

Panel Session “Towards an MEI neumes-module”

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**Notes taken by Chair, Karen Desmond, University College Cork
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Points raised during discussion time

Issues that arise if working towards a common neumes module.

Perry: Wants to emphasize the flexibility of MEI. Important to remember that you are never just recording a ‘shape’ – as soon as you attach a word to its identification, then it is no longer just a ‘shape’. What you are doing in MEI is deciding which levels of detail you want to accord.

Alan: Wants to emphasize that there are different levels of interpretation. Asks if it is necessary to always include the editorial interpretation. Is it possible to do straight transcriptions of the source without any interpretation.

Professor Haug: Would find it impossible to not include interpretation. There is always interpretation.

Perry: Must remember that with MEI having this level of flexibility there is not going to be tailor-made solution that will always fix your specific needs. You start with ut-of-the-box MEI. If you need more detail then there is a customization mechanism. For example, any list in MEI is not closed – you can always modify a list’s contents. If you are working in Oxygen – you can directly add to the lists in there just by typing in the word you want to add to the lists drop-down. You can also turn off attributes or elements that you don’t need. Even with things which are required these too also can be changed and made not required.

A clarification regarding the neume and the neume component described by Andrew in his presentation. A neume contains a neume component, which can itself contain another neume. This could be one workaround the ‘interrupted’ neume (this is a problematic aspect for some).

Stefan: In terms of where we were when we began this, we were totally aware at the time that we were just beginning with interpretation. It is true that every project and attempt to develop something new has to begin somewhere. We knew that we wanted to have the ‘neume’ as a central concept, and for the purposes of our interpretation and our repertory the concept of interrupted term was a convenient term to use.

Question posed: Do the mono:di editors used the neume names – at all?

Another question/comment: Interesting to look at the groupings of notes in later medieval manuscripts. For example, when we look at melismas, all these pitches and note groupings are within one syllable. These groupings and neumes (and specific neume types) are important in the melismas and in these cases it is worth it to show the neume types in the MEI encoding, and to show the interconnections and sequences of the these neume types.

Elaine: Other than the groups, one of our major issues is that currently when you want to record performance information, such as liquescence, at the moment you cannot

attach this information at the pitch level, and you have to attach it on the group level, and this is very cumbersome for us, because the performance aspect may only be relevant with respect to specific pitches.

Thomas: Following on from what Elaine is saying, at present you do need to put the liquescence as part of a group, rather than just assign it to a particular note. A quilisma, is part of a specific group. Would like to be able to move away from forcing a name and a form, and would like to be able to address individual pitches.

Perry: If we have a generic neume, and a neume component, sometimes you want to be able to say that the neume has a name and form or and sometimes not; and sometimes the neume component can have a name and form.

Coming from the TEI world, you have the TEI standards but before you start working with it, you should customize the thing first. This customization will help you in carrying out your tasks, you take away the things you are not concerned about. It is really just a tool that you will help you stick to your principles.

Professor Haug: Could we summarize it like this. We have these abilities basing encodings on MEI: the ability to render pitch information; to render the groupings of notes; and the fact that these groupings are contained within a graphic element (don't need to name the specific type of 'neume'). We may want to identify its characteristics. Differences in current implementations - mono:di project would like to be able to give an attribute to a note; TüBingen wants to give an attribute to the neume.

Andrew: Just wanted to give some insight to the discussion we had when figuring out the neume vs. neume component when we were in Charlottesville. Neume component is meant as some sort of a wrapper; felt uncomfortable just using 'note' – this mixes the different hierarchical levels. The neume components describe the sub-bits of a neume; so if you have a 2-note neume that had a liquescence in it, the inner neume component can an attribute.

Perry: This brings up an important point – remember that a note is a tag that is used across the implementation of MEI, it is not just part of the MEI-Neumes module, therefore we don't really want to be adding special attributes that are specific only to neumatic notation – we shouldn't add repertory-specific concepts to the 'note'. This is why the 'neume-component' (which can contain just one note) makes sense.

Specific follow-ups

Perry: Has a request from the technical group – if there is a request or specification for the things you would like to have made, it shouldn't be too difficult to put together something you want to do and when it's prepared please then forward it to the technical group.

Information will be circulated to the mailing list.