Purpose and Function

The sonification system which I have developed aims to display auditory data about the Top 100 best selling books of all time. My goal for this assessment was to try and find a pattern in all of this data, which would provide some clues or possible answers as to what makes a book a bestseller. Most people believe success of a book relies on the abilities of the author. Others assume that the more pages there are in a book, the better it is likely to be. Some even associate the date which it was written or published to be the definitive point of a books selling success. With these three opinions in mind, I tried to compose a Max Patch which would analyse this information and provide some answers in regards to what makes a book successful.

Essentially, what the Max Patch does is that it analyses the date, page number and the number of letters in the author’s name for each book out of the list top 100 best selling books of all time. The Max Patch reads this information and provides the user with an auditory analysis of the list. As the user listens to each sound each book in the list makes, they are able to pick up on the slight differences and similarities within the list. The page number from each book is hooked to the pitch of the sound, and the authors name and publish date control the volume of the sound. By providing the user with an auditory visualisation of the data, it allows them to pick up on the differences which make certain books in the list stand out from each other.

Results

The results I gathered from my Max Patch proved to be quite interesting in regards to the similarities and differences between all the books in the list.

Judging from the sounds, and the visual data the graphs provided, there were not many books in the list which exceeded over 1000 pages. Whenever a book with 1000+ pages came up in the list, a very high pitch sound was played, so the user could automatically identify a large book in the list. Surprisingly, a high pitch sound which indicated a large book rarely occurred. The majority of books all contained between 100 and 500 pages. Also, the date and authors name had little influence over the sound each book made. Most sounds had the same amplitude as the Max Patch cycled through the list.

Visuals are provided on page 3.
Discussion

The data I gathered from the Max Patch proved to be quite interesting. After analysing the list of the Top 100 Best Selling Books, it became clear that the author and publishing date of the book did little for the success of the books sales. This is quite interesting since a lot of people are under the assumption that some of the greatest books ever written were written decades, even centuries ago. However, referring to my results, this is not the case. Most of the bestselling books in the list have been written in recent years. Some examples include the Harry Potter series and Artemis Fowl series.

The results of the Max Patch have also challenged people’s perspectives regarding the fact that the author is essentially responsible for the success of a book. The author, just like the date of publication, proved to provide little influence on the books performance overall. In the list of Top 100 Best Selling Books, there were a variety of authors spanning over decades. You could also hear in the Max Patch the lack of movement in the volume of the sounds. This further indicated that the author of the book did little to influence a books success in sales.

Perhaps the most interesting development from this Max Patch is in regards to the page number for each book. In the beginning, I was under the assumption that the bestselling books were the ones which had the most pages, since they would have had a much deeper and interesting story to them. Yet, after putting the data through the Max Patch, it became clear that most of the bestselling books in the list where between 100 and 500 pages long. Very few were over 1000, and you could hear the rare shift in pitch when they appeared in the list. The pitch of the sounds which came from the book data was generally the same overall. After only hearing half the data in the file, the user would be able to hear the pattern in all the data in regards to the number of pages in each book. Also, the second graph which I had used to display a book’s thickness remained mostly constant. This proved to be an interesting piece of information obtained from the Max Patch.

Overall, I am quite surprised by the results given from the Max Patch. It provided some insightful pieces of information regarding the similarities and differences between each of the books in the Top 100 Best Selling Books list.

BBC The Big Read – Top 100 Best Selling Books: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top100_2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top100_2.shtml)
Distance between the bar and the top provided a visual display of the books thickness

High pitch sound indicated by the graph

Book with 1000+ pages

Book with 60 pages

Old book: Published 1985

New book: Published 2009