

AN INTERACTIVE MULTIMEDIA MUSIC REPOSITORY OVER THE INTERNET

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the Interactive Multimedia Music Repository project is to create a Malaysian music web site, into which any Internet user may surf to discover the kinds of music found in the country. The repository serves as a source of Malaysian musical reference and provides formal distance learning courses conducted on the same subject through the Internet. The multimedia information content implicit in such an application needs to be properly designed, implemented and managed for remote multimedia database access. The paper presents the criteria designed to guide the construction of the music repository database.

KEYWORDS: Internet; Music; Music repository; Distance learning; Database; World Wide Web; Malaysian music.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet offers online access to information in rich formatted textual, visual and audio form from almost any location globally and is not bounded by time. Although the evolving Internet standards are still being defined, the demand for access is enormous (Salvail, 1996; Miller 1996). The information mix, graphically attractive presentation and the numerous Internet utility tools available make it the most inexpensive source of fast access to multimedia information. The Internet thus is a suitable *channel* for the collection, catalogue, storage and retrieval of musical references.

The IBM Digital Library (IBM, 1996) is a digital asset management system that provides end-to-end solutions for content owners to create or transform multimedia assets into digital form, with the capability to distribute multimedia content, search and access information, manage multimedia databases of any scale, and protect intellectual property. At the core of the library infrastructure are library search servers which manage catalog information and provide secured access to the objects held in the collection. The client application receives direct access to the information requested from the collection regardless of where the data is stored.

Ang, M; Tee, E.R.; Abu Talib O; Abd Azim A G.

Indiana University's School of Music Variations project (IBM, 1996) is a digital library project which focuses on the delivery of high fidelity audio over a local network, using a web browser interface on desktop personal computers to access the music library. Students and faculty are able to log on, look up and listen to reserve lists that are assigned in their coursework. The Variations project is being created on a network designed for real-time delivery of multimedia that incorporates asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) technology, in which workstation of a client or a small group has its own dedicated network connection. With ATM, every client is ensured of access to the media on the server without interruption.

Drawing from the above project, the proposed web site is being developed to provide open access to Malaysian music resources and references. Users may register for formal distance learning courses on Malaysian music using the Internet. The courses to be conducted may provide a source of income to self-sustain the operation of the Internet server. This project is in line with the aspiration of the Malaysian government to promote the use of the Internet through the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) initiative, and ensure the promotion of Malaysian culture and heritage, and the delivery of affordable education to the masses (Kramer, 1992). This paper summarises the criteria applied in developing the music repository database.

INTRODUCTION TO MALAYSIAN MUSIC

Many researchers have published material on music in Malaysia (Tan, 1995; Matusky, 1994; Mohd Ghouse, 1992; Ku Zam Zam, 1995), yet what exactly constitutes "Malaysian" music is yet to be defined and a comprehensive overview of all types of music prevalent in the country is still lacking. Perhaps, this is because Malaysian music is still in a state of evolution. The definition of Malaysian music has been proposed (Ang, 1997) and the role of music in nation building has been discussed (Ang, 1996).

THE INTERNET APPLICATION

The present development of the music repository database, includes observation on the (i) criteria for selection, (ii) technology trends of the Internet in terms of user demand and availability of new related products, and (iii) support for satisfactory pedagogic requirements. The criteria for the client side and administration of the music repository itself are summarised and presented in brief (Swank, 1996; Wong, 1996; Date, 1990).

The choice of database is evaluated in terms of:

- *material* delivery, maintenance and management requirements;
- *material* data type, i.e. types of files, format, combinations thereof;
- data meta description and maintenance;

Interactive Multimedia Music Repository over the Internet

- database language, and its extension capabilities;
 - server side support applications, e.g. CGI scripts, *Java applets* library;
 - client side downloadable or existing support applications, e.g. media player, standards and availability;
 - data structural consistency to standards that still provide an upgradable or migratory path when necessary;
 - database management features, e.g. statistical reports, user lockout;
 - data backup and disaster recovery options (which includes migratory ease);
 - cost of implementation, that includes (especially) license to use and use limitations, e.g. maximum number of user connections per annum; and
 - cost to users/consumers.
- modularity, e.g. any change of media file format is transparent to the user;
 - meta information (help and assistance features); and
 - secured course evaluation.

The design of the server and client applications need to take into account the impending switch to the new IP address format, i.e. from IPV4 to IPV6 (Bradner, 1995).

The course administration is to include:

- support for submission or inclusion of new Malaysian musical materials, course topics and related mixed media files;
 - maintenance of course administrators, e.g. particulars and access for lecturers, examiners;
 - quality assurance and verification, even remotely for external auditors / moderators;
 - maintenance ease of course evaluation questions;
 - information on course modules, and relation of course modules;
 - course registration and course progression maintenance for users;
 - management information, e.g. enrollment, access, etc;
 - possible technical support for registered users (e.g. via email) requiring support - information database; and
 - possible integration with existing administrative/management systems (e.g. data or file transfer of registered course user particulars).
- For the client side or to the user, the following criteria are used in designing the application:
- remote access, using standard TCP/IP protocols, e.g. http;
 - minimal fuss with foreign format types, i.e. the application will help the browser to download or use the correct program to work with media files;
 - categorical access for the casual web browser, registered course user and privileged users;
 - restricted (graded) access to higher course levels, including bookmarking features;
 - course registration and course progression features, e.g. reminder for submission of assignment, payment of fees for Internet;

The overall application design also considers the following in view of the

distributed nature of the Internet. This is to cater to the sharing of the course with other course content providers, i.e. other universities or similar institutions.

