Based Search Technology Melvil for the EMN

Melvil™ by Vienna-based uma Information Technology AG is a knowledge retrieval system, which currently undergoes an EU funded project trial. It helps represent the collective knowledge of a specific field or organization and makes it accessible as a whole.

Results are dynamically displayed in a web-based 3-D environment and empower the user to navigate visually through meta- and detail-information spaces. Using Melvil's ontology, a hierarchically structured semantic net of terms, the user is guided through unfamiliar knowledge areas. The know-how within the IAMIC network will guarantee the development of a fully satisfying music ontology. A semantic net consists of interrelated concepts, which are a combination of specific "terms" and matching "term patterns", such as synonyms and various spellings, in one or more languages. The musical dictionary is full of synonyms and variations for one and the same term.

Melvil™ provides users with several dynamic data filtering tools, that help screening results by parameters including age, length, domain or top-level-domain. Additional functions such as Melvil's concept weight tool enable the user to give certain concepts more "weight" than others. In Melvil's meta-analysis space one navigates visually through large groups of documents, displayed as graphical, color-coded 3D objects, containing different combinations of the concepts included in the original query. Dynamic data filtering helps to analyze a set of results, before entering melvil's detail-analysis space to focus on a specific group of documents, all containing the same combination of concepts. To examine one document in detail, the user simply clicks on the corresponding graphical object and a new browser window, containing this document is being opened.