

## **Information subject gateway Musica**

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When I submitted this paper for the present conference almost one year ago, I supposed I would be able to present a finished, solved and complete result of our project. Unfortunately, it is not quite the case. The gateway, which is to be presented here, is still a work in progress and partially „under construction“. However, finished, solved, complete – these are not quite apt characteristics for the fluid and unstable environment of the online world, which is in the focus of our interest. In this respect, my failure in planning can be seen as something very characteristic, although it cannot, of course, be used as an excuse.

What is a subject gateway? The common definition describes it as internet-based service, providing unified access to a collection of *high quality, evaluated resources in a particular subject discipline*. In one place, users thus find databases, digital libraries and repositories, selected web resources as well as catalogues, through which they can access traditional documents. A significant feature of a subject gateway is the selection of resources, with respect to the focus of the gateway and the quality, using criteria such as originality or relevance.

In this paper, I would like to introduce the Czech project of the information subject gateway Musica (MUS). First, I am going to speak a little about the background of the project, about the focus and the goals of the gateway and about its limited starting conditions. Then I intend to present the structure of the gateway and services offered to the users, while at the same time pointing out some problems and solutions we chose for them, most of them ensuing from subject-specific features related to music and music documents. Last but not least, I would like to discuss the perspectives of developing the gateway in near future.

The MUS gateway has been created through the collaboration of the National Library of the Czech Republic and the Charles University in Prague, as part of the project of Coordinated Building of Subject Gateways. The aims of the project were, for one thing, to create a methodology for the building of Czech subject gateways, and, for the other, to launch several gateways. Simultaneously with MUS, three other sister

subject gateways have been created, namely a portal for library and information science (KIV), art and architecture (ART) and sciences, technology and engineering (TECH).

All four subject gateways are roofed by the Uniform Information Gateway, the Czech national portal for research information, taking over its technical solution and using the same technologies such as MetaLib, SFX and Plone. The offer of similar tools and familiar environment represent an advantage for users who can thus easily find their way through the system. This is not to say that the gateways are identical – of course they differ not only by the subject resources, but also other by unique features, which brings us to our topic of music and its specifics.

The aim of MUS is to offer unified access to information resources in the fields of music and musicology. The gateway does not strictly focus on musicology, because this field of study is not very wide-ranging in the Czech Republic. The range of the gateway is therefore defined more broadly, although attention is paid to the relevance of the resources for research purposes. The second aspect is regional – priority is given to resources relevant for the study of music in Czech lands and, a more broadly, the Central European region.

The target group of the gateway thus includes musicologists, teachers and students of music, music librarians, publicists writing on music, musicians and anyone interested in quality information on the field of music. Again, the gate is primarily intended for Czech users and for those interested in Czech music. However, as the gateway strives to provide complex services to researchers, it of course comprises sources based elsewhere than the Czech Republic. The ultimate goal of MUS is to help experienced users exploit field information resources fully and to give them the possibility to personalise the MUS Search interface, as well as provide quick orientation and support to any user looking for information on music.

It was clear from the beginning that the starting position of the project is impaired by the limited availability and varying quality of field resources. The majority of Czech musical libraries, for example, have not yet retroconverted their musical collections. The bibliography of Czech musicological publications is issued only in paper print

version. And most significant licensed resources, especially full-text ones, were not available in the Czech Republic, etc. These imperfections impair mainly the possibility of simultaneous searching of resources. A useful tool, which the metasearch engine undoubtedly is, could easily become a confusing barrier for users. They might lose track of what kind of resource they are searching and fail to adjust their search strategy accordingly if their search has been unsuccessful. On the other hand, the gateway is a flexible tool which can promptly react to the growing offer of field electronic resources as well as participate in creating new ones.

What services does the MUS gateway offer? The core of the gateway is the MUS Search – a metasearch engine making possible simultaneous **searching** of databases and catalogues. By means of the SFX link server you can get complementary services for found items, such as links to full text articles, to holding information and to other relevant resources. A significant part of the gateway is the **collection of web resources** selected with respect to the focus of MUS, which you can not only search, but also browse by means of the **MUS Browse** tool. Registered users can personalise the MUS Search and use other features of My Space in MetaLiB like e-Shelf etc. And finally, with respect to the above-mentioned resource limitations, we are working on a section called Not Found?, which provides support in case of unsuccessful search.

Let us have a more detailed look at the services, starting with metasearch. We have decided to structure the menu by the type of document, as you can see in the QuickSearch module in MUS Search. There are groups of sources called QuickSets for Music Literature, Sheet Music, Sound Recordings and Web Resources. This is for the following reasons: 1) special documents like sheet music and sound recordings are specific for music, 2) Even before the search, users usually know whether they are looking for a book, article, sheet music or recording. Besides, there is not one single resource that would sufficiently cover the Czech production of sheet music and recordings. Both the combination of catalogues and the possibility of limiting the search by the type of document is thus a useful feature here. However, MetaLib does not yet offer filtering search results by the type of document. We solved this problem

by attaching several separate sub bases of music and sound recordings from the catalogues of selected Czech libraries.

Other possibilities are offered by QuickSet Music Literature. It also comprises sub-bases made from generally aimed resources. These include articles on music from the Czech article bibliography and books on music in NLCR. Both sub-bases have also certain limitations given by their scope. In combination with the German Bibliographie des Musikschritftums and RILM, which is available for registered users of NLCR, they provide a quick overview of music literature.

