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Dear Prof. Zukoski

I am a Professor of Computing and Dean of the Faculty of Computing and Mathematical Sciences here at Dublin City University. For some years I have led a small research team which has been investigating techniques for melody retrieval from large archives of digital music information. This challenge is the fundamental research issue dominating our field and despite the investigation that the problem is attracting throughout the world, there remains much progress to be made before we can claim that we can perform effective and efficient music retrieval from large-sized collections of music.

I am familiar with recent developments which sees an offer to make the entire catalogue of music from HNH Hong Kong International available for research and evaluation purposes to the music IR research community. Should this happen, and I dearly hope it does, then this would represent the largest single contribution to advancing the field of music information retrieval. Let me draw a parallel with a similar initiative from over a decade ago.

For 11 years, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), part of the US Department of Commerce, has been running the series of TREC conferences. TREC (Text REtrieval Conference) has sought to gather together large collections of text, spoken audio, web and video information with a view to supporting research into information retrieval tasks on that data. TREC has provided an infrastructure and a comparative evaluation for information retrieval tasks which I believe has led to a doubling of the level of effectiveness of information retrieval on text and similar progress is being made on other media. Several formal scientific experiments have shown this doubling of the level of effectiveness of information retrieval on text over the last decade,

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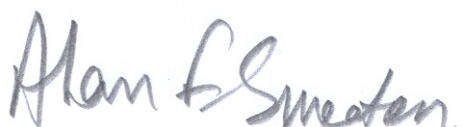
helped in no small measure because of the availability of the TREC collections and evaluation infrastructure.

I have been a supporter and active participant in TREC activities since its inception and as an active researcher in the field of information retrieval I am convinced that the TREC initiative is the largest single ingredient which has progressed the field of information retrieval.

The field of music information retrieval is one which is bereft of a large, easily accessible collection of music on which researchers, such as those in my own group, can develop and test music information retrieval tasks in a controlled, scientific environment. If significant advancements in music IR are to be realized, then a large-scale standard collection is an imperative. A project such as the one under development by Dr. Downie will also create opportunities for meaningful international collaborations. For example, TREC participation now has more non-US organisations than US-based, and has a significant involvement from commercial, as well as university and other research organisations. A project such as the one being mooted here, has the potential to galvanise the international research community into a focussed project, just has been done with TREC.

In summary, I wish to add my voice to the list of supporters of this project. I urge the University of Illinois and the National Center for Supercomputing Applications to fund Dr. Downie's initiative and I believe that if it goes ahead it will make a huge impact on our area. I look forward to a positive outcome.

Yours Sincerely,



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