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Abstract. Existing work has produced a variety of techniques to improve interfaces for navigating an audio timeline. These interfaces typically map user input to either a change in play *rate*, or playback *position*. Audio feedback while scrolling at arbitrary rates can be provided by: *skipping* immediately to the new position in the audio; *resampling* the audio, which introduces pitch-shifts; *time-stretching* the audio to preserve the pitch; or not at all. We conducted a series of user studies to examine the effects of input and feedback type on targeting performance. Position control was found to be, on average, 15–19% faster than rate control when searching for targets 90 to 100 seconds away in the audio timeline. *Time-stretching* was found to be the best choice in most scenarios, but *skipping*, and, for specific user groups, *resampling*, should be used for precise targeting tasks where the audio play rate falls below one-tenth nominal speed.

1 Introduction

Technology advancements in recent years have made continuous time-based media such as audio and video a popular medium for electronic communication. Increasing availability of computers for content creation, the internet for content distribution, and portable media players such as the iPod (www.apple.com), have dramatically increased both creation and consumption of these digital media types. Radio, for example, has in recent years been reborn in digital form as "podcasts"; with today's technology, it is possible for even the average home user with a computer to create such content, and distribute it to a global audience. According to Apple, over one million podcasts were already subscribed to, just two days after the iTunes podcast directory became available [App05].

With this increased popularity of the medium, searching and navigating through an audio timeline is becoming both more common and more important. Audio navigation tasks can also be roughly categorized as *searching* or *gisting* (obtaining the essence of a message). Searching differs from gisting in that searching typically requires at least a passing familiarity with the material; searching also often requires the user to locate a target with some level of accuracy. Common scenarios for searching include:

- finding a specific section in a podcast listened to yesterday
- looking for the start of the next track in a live concert recording that has no track marks
- skipping over a commercial in a podcast
- extracting and editing segments from a recorded voiceover for a CHI 2007 video submission

Unfortunately, most commonly-available interfaces for navigating the timeline of audio do not differ significantly from the "tape recorder" metaphors of *play*, *stop*, *fast forward* and *rewind* from the 1950's. Recent versions of QuickTime Player (www.quicktime.com) and Windows Media Player (www.microsoft.com) support audio playback at variable rates, but is controlled using an "advanced" setting that is neither accessible nor visible in the main user interface.

Existing systems often make use of audio processing techniques to assist with audio searching, including automatic speech recognition (ASR) [WHA$^+$02], speaker segmentation [DMS92], and emphasis detection [Aro97]. Unfortunately, these algorithms are unable to assist with finding detailed semantic information in an audio stream [SHWD04]; thus, in the general case, one must still listen to the stream to find the desired information.

There is, however, little work that studies the various methods to interpret user input, or provide feedback in an audio navigation interface. Research in document navigation, in contrast, has examined in detail both rate controls (where the user controls the scrolling speed) and position controls (where the user controls the scrolling position) [HCBM02][ZSS97], and both input types are used in practice. Existing work in improving audio navigation interfaces [Aro97][HLBG05], however, favors rate control, often with the implicit assumption that they are superior to position control.

The temporal nature of audio creates unique challenges when designing feedback for navigation interfaces – naïvely altering the play rate of audio by resampling it creates well-known pitch-shifting artifacts (commonly known as "the chipmunk effect"). Despite the increasing prevalence of time-stretching algorithms that perform extra processing to remove the pitch shift, systems such as audio editing software continue to employ resampling for interactively adjusting the play rate.

In this paper, we present the results of an empirical study examining the effects of input and feedback type on tasks that require the user to navigate an audio timeline to search for a specific target. We begin with a comparison of spatial (document) navigation and temporal (audio) navigation. We then propose a design space for audio navigation interfaces, and show how existing work in this area fits into this space. We then present the results of several user studies that explore this design space in more detail, leading to a set of guidelines for designing audio navigation interfaces.

2 Spatial vs. Temporal Navigation

Navigating through the timeline of continuous time-based media, such as an audio recording, is similar to navigating through a document in many respects. Despite the spatial nature of documents, as opposed the temporal one of audio, the *input* techniques used for scrolling through a document often apply to audio as well. Audio navigation differs from document navigation, however, in how *feedback* is provided to the user while scrolling.

2.1 Input

A common software interface widget for scrolling through audio is the timeline slider, analogous to a scrollbar in a document window. The *wiper* inside the scrollbar, which controls the current viewing area in a document, is the *playhead* in an audio timeline slider. The arrow buttons at either ends of a scrollbar correspond to the *fast forward* and *rewind* buttons (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. The scrollbar for document navigation (left) is analogous to the timeline slider for audio navigation (right).

Zhai et al. [ZSS97] observed, however, that the scrollbar interface for navigating through a document suffers from at least three drawbacks: time is required to acquire the wiper; scrollbars are ill-suited for continuous scrolling with precision; and navigating to the scrollbar shifts the user's locus of attention away from the target. The timeline slider uses the same mappings, and thus suffers from similar drawbacks; moreover, the playhead in a timeline slider is usually very small, and thus acquiring it is even more difficult than with a scrollbar (see Fig. 1).

As a result, alternative interfaces to more efficiently navigate a document have been studied. These interfaces typically control *rate* (user input maps to scrolling velocity), or *position* (input maps to viewing area position). For audio navigation, a rate control would similarly control the play rate, and a position control the current playhead position.

Unlike spatial navigation, where both position and rate controls have been studied extensively and their merits widely debated [Zha95], rate controls appear to be the de facto standard for audio navigation; the sliders for playback speed in QuickTime Player and Windows Media Player, and even the ubiquitous *fast-forward* and *rewind* are rate controls.