You must have noticed that in the QuickSearch module we do not offer the possibility to search all available resources. This omission is intentional. We want to make the users – especially the less experienced ones – make decisions and think about what they are looking for and whether they are in the right place. In the near future, however, we plan to enrich the present QuickSearch module by more QuickSets, which are likely to include the option of searching all resources. More experienced users can use the advanced MetaSearch module. It not only provides a broader selection of resources, but also enables to select and combine them in various ways. Registered users can also create and save their own QuickSets as they wish.

Working with the search tool ideally takes place in two steps. After finding a record, the user needs to find the document, and that is what the SFX server is there for. Its typical function is to find out whether the full text of the document is available. I have already mentioned that the number of full-text resources is rather limited, so this potential of the gateway remains presently rather unrealised. The other typical function of SFX, ordering a copy by the delivery service, is also inhibited by an obstacle: in most cases, copies of sheet music and recordings cannot be provided for copyright reasons. That is why the offer of SFX MUS consists of finding copies stored in various libraries, and other services such as searching for information about the author in music encyclopaedias and on the internet. A special feature of SFX is the context offer of services according to the type of document. Unfortunately, the makers of SFX considered music a field too narrow to be included in the knowledge database as the subject category. Also, SFX does not take into account the specifically musical type of documents. The new versions of SFX should, however, support more type of documents than the existing one.

Let us now proceed to another area of the MUS gateway, the collection of web resources. There is a difference between databases and web resources from the viewpoint of collection management. While databases appointed for metasearch are described in reduced form in the knowledge base of MetaLib, other web resources such as web sites or their parts, doc or pdf documents etc. are catalogued in a bibliographic database. Records are hosted by the catalogue of the National library and created under standards valid for other records, i.e. MARC21 format, cataloguing rules AACR2R and the authority files of the National Library. In selecting the resources, we take into account their relevance for the thematic focus of the gateway, content, quality and other criteria. As for Czech resources and resources related to Czech music, we try to process them exhaustively and in depth. Other resources are usually recorded at the level of web sites. Another important criterion is the singularity of the resource. Electronic versions of printed articles or books are not processed anew, but the existing records of printed documents are provided with links to their electronic versions. Another exception are records of articles in Czech e-journals – for the time being there is just one such e-journal in musicology. These records are hosted in the Czech article bibliography.

The collection of web resources can be searched by MUS Search. Another possibility is to search by selected thematic categories of Conspectus by means of MUS Browse, which is yet to be modified and which is for the time being available only in Czech language interface. Records usually include a brief annotation, as you can see in this example of found results for the enquiry for the surname of the Czech composer Jan Dismas Zelenka. From the record you can get directly to the document through a hyperlink included in the record. At the moment the collection comprises several hundred records.

The last part of the gateway which I would like to present briefly is called Not Found? This section is now available only in Czech language. Its first function, necessitated by the limited possibilities of the gateway, is to be a kind of safety net for users who did not find what they were looking for. It includes reference to important resources which cannot be searched through MUS search and, due to their general character, cannot be described adequately in the collection of web resources – such as scanned catalogues of older sheet music. On the other hand, the Not Found? section

is a place where less experienced users or those attending for the first time can get their initial orientation. We are preparing tutorials such as How to find...? (music, information about music sources etc.). A ready sample is the directory How to find music e-journals? containing lists of e-journals.

I began this presentation by stating that the gateway is still under construction. You have noticed a number of obvious imperfections such as the incomplete English language interface. You might want to know what else is missing that should be added in near future. I have already mentioned the expansion of the QuickSearch module in MUS Search. A more significant addition, however, is access to new important resources, for example the adding the catalogue of Bedřich Smetana library, i.e. the music department of the Municipal Library in Prague, which records an outstanding musical collection. Also, a retroconversion of the catalogue of musical prints of the National Library is taking place, including acquisitions up to 1995. The finishing of this project will also represent a significant enhancement in the scope of resources of the MUS gateway. Another valuable resource is the planned electronic directory of musical collections in the Czech Republic, also prepared in the National Library.

Other areas of development of MUS include the addition of digitalised documents. The National Library is developing two digital repositories, Manuscriptorium for older production approx. up to 1800, and Kramerius for more recent funds. So far some digitised music documents, especially manuscripts, had only been included in Manuscriptorium. At present we are starting a selective digitisation of 19<sup>th</sup> century music documents within the Kramerius repository as well. The exact way of presenting these digitised documents via MUS has not yet been decided upon, but the decision is to be made soon.

Finally, in Czech music libraries, there are more and more licensed resources for the area of music. That is why we strive to coordinate the gaining of these resources, inform about their accessibility and try to make them available to registered users through MUS. To give an example, we are currently preparing the import of the Naxos Music library records into the National Library catalogue.

In relation to subject gateways, discussions have taken place as to their sustainability. A number of promising projects have been cancelled, abandoned and conserved. I do not dare to predict the future of the MUS gateway. The project of co-ordinated building of subject gateways ends this year and the running of the gateway is to be financed by the National Library. A certain guarantee lies in the agreement on the technical solution of the gateway, which is to be further maintained in connection with the Uniform Information Gateway and other still planned gateways, which have a chance to apply for grant support.

I would like to end with a question: MUST it be? Is it necessary to create such gateways when there is the wonderful Google and most users with at least minimum experience get the desired information in some way or other? We asked ourselves this question in the initial stages of the project and we keep asking it. One possible answer is carved directly into the MUS gateway. However, the most important answer will be given by our users. That is why I would like to invite you for a visit to MUS.