

The Games We Play:

Exploring The Impact of ISMIR on Musicology

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We explore the **interaction and exchange of knowledge between musicology and computational music research**. Most contributions from ISMIR rarely appear in musicological venues. We seek possible explanation in the issues of new media, institutional restrictions, and the theoretical restrictions that block the multidisciplinary communication.

1000+ papers
from ISMIR 2012-2021

Do they claim “musicological utility”?
Are they cited or used, and how, by studies
in “musicological” journal / conferences?

claim to some
musicological utility

114
papers

cited 907 times

cited in a
musicological venue

55
papers

cited 143 times

actually used in a further
musicological study

28
papers

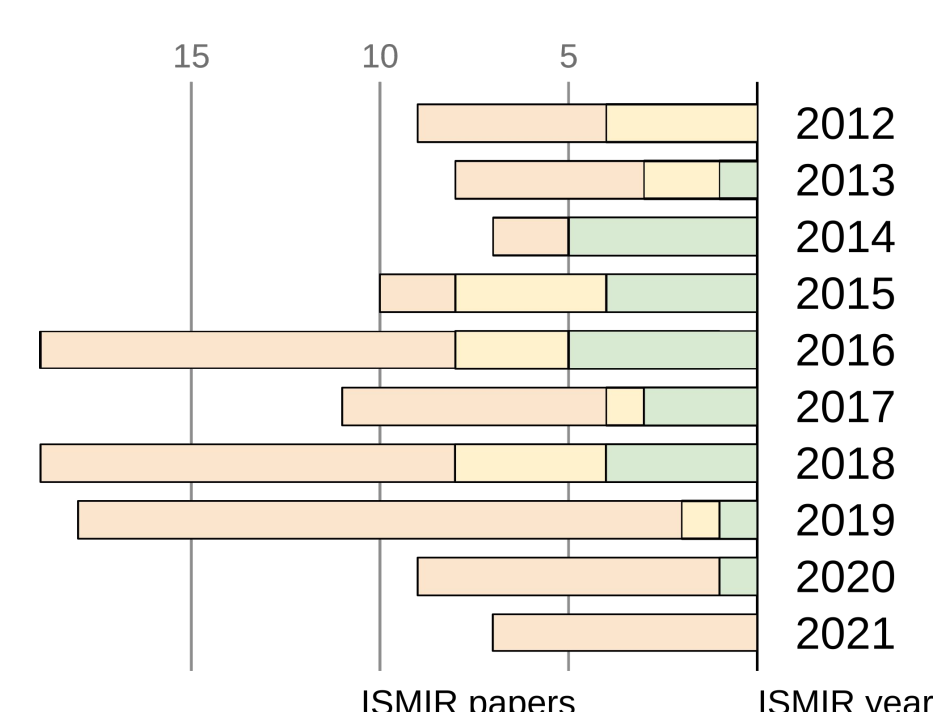
cited and used 51
times

Dataset: 5 papers used 10 times
Methodology: 17 papers used 22 times
Code/Tool: 13 papers used 19 times

“

*ISMIR in itself is a multidisciplinary environment,
however, most of the participants (deriving from
empirical science rather than humanities), already play
by similar rules (or speak the same language).*

”



**Success stories
in knowledge transfer**

VIS Framework [1], tool used in [2]
PiPo plugin [3], tool used in [4]
Jingju dataset [5], dataset used in [6]
The Lohengrin TimeMachine [7]
tool / methodology used in [8]

**3 potential
obstacles**

“

*Merely adapting to each other's rules seems like
trying to simultaneously play football and handball,
where similar “material” surely cannot and will not
bring a consensus between the two games.*

”

New media and/or new technologies

The transition [9] of computational tools from “old” to “newer” technologies
was **too sudden** and mostly **detached** from present musicological media.

Institutional boundaries

The far-from-natural **disciplinary divisions** [10]
disable multidisciplinary solutions.

Theoretical and methodological compromise unresolved

MIR as well as musicological subfields are sourcing their theoretical and
methodological approaches from very different ideas, but have **no solid**
common theoretical frame and **goals** that would define them. Outsourcing the
“**communally**” preferred frames means, that there is little room left for the
dialogue between “them” and “the others”.

“

*What seems to be called for is less an
attempt to transform organizational
frontiers than to amplify the
organization of intellectual activity
without attention to current disciplinary
boundaries [10].*

”

References

- [1] C. Antila and J. Cumming, 2014.
- [2] S. Howes, 2021.
- [3] N. Schnell, D. Schwarz, J. Larralde, and R. Borghesi, 2017.
- [4] E. Ornoy and S. Cohen, 2021.
- [5] R. C. Repetto and X. Serra, 2017.
- [6] R. Gong, R. C. Repetto, and X. Serra, 2017.
- [7] D. Weigl and K. Page, 2017.
- [8] D. Lewis, K. Page, and L. Dreyfus, 2021.
- [9] L. Manovich, 2002.
- [10] I. Wallerstein, 1996.

The complete bibliography is available in the paper.

Data of the case study is available on algomus.fr/data.