2.2 Feedback

While spatial and temporal navigation may share many similarities in input, they differ in how feedback is presented to the user. Hürst observes that when navigating through continuous time-based media, only the smallest unit (e.g., one video frame, or one audio sample) can be conveyed to the user at any moment in time [HS02]. In spatial media such as a text document, many lines of text can be displayed to the user at the same time. Moreover, temporal media must often be perceived over time; a single audio sample, for example, has no meaning by itself.

Fortunately, workarounds to this limitation have been developed. Audio editors, for example, represent the temporal dimension spatially by displaying a section of the audio waveform, thus allowing the user to visualize multiple instants of the audio timeline concurrently. While such visualizations are useful for locating "meta-features", such as pauses between words and sentences, even experienced audio editors are unable to derive the words of a speech recording, or the melody of a song by simply looking at its waveform. Thus, Hürst's statement still holds true, and audio must be interpreted over time to fully understand all nuances of its semantics.

Presenting audio recordings at arbitrary rates can be challenging, however, and a surprising number of audio systems today do not support variable-speed audio playback. Time-stretching algorithms, which preserve the original pitch when the play rate is changed, remain an active area of research [KLB06][LD99][Röb03][VR93].

3 Related Work

Document navigation has been studied more extensively than audio navigation. We provide an overview of both, focusing on the aspects most relevant to our work here.

3.1 Document Navigation

Studies comparing rate and position controls have been conducted since the 1970's: a detailed overview of these works is given in [Zha95]. In [ZSS97], Zhai et al. examine a variety of input devices for scrolling and pointing in documents. They found that an isometric joystick (rate control) outperformed the mouse scroll wheel (position control) for locating a hyperlink when scrolling though a ten-page document. More recently, Hinckley et al. found that scrolling performance with rate and position controls exhibit a crossover effect; while rate control is better for long searches, position control is better for short searches [HCBM02]. Moreover, they found that position control can be significantly improved by using an acceleration function.

In a study comparing a touchpad scroll ring, touchpad scroll zone, and the mouse scroll wheel (all position controls) [Whe03], Wherry found that the scroll ring was faster, with lower error rates, and was most preferred by the users for a spatial navigation task. The circular scrolling metaphor has also been extended to mouse and pen interfaces [MH04][Ss04].

There do not appear to be, however, any existing attempts to generalize the conclusions drawn from the above works to audio navigation.

3.2 Audio Navigation

In [HS02], Hürst proposes several software widgets for scrolling through continuous time-based media; these widgets are controlled using a mouse, and include both position and rate controls. He found rate control using a slider to be the most efficient. Input devices other than the mouse are not included in his study, and it appears to be the only one comparing position and rate control for temporal navigation.

Arons' *SpeechSkimmer* [Aro97] and Hürst et al.'s *Elastic Audio Slider* [HLBG05] are rate controls for skimming through speech. Both use a time-stretching algorithm to play audio at variable rates without pitch-shifting artifacts. The *SpeechSkimmer* improves skimming performance by automatically analyzing the content to reduce or eliminate pauses in the audio; pitch is also analyzed to help the user locate potentially interesting sections in the audio. Alternative input and feedback types are not explored.

DiMaß, our technique for audio navigation using direct manipulation, uses position control. DiMaß also uses a pitch-preserving time-stretching algorithm. There is no comparison of scrolling performance with other input devices.

Moving the playhead back and forth over a waveform visualization in audio editors is known as "audio scrubbing", and is often used to mark cut and trim points in the audio. Many audio editors, such as Audacity (audacity.sourceforge.net), do not provide any audio feedback while scrubbing. Some audio editors, such as Adobe Audition (www.adobe.com) advertise "tape-style" scrubbing, where a rate change introduces a corresponding pitch shift. Video editors, such as Final Cut Pro, use an alternative technique where short snippets of audio are played every time the playhead is moved. Interestingly, there are no well-known audio editors that employ the time-stretching techniques used in [Aro97][HLBG05][LB06].

4 Design Space for Audio Navigation Techniques

The design space we propose is based on our analysis of spatial and audio navigation, and survey of existing audio navigation techniques (see Fig. 2). It consists of two orthogonal axes: input and feedback type. Input types are classified as position (also known as *zero order*, see [Zha95]) or rate (*first order*). Higher order input methods, such as acceleration control (*second order*), have been previously demonstrated to be less efficient compared to zero and first order controls [Pou74], and are thus less common; we leave exploration of higher-order controls for future work.

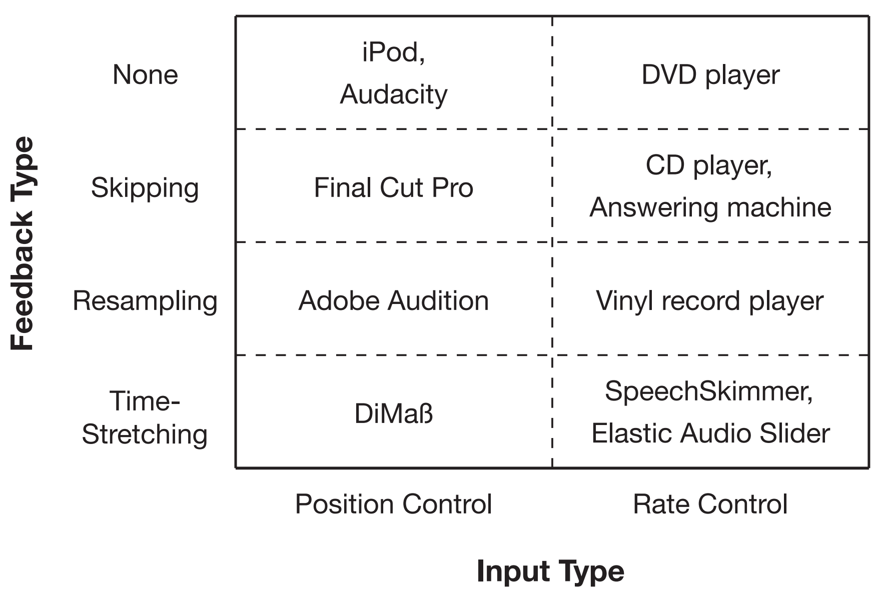

Fig. 2. Design space for audio navigation techniques, populated with examples of existing devices.

