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The "musicSpace" Project: Orchestrating Musicological Metadata

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In their research, musicologists consult a wide variety of heterogeneous data sources, many of which are now available online. However, the segregation of online data into numerous discrete repositories, inadequate metadata, insufficient data/search granularity, and poor search UIs prevent researchers from realising the full potential of this data revolution. Specifically, research questions requiring advanced cross-source filtering on metadata fields and the running of complex multipart search queries have to date been effectively intractable. Using cutting-edge Semantic Web and Web 2.0 technologies, the "musicSpace" project is enabling such research questions by integrating access to leading musicological data sources via a customised version of the "mSpace" faceted browser, and by enriching the metadata of our data providers. A large-scale trial of the musicSpace browser will begin in autumn 2009, which will enable us to evaluate the efficacy of our interface in comparison to currently deployed solutions. In this paper we describe the technologies behind musicSpace, give real-world examples of the musicological research questions that musicSpace has enabled, and give a preliminary report on our large-scale trial.

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