FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORKS:
THE MULTIMEDIA THESAURUS

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Background

Despite the prevalence of multimedia content in today's world, there remains a paucity of critical language and analytical methods for investigating results of interacting sounds and images. Those working within artistic collaborations are often frustrated by the lack of common vocabulary for describing essential qualities of an existing or imagined sound.

Aims

The aims of the project are to discover, develop, and refine appropriate means for talking with other researchers about sound in multimodal artworks. In particular, the project is being designed to encourage reflection on the ways in which we might classify sounds, with and without accompaniment by still and moving images.

Main Contribution

The paper will report on a feasibility study for the construction of physical and virtual tools to explore our perception of sound and music, particularly in multimedia contexts. The project is designed to encourage reflection on our ways of classifying sounds, by soliciting different axis labels for classification of a vast library of short sounds and images in a (real or virtual) three-dimensional space. These will include musical and visual gestures, textures, narratives, collages, and excerpts from a wide variety of musical genres and moods. A few short examples will be presented.

Implications

The project is expected to accelerate the progress of understanding of our perception of sound and music in multimedia contexts by directing the attention of the "users" to the way in which they think about music, as well as by exploring the commonality of responses. The research tool itself encourages multiple classification systems rather than searching for a single "best" solution, allows for continual refinement of responses, and welcomes collaborative investigation.