We have also identified four possible feedback types[1]:

None: Systems that do not provide audio feedback while scrolling still provide a means to play the audio at its nominal rate (e.g., *play* button). While it may seem obvious that no feedback would result in poor audio scrolling performance, we include it as the baseline case for comparison. It is also common in existing systems – no feedback is given when scrubbing through audio using an iPod or Audacity, for example.

***Skipping*:** A short segment of audio (tens of milliseconds) is played at regular speed when the playhead position is changed. This allows the user to experience feedback at arbitrary scroll rates without any pitch-shifting artifacts. The resulting audio is choppy, however. Many CD players and answering machines provide *skipping* feedback when the *fast-forward* and *rewind* buttons are held down. It is also common in video editors such as Final Cut Pro.

***Resampling*:** The audio is *resampled* to allow playback at arbitrary rates. Resampling also pitch-shifts the audio; the effect is the same as varying the play rate of a vinyl record player. While disc jockeys (DJ's) make use of this feature for artistic effect, pitch shifts to the audio are typically undesirable as it renders the resulting audio incomprehensible. Adobe Audition supports this type of feedback for scrubbing as a separate mode ("tape-style" scrubbing).

***Time-stretching*:** The audio is processed to allow playback at arbitrary rates without changing the pitch. The processing, unfortunately, introduces artifacts into the resulting audio. Time domain algorithms such as waveform similarity overlap-add (WSOLA) [VR93] produce satisfactory results for only a small range of play rates (20% above or below nominal speed); certain audio navigation tasks such as scrubbing, however, easily exceed this range. Moreover, they do not work well for polyphonic audio signals such as music. Frequency domain algorithms, such as the phase vocoder and its variants [KLB06][LD99][Röb03], have been developed to address these limitations, but still exhibit "transient smearing" and "reverberation" artifacts. The *SpeechSkimmer*, *Elastic Audio Slider*, and DiMaß all use time-stretching.

Exploring both of these dimensions simultaneously would not have been practical, and thus we have chosen to study input and feedback type independently.

5 Position vs. Rate control for audio navigation

The following user scenarios illustrate temporal navigation using rate and position controls:

David and Victor are arguing over the name of the ensign killed off in Episode 213 of Star Trek: TOS*, and they decide to refer to the DVD to resolve their dispute. David's DVD player, a Sony DVP-NS700P (www.sony.com), has a shuttle ring control to interactively adjust play rate. Using the DVD menu, David jumps to the scene where the ensign first appears, and uses the shuttle ring to navigate to the part where the his name is mentioned.*

Eva has just returned from a Dave Matthews Band concert. She recorded the entire concert onto her iPod, which the band permits for personal use. Alas, the

[1] We invite readers to view the accompanying video figure for demonstrations of the various input and feedback types.

recording has no track marks, and she must scroll through the audio using the "Click Wheel" to find the start of her favorite song.

Existing research in audio navigation [Aro97][HLBG05] focuses primarily on rate control. We hypothesized that, similar to spatial navigation, position control can be faster for audio navigation under certain circumstances (e.g., when the search target is close to the current position).

We designed an audio navigation experiment where users were asked to locate a target between 90 and 100 seconds from the current playhead position using both rate and position controls. We measured and compared the targeting times for these devices.

5.1 Setup

We included the following three input devices in this study:

Scroll ring: A rate control consisting of a spring-loaded ring. This device is found on certain DVD players, such as David's DVP-NS700P (see Fig. 3a). The play rate increases in the forward direction as it is rotated clockwise, and backward when rotated counter-clockwise. When released, the ring "snaps" back to its original position. Previous research has shown that this self-centering mechanism is an important characteristic for rate control [HCBM02][ZSS97].

Jog dial: A position control using a solid dial. The audio will advance forwards as the dial is rotated clockwise, and backwards when rotated counter-clockwise. Some CD players used by DJ's, such as Stanton's C.500 (www.stantondj.com, see Fig. 3b) offer this type of control.

Touch wheel: The touch wheel operates similarly to the jog dial, except that it is touch-sensitive and thus lacks any haptic feedback. The touch wheel is the primary control on the iPod, where it is used for menu navigation in addition to audio timeline navigation (see Fig. 3c).

(a) (b) (c)

Fig. 3. (a) Scroll ring in the Sony DVP-NS700P DVD player. (b) Jog dial in the Stanton C.500 CD player. (c) Touch wheel on the iPod portable media player.

In our experiments, we used the ShuttleXpress (www.contourdesign.com, see Fig. 4), a device that includes both a scroll ring and a jog dial. Its scroll ring offers 7 unique positions in either direction, which we mapped to play rates from $\pm\frac{1}{4}\times$ to $\pm 16\times$ on an exponential scale. Audio playback stops when the ring is in its rest position. The ShuttleXpress jog dial snaps lightly into place on 10 unique positions per revolution.

