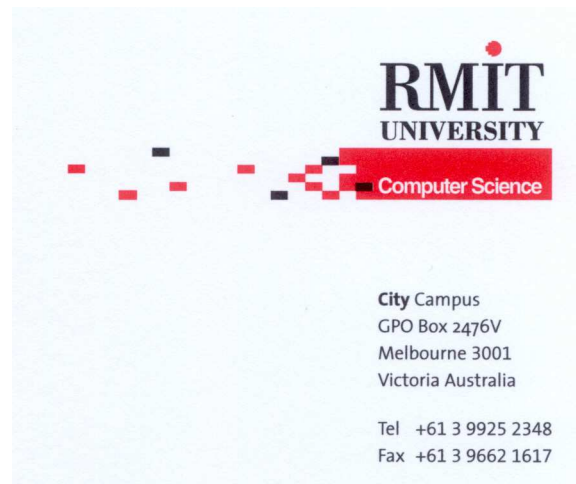


November 4, 2002

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



Dear Professor Zukoski,

I am delighted to write this letter in support of Dr Stephen Downie's proposal for "Creation of a Music Information Retrieval (MIR) Development and Testing Database".

While I am relatively new to the field of music information retrieval, I have played a significant role in the field of image and multimedia watermarking, and so I am aware of the security issues surrounding the housing of sampled data that is subject to copyright. The fact of HNH Hong Kong International and other digital music vendors being willing to contribute their 'crown jewels' to a venture such as this bespeaks a significant amount of trust on their behalf in your institution and in particular in Dr Downie's proposal.

Such opportunities to provide a statistically significant volume for data analysis of real data are rare and I would strongly encourage efforts to make such data available to the MIR community.

This initiative has the potential to open up many other lines of research, not only in MIR, as many other letters of support will undoubtedly have pointed out to you, but also in the secure and high-volume use of sampled data in general.

For example, at the School of Computer Science and Information Technology at RMIT University, in Melbourne Australia, we have a highly successful group involved in research in data engineering and search engine design. This research incorporates not only text queries, but also queries using a wide variety of digital formats, with sound and music queries being one of our more recent additions.

Our search engine group conducts research into the large-scale storage and access of information. Research topics include database compression, genetic databases, indexing high-dimensional data, hashing for large datasets, and pattern matching. In fact, the techniques developed by this group have also been adopted for applications such as the major Web search engines.

The expressed need for standardised image and video testbeds were also felt (and still are!) in the area of multimedia watermarking, but in this case, private corporations have made arrangements to obtain their own private testbeds. The difference is that these are not shared, nor are they always publicly available, and the effectiveness of the algorithms used by the various corporations is not often mutually comparable on the same dataset. In a research context such a situation is totally unacceptable.

In any discipline, it is vital that standard testbeds and methodologies be established for cross-comparison of the results of new research. I feel it is a mark of maturity in any new field when the need for such a system or methodology is felt strongly enough that many disparate researchers will collaborate to make it come about, and I wholeheartedly supports such moves, and encourage you to do the same.

Yours Sincerely,

Ron van Schyndel, PhD  
Lecturer, MACM, MIEEE