DISTRIBUTED INTERNET DATA REPOSITORY

The application will cater to distributed databases through loosely coupled access (e.g. using http and CGI) to extend the course modules, contents and referrals. A means to filter (e.g. hypertext tags) and to reorganise content and media files may be necessary. The management of this design calls for a localised course delivery module which may be tailored to meet local needs.

COOPERATIVE COURSE PROGRAMMING AND DELIVERY

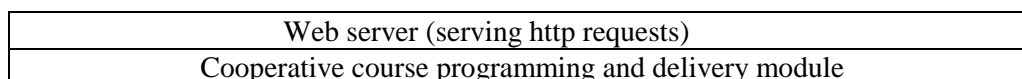
This would be a top level module that will draw data from participating Internet sources and provide a comprehensive course delivery mechanism while maintaining the independent setup of the participating data sources. The module maintains the meta description of the course and logs shared user access to data sources (Figure 1).

Figure 2 shows the system model which consists of the database clusters. These are general components that construct the

Malaysian music web sites. The components are:

- (i) administration database which maintains data pertaining to the operation of the web site which includes data on materials submitted for publication on the Internet;
- (ii) web site users database which maintains registered and guest users;
- (iii) database for logs, e.g. for access counters, errors, utilisation statistics;
- (iv) website databank;
- (v) CGI scripts databank, which includes scripts for data search and invokes server-side which includes (SSI) functions;
- (vi) general help text or meta information database;
- (vii) browser loadable programs databank, e.g which includes compiled Java applets, platform specific media player programs;
- (viii) meta data database which describes component contents of the system and resources for creating /formatting HTML pages;

Figure 1: Diagrammatic view of the *Cooperative course programming and delivery* module



Interactive Multimedia Music Repository over the Internet

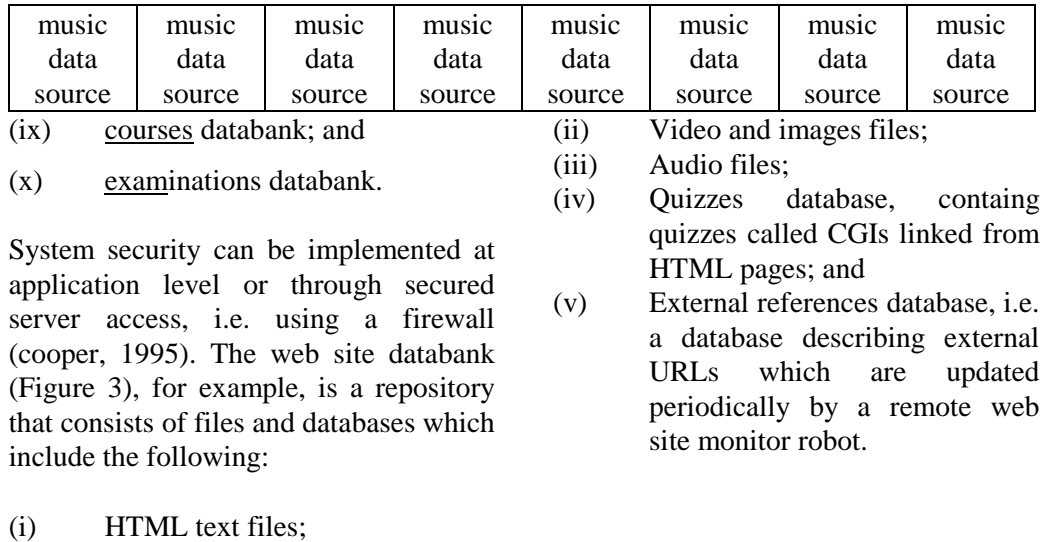


Figure 2: System Model of the Malaysian Music Resources Web Site

Ang, M; Tee, E.R.; Abu Talib O; Abd Azim A G.

Figure 3: Website Databank Components

The various format type files of the web site databank are described in the relevant meta data database. For example, the subject on Asian musical instruments may pull together HTML text, images and audio files found in the web site databank or from other cooperative web sites. The meta data

description of the files include file owner, author, file expiry date, access type, access chargeable code and subject code. A meta data files (Tables 1 and 2) may be accessed by external participating web sites and used to compile a suitable HTML page using CGI script as and when requested by a browser.

Table 1: A Meta Data File Sample Table Describing Asian Musical Instruments

Instrument	Site alive check date	General URL	Image	Sound	Text	Chargeable Access	Cost per full page load
Gong							
kompang							
pipa							
saron							

Table 2: Meta Data Sample Table on Cooperative Course Delivery

Course code	Course owner	Course URL	Course description	CD-ROM address	Site off-line indicato	Chargeable access	Cost per full page
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Interactive Multimedia Music Repository over the Internet

					r		load
	Middlesex						
	UCE						
	UPM						

SUMMARY

This paper has presented the impending project on the development of an Interactive Multimedia Music Repository of Malaysian music resources on the Internet. Brief guidelines as to the criteria for development of the repository database and its supporting applications were presented as reference for similar

projects. The Cooperatrive course programming and delivery approach is a formal method of presenting distributed data, owned by various sources, through retricted access of resource databases. While the distributed Internet repository is an approach to share public domain data through reformatting of HTML text using CGI at the server side before delivery to the client.

Figure 4: Sample Screen Copy of a Music Resource Page Tailored to Local Needs

Ang, M; Tee, E.R.; Abu Talib O; Abd Azim A G.

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Interactive Multimedia Music Repository over the Internet

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