For the touch wheel, we used the Phidgets CircularTouch (www.phidgets.com); it is touch sensitive, with a diameter twice as wide as the ShuttleXpress jog dial. The CircularTouch advertises an ability to report 128 unique positions per revolution; in practice, however, we found that the effective resolution was much lower (roughly 32 positions), due to the uncertainty of a finger making contact with a region on the wheel. We repackaged the CircularTouch to resemble a larger version of the iPod Click Wheel (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. The ShuttleXpress (left) has an outer self-centering ring for rate control and an inner dial for position control. The Phidgets CircularTouch (right) has a touch-sensitive surface that we used for position control, repackaged to resemble an iPod Click Wheel.

We wrote a software tool that accepts input from all three devices. According to Hinckley et al., incorporating acceleration into a position control significantly improves targeting times [HCBM02]. We used the following acceleration function to compute the play rate r for both the jog dial and touch wheel: $r = (\kappa_s \Delta p / \Delta t)^{\kappa_a}$. Δp is the amount of movement over the time interval Δt, and κ_s and κ_a are constants that control the scroll sensitivity and acceleration, respectively. For this user study, we used values of $\kappa_s = 1.5$ and $\kappa_a = 2$, which we determined in preliminary user tests to give satisfactory results. None of our users reported any problems with the jog dial and touch wheel acceleration.

The user is presented with a slider that shows where the current playhead is in the audio timeline. The playhead position was not reported numerically to the user (see Fig. 5).

In all cases, audio feedback was provided using a high-fidelity, frequency domain time-stretching algorithm based on [KLB06][LD99][Röb03]. For reverse playback, the audio samples were simply played in reverse order; while other methods for reverse playback of speech have been proposed [HLB05], such methods are difficult to apply for non-speech media, and our experiments include both music and speech.

5.2 Procedure

16 volunteers (10 male, 6 female) in their 20's and 30's participated in the experiment; two were office workers, and the remainder were students from varying

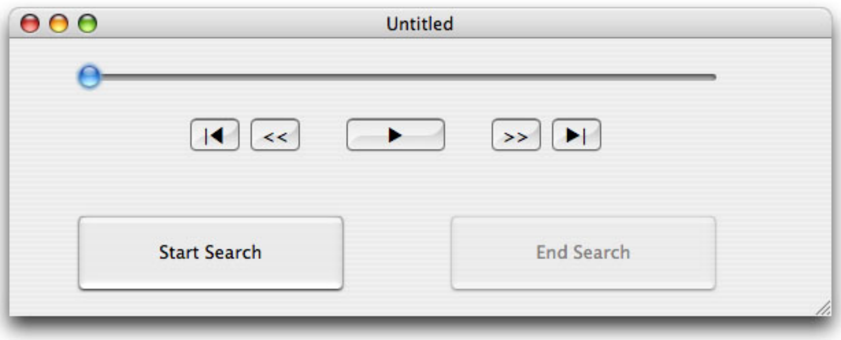

Fig. 5. Software interface presented to users participating in the study comparing position and rate controls.

backgrounds including computer science, psychology, and technical writing. Participants were introduced to the three audio navigation devices, given some time to familiarize themselves with the devices, and then performed some test trials. The actual trials began when they indicated that they felt comfortable operating the devices on their own. The session concluded with an interview and questionnaire; each session took between 30 and 45 minutes. The software was run on a 17" iMac (1.83 GHz Core Duo processor, 1 GB RAM) running Mac OS 10.4.7; Sennheiser HD 280 Pro headphones were used for sound. Participants were compensated for their time with some sweets.

Each trial consisted of locating a cut point in a roughly three minute-long audio recording consisting of either speech or music. Users were instructed to locate the cut point as precisely and quickly as they could. In our subsequent data analysis, we only used data points that were within ± 2 s of the actual cut point. The user was not given any feedback during the session on their accuracy, and we found that in practice, users rarely (less than 10% of the time) were unable to meet this target.

The CircularTouch device gave us intermittent problems, interpreting a finger hovering over the device as input; fortunately, a software restart to trigger a recalibration of the device solved the problem.

Users searching through audio in a realistic situation would know their search target, and to simulate this, we used a relatively easy target: the cut point was either a speaker change (male to female), or a music genre change (classical to pop). Each user was tested with either music or speech, but not both. Users performed two trials for each of the three devices. They were informed beforehand that the cut point would be "somewhere in the middle" of the audio recording. Multiple versions of the same recording with the cut point placed between 90 and 100 seconds into the audio were prepared offline; they were presented to users during the experiment in pseudo-random order. The order in which users operated the devices between trials was also pseudo-randomized – users never operated the same device for two consecutive trials.

5.3 Results and Discussion

The data points for a specific user and device were averaged together, and a repeated measures ANOVA revealed significant differences between the mean search times for the three devices ($F(3, 16) = 5.6$, $p < 0.01$; see Fig. 6). The Tukey HSD post-hoc test revealed that the average search time with the scroll ring is significantly higher than the average search times with both the jog dial and touch wheel. The difference between the jog dial and touch wheel is not significant.

