The purpose of my data sonification is to determine the overpowering mood of the user-base during a particular time of the micro-blogging service ‘Twitter’.

For this assignment I will be comparing the ‘happy’ hash-tag (#happy) and the ‘sad’ hash tag (#sad). This has probably already been investigated and done with a larger dataset but I can imagine it has mainly been done by visualization only rather than sonification. I believe from this dataset we will be able to hear the mood of the Twitter-collective during a particular time.

This data is obtained by doing a search using the Twitter atom feed (http://search.twitter.com/search.atom?q=%23happy) and (http://search.twitter.com/search.atom?q=%23sad) and finally parsing this information into a spreadsheet. The only useable information that I thought could be sonified and necessary to fulfill the purpose of this assignment was the timestamp of the post; with this information we should be able to interpret and manipulate the data in some way where we can then use the data with the synthesiser in MaxMSP.

I realised that the timestamp was in a format that MaxMSP may not be able to recognise; the format being 2010-10-26T11:22:47Z. It took some time and thought to figure out how I could turn this data into a plain Integer that could then be used in MaxMSP easily. After some research into different timestamps I went with Unix time which is defined as “the number of seconds elapsed since midnight proleptic Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) of January 1, 1970, not counting leap seconds.”

After converting the timestamp from earlier we now end up with something like this, 1288088733. This information is now ready to be used with MaxMsp.

This number is very large and will not work well with the MaxMSP synthesiser so to solve this problem I will divide it by 1000000, this gives us a much more usable number which will result in better tones.

I had more ideas for this but unfortunately the data I required was not present, or only available very scarcely. I wanted geolocation data to also affect how the data would be sonified, perhaps even comparing the datasets between countries to determine which countries were happier or more sad during a certain time of day. Unfortunately gathering this much data, especially the specific data would take a long time to get and would take a while to turn into useable data but it is an interesting though. If Twitter did not limit there searches to 100 results per search and provided location based searching this would have been a lot easier and more interesting!
We can just treat my work as a preliminary look at what we can do with social based data and the limitless things we can do with this real-time information.

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

After doing some basic testing with my patch we can see that the mood of this data set (taken Tuesday night) we can see that the general mood of the ‘Twitter-verse’ is leaning more towards sad. What I’m guessing is during this time most of the US is asleep and they make up a large number of Tweeters on Twitter, so this mood of sadness could be directly related to the time of day, being night, and the people who are currently awake. Night time can be said to be a time of melancholy so this could be a reason why. One interesting thing to note is that the time stamp is in local time of where the data was gathered from, if Twitter allowed it, it would be great to see the timestamp of where the Tweet actually came from, this is similar to my location proposal earlier.

**CONCLUSION**

I’m hoping this patch can be eventually expanded on to interpret different types of data from social networks, perhaps even comparing two different services (Flickr and Facebook) to see the general mood of each services. The possibilities with something like this is endless and rather than visualising the data like most software does out there, sonifying the data is a more interesting way of presenting the data.