

Professor Charles F. Zukoski  
Vice Chancellor for Research  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
420 Swanlund Administration Building, MC-304  
601 East John Street  
Champaign, Illinois 61820

1 November 2002

Dear Professor Zukoski,

As the project coordinator of OMRAS (Online Music Recognition And Searching) and as a member of the ISMIR Steering Committee (Papers and Posters Chair, ISMIR 2002), I am writing to you in support of Professor Stephen Downie's proposal for "Creation of a Music Information Retrieval (MIR) Development and Testing Database," to be carried out initially at NCSA.

OMRAS is an international collaborative project funded jointly by the NSF-led Digital Libraries Initiative in the US and by the Joint Information Systems Committee in the UK. It commenced in 1999 as a partnership between King's College, London (Departments of Music, Electronic Engineering and Computer Science) and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval, Department of Computer Science). The amount of combined funding for the project falls not far short of \$1m. At the present time, just at the end of our three-year initial funding period, OMRAS now also involves Queen Mary, University of London (Department of Electronic Engineering) and City University, London (Department of Computing) in the UK, and Indiana University (School of Music) in the US.

OMRAS has the basic goal of allowing user-friendly content-based access to digital collections of music in various formats, from 'raw' audio recordings to score-based notation encodings. The project proposal (see <http://www.omras.org>) recognised that this required a good deal of original research and the development of novel techniques to achieve, and an essential feature of the work is the evaluation of these techniques in comparison with other systems. While we have been able to carry out some testing on comparatively small collections of non-copyright or rights-restricted materials, we have always been limited by their small size in comparison to 'real-world' collections such as those held by recording companies or public libraries. We see the provision of large-scale test collections as an essential requirement for the advancement of the MIR discipline, and warmly welcome Professor Downie's initiative.

The three highly successful ISMIR conferences (held in Plymouth, Mass, Bloomington, Indiana and Paris, France) to a large extent arose out of the synergy between OMRAS and Professor Downie's own important work in the MIR field. A systematic approach to the various aspects of MIR evaluation has been one of his most important contributions over several years, and he has the full support of the ISMIR community in this initiative.

It is clear that NCSA is provided with all the necessary technical and infrastructural means to offer a really vital resource for the future development of high-quality MIR

tools for a wide range of academic, commercial and educational applications. We very much hope you will be able to make this a reality.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Crawford, OMRAS Project Coordinator, ISMIR Steering Committee Member

Centre for Computational Creativity  
Department of Computing  
City University  
Northampton Square  
London EC1V 0HB  
United Kingdom