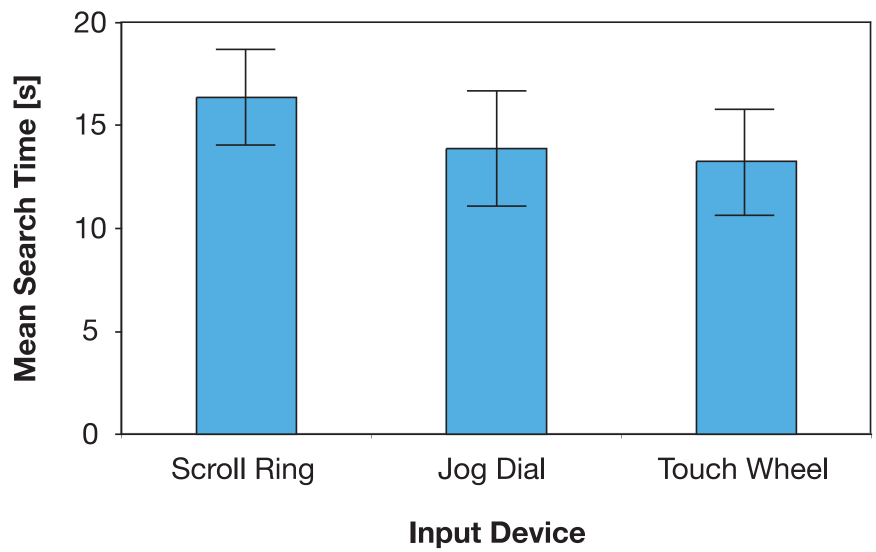

Fig. 6. Mean search times using the scroll ring, jog dial, and touch wheel with 95% confidence bars. The mean search time for the scroll ring is significantly higher than for both the jog dial and touch wheel.

Our results confirm our initial hypothesis that the jog dial and touch wheel, both position controls, allow users to locate a target in a continuous audio stream significantly faster than the scroll ring, a rate control, for search targets between 90 and 100 seconds from the current playhead position. The mean search times are 16.4, 13.9, and 13.3 seconds for the scroll ring, jog dial and touch wheel, respectively, and thus, for our users, the jog dial was 15% faster than the scroll ring, and the touch wheel was 19% faster.

Hinckley showed that for document navigation, position control is faster than rate control for closer search targets, but as the search target distance increases, the performance difference becomes less significant until a "crossover point", when rate control becomes superior [HCBM02]. We believe this same crossover effect applies to audio navigation as well, in which case 90 to 100 seconds is a minimum upper boundary, below which position control is significantly faster than rate control. However, more studies would have to be conducted before such a statement could be conclusively made, which we leave for future work.

Users were also asked to subjectively rate each of the three devices on a scale from 1 ("very poor") to 5 ("very good") (see Fig. 7). Users were also encouraged to provide comments, many of which were consistent with previous studies comparing rate and position controls. Users observed, for example, that it was easier to play through audio at constant rates with the scroll ring, and operating it did not require as much physical movement compared to the dial and wheel. On the other hand, most people felt the dial and wheel were easier to control for precise position changes. Some users had comments specific to the devices we had chosen for our study, such as "the jog dial was too small", and, "didn't like the feel/texture of the touch wheel underneath my fingers".

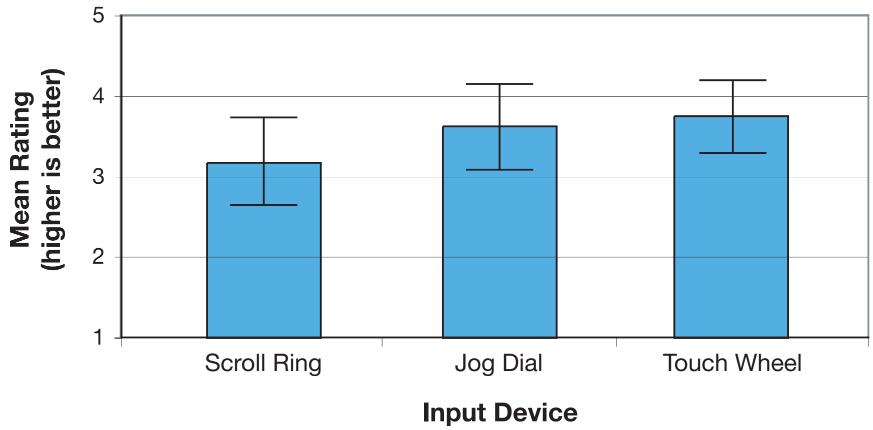

Fig. 7. Mean subjective ratings for the scroll ring, jog dial, and touch wheel with 95% confidence bars (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = very good).

6 Effect of Feedback Type on Audio Editing

To study the effect of feedback on audio timeline navigation, we chose the following scenario:

Sarah is preparing a two minute summary of an interview for the student radio station. She sits down to extract the most important bits from fifteen minutes of raw material, and remove the "fillers" (the "uhms" and "aahs"). For example, she modifies the phrase "used a.. uhh.. the Heisenberg..." to "used the Heisenberg...". Unfortunately the software that Sarah is using does not provide any audio feedback when scrubbing over the waveform.

We examined all four feedback types in our design space: no feedback, *skipping*, *resampling*, and *time-stretching*. Both task times and behavioral pattern changes were studied.

We contacted a local student radio station to assist us with our studies. We felt they are representative of an increasing population of hobbyist content-creators: members of the radio station volunteer their time to assemble the radio programs, and come from a variety of backgrounds, including computer science, political science, economics, and geology. Their experience with editing audio ranges from just a few months to a couple of years, and none are professionally trained. Some have a weekly workload of programs to produce, while others contribute only once a month. Interviews make up a significant portion of the time they invest in preparing material to air.

