fulgeo—Design of an Intuitive User Interface for a Multimedia Search Engine

D. Schneider¹, D. Stohr¹, J. Tingvold², A. B. Amundsen², L. Weiland¹, S. Kopf¹, W. Effelsberg¹, A. Scherp¹
¹University of Mannheim, Germany; ²University of Oslo, Norway
dominik.schneider@students.uni-mannheim.de, dennystohr@gmail.com
joachim@tingvold.com, andrebam@ifi.uio.no,
{lydia|kopf|effelsberg|ansgar}@informatik.uni-mannheim.de

ABSTRACT
Multimedia documents like PowerPoint presentations or Flash documents are widely adopted in the Internet and exist in context of lots of different topics. However, so far there is no user friendly way to explore and search for this content. The aim of this work is to address this issue by developing a new, easy-to-use user interface approach and prototype search engine. Our system is called fulgeo and specifically focuses on a suitable multimedia interface for visualizing the query results of Flash documents. The prototype is available online as live demo at: http://fulgeo.komsys.org/

1. INTRODUCTION
Flash content and multimedia content in general is quite popular and widely used today. Still, there exists no reasonable way to actually search for, find, and explore Flash documents on the Internet. Search engines like Google limit their support by presenting Flash presentations merely as textual results. Users can click on a result to view the presentation, but provide no further intuitive ways for exploring the content.

The speciality of multimedia content is that it consists of a collection of images, videos, sounds, and text assets [1]. Further, these media assets can be animated or rearranged by user interactions, which affects the temporal and spatial rendering of the presentation. Due to these special features, it is not sufficient to provide only a text based search result page like Google, but to address all aspects of multimedia. To the best of our knowledge, FLAME (Flash Access and Management Environment) [7] is the only search engine for multimedia content today. The search user interface consists of an input field for keyword-queries and the results are displayed in a grid like it is shown in Figure 1(a). A link to the details of a presentation is provided and a button to find similar flash files [3]. FLAME provides an “Advanced Search” page depicted in Figure 1(b) where users can enter more sophisticated queries via an input form such as shape, color, and media type. While such a query form represents the information that is actually encoded in the Flash presentations, we believe that a casual user will have significant difficulties filling out the form. Thus, with fulgeo (“flash” in Latin) we propose a new and more intuitive to use search user interface (UI) and an interactive result presentation for multimedia content. With fulgeo, we follow the strategy of a less sophisticated but more intuitive approach for searching multimedia content.

Goal of our multimedia search engine fulgeo is to provide the users both a good overview of the result set as well as intuitive ways to explore the nature of a presentation’s content, without the need to fill out complicated forms such as in FLAME [7]. In addition, advanced search methods like query-by-example or the specification of color and context features requires that the users already know much about the result he or she is looking for [4]. The design of our search engine UI is based on general design recommendations and interviews with three experts.

2. FULGEO MULTIMEDIA SEARCH
Like in traditional search engines, an initial keyword-based query is entered to fulgeo and matched to the text extracted from the Flash files. A screenshot of this initial query screen is depicted in Figure 2. The database ranks the results based on their cover density [2]. The engine also supports filtering Flash files for those that contain audio or video files, animations or interaction by clicking on the check-boxes below the query field. The search result page depicted in

Figure 2: Initial search UI

Figure 3 provides the users a quick impression of the Flash document content by showing a thumbnail for each result.
This is a major lack of commercial search engine support for Flash content like Google, which provides only a textual result list. The literature suggests that thumbnails are scanned faster than text and improve the performance of the user to find good results [4]. In order to interactively explore the Flash presentations, we provide intuitive UI features like it is known from today’s video search engines such as YouTube. For example, we support a mouseover-event of the thumbnail, i.e., a small animation when hovering over a result.

In order to view the document, a link is placed directly next to the thumbnail in the search results page view and details view. Additionally, the document opens when clicking on the big thumbnail inside the view as this is more intuitive than to extra click on a button for that. Finally, the users can also download the presentation.

3. CONCLUSION

This paper investigated the problem of providing an intuitive and easy-to-use search user interface for multimedia content. We presented our prototype fulgeo as a way for a novel user interface for multimedia search engines. It addresses the specific characteristics of multimedia content and at the same time is aimed to be easy to use. In its current version, the prototype contains more than 1.000 Flash files. As future work, we plan to add at least two orders of magnitude more files. In addition, we plan to conduct extensive user studies.

4. REFERENCES