
Summary of the Research Proposal

Music Information-Seeking Behaviour of Non-Music Experts

In spite of the exponential growth of sound recordings in digital format and the significant amount of research on music information systems, very little attention has been paid to user aspects. Moreover, most user studies carried out in that domain have concentrated on the use of specific systems rather than on general information-seeking behaviour. As stated by Cunningham, this type of studies tells us what users do but it does not give indication of what their perceptions, their preferences, and the reasons behind their behaviour are, nor does it provide information on the relevance of the results/responses obtained (2002: 17). As for the very few published qualitative user studies (Bainbridge, Cunningham & Downie 2003; Cunningham, Reeves & Britland 2003; Kim & Belkin 2002; Downie & Cunningham 2002), the results obtained suggest that this research topic worth further investigation.

Drawing on the sense-making theory developed by Dervin from 1972 to now, my research will aim at providing deep insights into behaviour of users seeking for musical recordings for recreational purposes, and its implications for system design. More specifically, I will try to answer the following research questions:

1. What barriers do users face?
2. What strategies do they use to bridge the “gap” (as defined by Dervin) between the initial situation and the desired situation?
3. What kind of help would they like to get from a music information system?

To do so, I will conduct in-depth interviews with non-music experts using the micro-moment time-line method proposed by Dervin.

On the theoretical point of view, my research will help increasing our knowledge of music information behaviour. On the practical point of view, a deeper understanding of information behaviour should lead to systems that better meet user needs, for the benefit of end-users.

Bibliography

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