We began by observing how two of these editors use Adobe Audition, the software provided by the radio station, to edit interviews. By default, Audition does not provide any feedback while scrubbing, although the most recent version advertises "tape-style" scrubbing (i.e., *resampling*). However, it must be activated as a separate mode, and we found the resulting lag between cursor movement and playhead position often interferes with normal operation. Moreover, the pitch artifacts introduced by resampling made the resulting audio incomprehensible to the editors. On the other hand, with no audio feedback, the editors were forced to navigate blindly: they would adjust the playhead position, play the audio, readjust the playhead, and so on until they had finally located the target. While being able to visualize the audio waveform is helpful in locating sentence boundaries and pauses, filler sounds are often mixed together with neighboring words, in which case the cut point must still be found using this trial and error method (see Fig. 8).

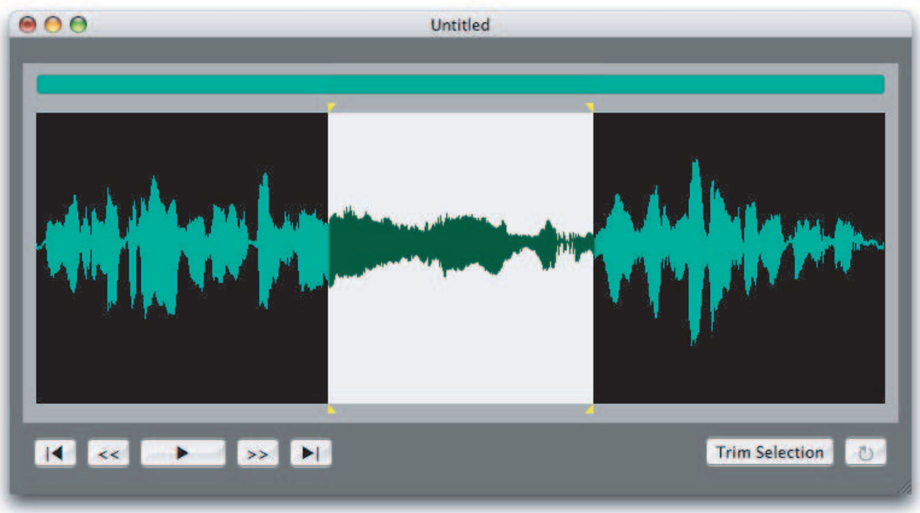

Fig. 8. Example interview segment with a filler. The highlighted region represents the filler to be removed, which cannot be easily identified and correctly marked using only the visual view of the waveform.

We further observed that the following sequence of tasks occur repeatedly while editing an interview:

1. **Locate**: A desired segment, such as a sentence, in the raw recording is located.
2. **Cut**: A "rough cut" of the desired segment is performed, allowing the editor to focus on just that one segment.
3. **Polish**: The rough cut is refined by deleting the extraneous material on either edge of the cut. Fillers, long pauses and mistakes in the speech are also deleted.

The first and third steps were the most time-consuming in the editing process. Note that while a system with automatic content analysis such as the *SpeechSkimmer* could help with the *locate* task, the *polish* task requires precise pinpointing, and the audio must be examined manually.

6.1 Setup

Based on these preliminary observations, we developed an audio editor modeled after the Adobe Audition interface for our user studies (see Fig. 9). The editors were interviewed at depth about the subset of features they used, and these were subsequently incorporated into our software. These features include:

- a waveform view, where most of the interaction occurs
- playhead and selection markers above and below the waveform view; these markers can be dragged to move the current playhead and modify the current selection
- auto-scrolling behavior, with and without selection
- a zoombar located above the waveform, used for scrolling large distances in the audio, as well as interactively adjusting the zoom factor
- shortcut keys for playing, zooming, and deleting the current selection

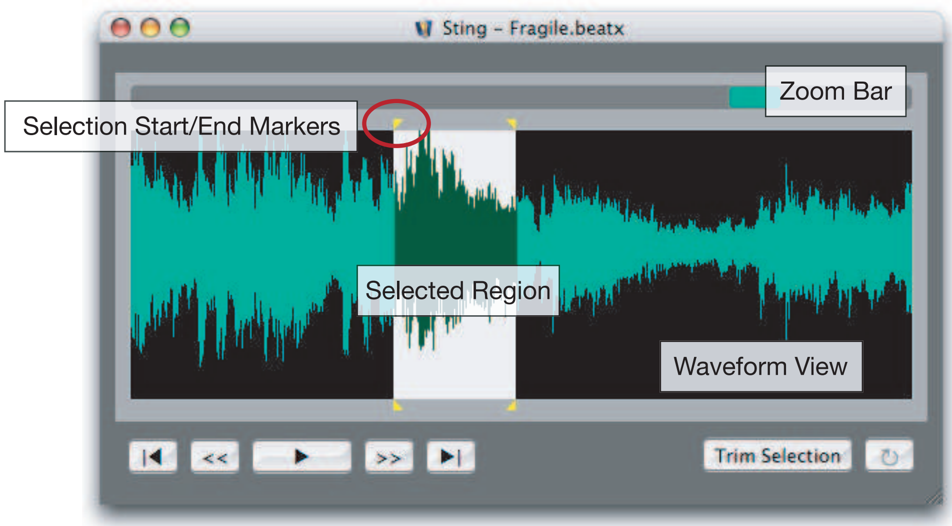

Fig. 9. Audio editing tool modeled after Adobe Audition. The interface consists of a waveform view, where the user can select regions of the audio. The selection start and end points are located above and below the waveform view (the playhead is not visible in this picture). The zoombar above the waveform view is used for scrolling quickly through the audio and interactively adjusting the zoom factor.

We also included a control that allows the user to set the audio feedback type while scrubbing to one of the four feedback types: none, *skipping*, *resampling*, and *time-stretching*. Audio feedback was only given when scrubbing in the main waveform view, or manipulating the playhead and selection markers, but not the zoombar. As the zoombar is used primarily used to change the zoom factor, and for quickly jumping and scrolling to distant points in the audio, we felt audio feedback would not have been appropriate, and this was later confirmed by our users.

