

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTEREST

Submitted to KMDI admissions committee, May 2009

INTERDISCIPLINARY BACKGROUND

My interdisciplinary interests can be quickly identified by skimming my resume.

I was first inspired by the open-classroom environment of the CyberARTS Program during my high school years. Our classrooms were either a computer lab or an art studio. The curriculum was structured around team-based projects balanced with individual assignments. Students were expected to be well versed in their ability to apply design principles in their work, adapt at learning new technologies, while respecting the importance of a fine arts foundation. My days often started with life drawing exercises — occasionally with hired models — and ended in the computer labs with my classmates well after most of the student body had left.

Evaluations were not completed on paper. Instead, we were assessed on our ability to present and articulate ideas in formal and casual settings. Learning was often self-initiated as we were required to submit proposals within the scope of a particular assignment. It prepared me very well for my post-secondary education in music history at the University of Toronto, where I took many seminar-based courses along with graduate students that were focused on specific eras in history.

During my first year as a part-time student at the Faculty of Information, I received a well rounded introduction to the socio-political aspect of ICTs, as well as a glimpse into the real life challenges of implementing and managing ICT projects. In particular, Prof. Caidi's course on "*Information and Culture in a Global Context, FIS2125*" afforded me the opportunity to engage in an ICT project: the On-Demand Book Service (odbs.knet.ca). The experience triggered my passion and interest in design, and I began to recognize the role of design in the context of information systems, and information visualization.

RESEARCH INTEREST & SCOPE

My research interest is in exploring the challenges of Information Retrieval (IR), especially from the perspective of interface and experience design. I am particularly interested in domain-specific IR systems — such as music — in the context of digital libraries, online educational tools, research and collaboration tools, to cite a few examples.

I would also like to conduct research in the information seeking behaviour and information needs of specific user groups within the music domain, such as musicologists, teachers, students, and therapists, for the purpose of informing system designers.

As inspired by Bill Buxton, an IR system design concept will be developed, based on the gathered information, in an attempt to visualize tools and functionalities that the domain-specific users find lacking in the existing systems (Buxton, 2007). End users will be invited to be part of the development of the design in order to give relevant feedback. This design or prototype will serve as my final portfolio piece should I successfully enroll in KMDI.

I will be eligible to apply to the thesis options at the Faculty of Information by May 2010, by which time I hope to have narrowed down my research scope as well as identifying a supervisor. In the mean time, I am familiarizing myself with the literature and conferences surrounding IR and MIR (Müller, 2007), as well as potential sources of funding in support of the user studies that I would like to conduct. Becoming familiar with methods of inclusive design and user behaviour research will also be essential in the refinement of my research approach. I would also like to explore the latest research on information visualization — especially in the arts and humanities — and the implications of their development in IR system design.

REASON FOR CHOOSING KMDI

I am excited about the opportunity to apply to KMDI, especially in light of the recent decision to have the institute become a part of my home faculty. I enjoy collaborations that occur between different academic fields and feel strongly that such communities should be fostered in order to learn from one another. Furthermore, I believe that good scholarship happens within a community, and KMDI attracts individuals who seek a community that approaches knowledge media design problem from different perspectives. Learning from each other and sharing what we have learned is what will develop our ever-growing understanding, and lead us closer to developing real life solutions.

KMDI establishes a sense of community amongst students and scholars who share similar interests, and I feel that it can provide me with exactly the kind interdisciplinary support that I seek for my research. Thank you for taking the time to review my design statement. I hope that I will have the opportunity to be a contributing member of the KMDI community, and I look forward to receiving your response.

REFERENCES

Buxton, B. (2007). *Sketching User Experiences: getting the design right and the right design*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

Müller, M. (2007). *Information Retrieval for Music and Motion*. New York: Springer.