Looking at archival sound: enhancing the listening experience in audio archives

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Overview

- SpokenWeb project
- Research on the scholarly process
- Close listening
- Features that facilitate close listening
Spoken Web

Conceptualizing and Prototyping a Comprehensive Web-based Digital Spoken Word Interface for Literary Research
Scholarly Information Activities & Primitives
Palmer, Teffeau & Pirmann (2009)

- Searching
- Collecting
- Reading
  o Scanning
  o Assessing
  o Re-reading
  o Note-taking
- Writing
- Collaborating
Towards close listening

- Humanists “deeply engaged in source material rely heavily on browsing, collecting, rereading and notetaking.”

- In an audio environment, reading and rereading become listening and relistening.

- The close reading done by humanists expands to include what Charles Bernstein calls “close listening,” a practice of critical engagement with sounded poems.
Poetry and Music Scholars: Affinities

- We can link some of the work of music scholars and literary critics
  - Attentiveness to sounded poetry and sounded music; existence of a written source and a sounded source; versions of works
  - Awareness of performance practice
  - Importance of rhythm, metre, prosody, phrasing
  - Importance of language to both music and poetry
How music scholars listen

- Brown (2002) - Straddling the humanities and social sciences: the research process of music scholars


Previous Work: multimodality of learning & visual features that enhance listening

Looking at archival sound: Enhancing the listening experience in a spoken word archive

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Abstract:

What helps researchers listen in deep and engaged ways to poetry that is delivered on the Web? This paper considers how visual aspects of Web-based archives for poetry recordings can enhance the listening experience for users by providing more context and clarification that can help users better understand and use the recordings. Drawing from studies in a variety of disciplines that demonstrate that much of our learning is multimodal, the SpokenWeb project in Montreal, Canada is using digitized live recordings of a Montreal poetry reading series from 1965-1972 featuring performances by major North American poets to investigate the features that will be the most conducive to scholarly engagement with recorded poetry recitation and performance. Visual features such as tethering audio playback with a written transcript, sound visualization and including videos and images are discussed as means to enhance the listening experience in a digital spoken word archive.

Full Text: HTML
What features might facilitate close listening?

- Tethering audio-playback and written transcript
- Sound visualization
- Annotation
- Playback manipulation
Tethering audio-playback and written transcript: Radiolab
Sound visualization: Soundcloud player
Sound visualization: Mashup Breakdown
Sound visualization & Annotation: Variations Audio Timeliner

Timeline: Chopin, Nocturne in D-Flat Major, Op. 27 no. 2

Annotations:
A: The serenely simple violinistic A theme of this Nocturne hovers gently over a Db pedal and wide left-hand arpeggios.
Sound visualization: Smithsonian Jazz Mixer
Annotation: Soundcloud
Playback manipulation: Myna
Listen to the listener.
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