Skipping was implemented by playing a 70 ms snippet of audio at the current playhead position whenever it is moved; these snippets are windowed to minimize pops and clicks in the audio. *Resampling* uses the high-quality resampler unit in Core Audio, the audio framework in Mac OS X, and *time-stretching* uses the same algorithm from our previous experiment. As users had previously complained about the lack of responsiveness when testing the tape-style scrubbing feature in Audition, we adapted the synchronization technique presented in [LB06] to minimize the lag between the mouse input and the subsequent playhead movement when providing feedback using *resampling* and *time-stretching*.

6.2 Evaluation With Professional Video Editors

We had the opportunity to demonstrate our prototype to three experienced video editors consulting in UI/workflow design at a company producing video editing software. The editors were familiar with all the feedback techniques except *time-stretching*. After a demo, the editors were given the opportunity to experiment with the prototype using each of the feedback types with both music and speech.

They described their typical workflow as one that is very similar to the *locate/cut/polish* pattern we observed earlier with the radio editors. For cutting audio, all of them preferred feedback provided by *time-stretching*. Surprisingly, however, for precise cuts, two of the editors preferred *resampling*. They revealed that audio editing before computers became common required them to manipulate physical reels of tape, which exhibited the same pitch-shifting effects. And, although it requires training and experience, cutting is actually easier with audio that is lowered in pitch, because certain features, such as transients (drum beats, or a gunshot sound), become more easily recognizable. Thus, to them, the pitch-preserving capability in *time-stretching* did not offer any advantages when doing precise positioning. Moreover, they strongly disliked the transient smearing artifacts and other distortions introduced by the processing at low play rates; *resampling* does not have these artifacts despite the pitch shifts it introduces.

However, they all agreed that editors without prior experience working with tape would most likely not find *resampling* useful.

6.3 Study A: Start-to-Finish Editing

We recruited 9 editors from the student radio station (5 male, 4 female) in their 20's and 30's to participate in this first study. Following the results from our earlier observations with the radio editors and preliminary evaluation with the professional editors, we dropped *resampling* from the experiment. The remaining feedback types were labeled "A", "B", and "C" (no feedback, *skipping*, and *time-stretching*, respectively) when presented to users.

Each session lasted approximately sixty minutes; users were asked to perform complete editing tasks using our software. Each session began with a brief introduction and some test trials. Trials followed the *locate/cut/polish* sequence, and users were asked to indicate when they had completed each task so that their completion times could be recorded. How users went about completing the task was otherwise left to their own best judgment, however. Software was run on a 15" MacBook Pro (1.83 GHz Intel Core Duo processor, 2 GB RAM) running

Mac OS 10.4.7; a Logitech optical mouse and AKG K55 headphones were also used.

Users began with a seven minute interview segment; a text transcription of the recording was given to them on a separate sheet of paper. This transcription simulates the context that our editors would normally have: the person cutting the interview is almost always the person who recorded it. A sentence roughly five seconds long in the audio was highlighted on the transcript, which the users had to locate, extract and polish by removing the fillers and unnecessary pauses. Each user performed six trials, twice for each of three feedback types. The order in which the feedback types were presented were pseudo-randomized, with the feedback type always changing between consecutive trials. Each trial used a completely different recording, although the same six recordings, presented in pseudo-random order, were used for all users. The raw material was graciously loaned to us by the radio station, taken from one of their older archives.

The session concluded with a questionnaire and interview, and users were offered a small amount of monetary compensation for their time.

6.4 Results and Discussion - Study A

Each trial in the Start-To-Finish study took between 105 and 210 seconds to complete, with an average completion time of 159, 133, and 146 seconds with no feedback, *skipping* and *time-stretching*, respectively. Mean completion times divided by task are shown in Fig. 10. As expected, the results indicate a clear trend that *cut* times are reduced when audio feedback is provided, with *time-stretching* giving the best results. There also exists a trend where audio feedback reduces *polish* times. Surprisingly, however, *polish* times were higher with *time-stretching* for three of our users than with no feedback at all, and was almost double that of *skipping* for one user. These results were explained in subsequent interview results.

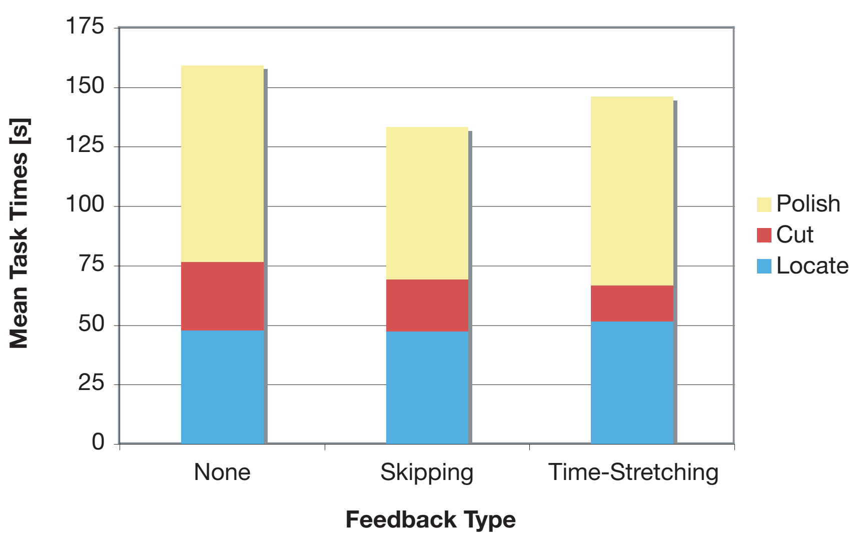

Fig. 10. Mean completion times, divided by task for each feedback type.

The effect of audio feedback on the *locate* task was least dramatic, unsurprisingly, since using the mouse as a position control physically limits the user's ability to navigate large distances [ZSS97].

Users were asked to give a subjective rating of each of the feedback types on a scale from 1 ("very poor") to 5 ("very good", see Fig. 11). Two users ranked *time-stretching* worse than no feedback, and only one user felt *skipping* was slightly worse than no feedback. There appears to be no clear distinction between ratings for *skipping* and *time-stretching*, however. Three of our users were not able to distinguish between *skipping* and *time-stretching*, and rated them identically.

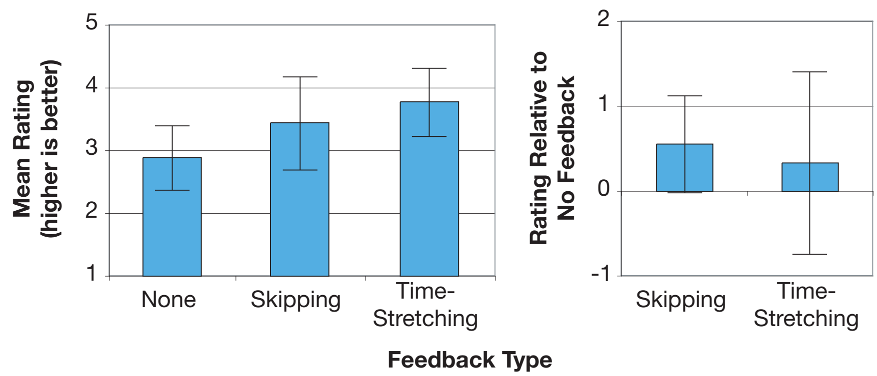

Fig. 11. Mean subjective ratings for the three feedback types (left), and ratings when compared to no feedback (right), with 95% confidence bars. While *skipping* is consistently ranked higher than no feedback, *time-stretching* results are mixed.

Asking users to comment further about their perceived differences between *time-stretching* and *skipping* revealed further results. A majority of the users strongly preferred *time-stretching* during the *cut* task, as expected, since audio processed using *time-stretching* exhibits significantly less artifacts than *skipping*. However, during the *polish* task, more users preferred *skipping*. During the *cut* task, the audio play rate rarely drops below one-quarter nominal speed, but during *polish*, they work at significantly higher zoom rates (two or three seconds of audio, as opposed to tens of seconds during a rough cut, in a window 1280 pixels wide); scrubbing through the audio at such high zoom factors results in audio play rates that are, on average, less than one-tenth nominal speed. Time-stretching at such extreme rates results in significant artifacts, enough for the feedback to be unhelpful, and even objectionable. Users commented that with *skipping*, they were still able to recognizes the syllables in the speech, and could thus more easily complete the task.

These results are consistent with those obtained in our preliminary evaluation with professional editors, although in their case they preferred *resampling*.

6.5 Study B: *Polish*-Only Editing

In this follow-up study, the conditions under which editing was performed were more strictly controlled to help us better understand users' behavior patterns when editing. 7 users from Study A participated in this study, and we recruited an additional 4 editors from the radio station for a total of 11 users (7 male, 4 female). Each trial consisted of removing a single filler from a three second phrase, or five words from a three second segment of music. Users were only able select, play, and delete the current selection. They were not, for example, permitted to change the zoom level of the waveform. Each user was tested with three recordings: two speech and one music. The same recordings were used for each of the three feedback types, but interleaved between trials to minimize learning effects; we hypothesized that any residual learning effects that might occur would be less than the variance introduced by using different data sets. We logged all mouse and keyboard input for offline analysis.

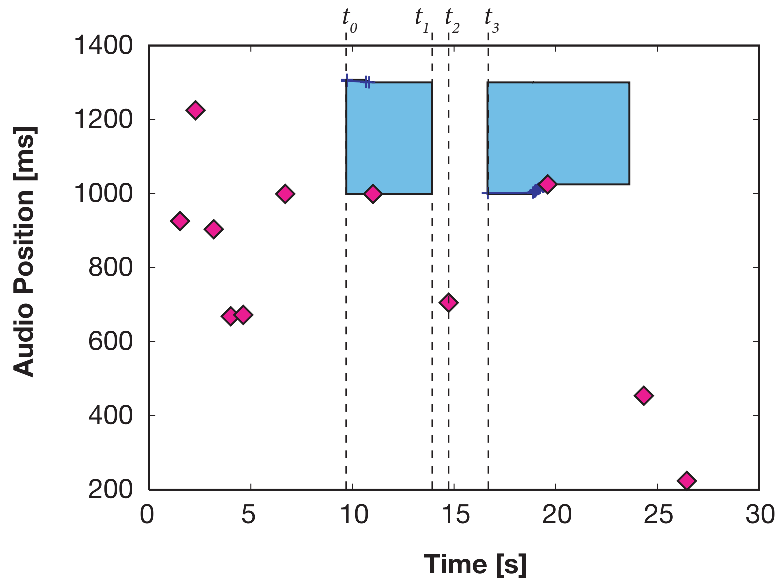

Fig. 12. Removing filler with no feedback. Shaded regions represent selection, diamonds represent times where audio playback is triggered, and crosses are mouse events. The user starts by playing the segment a few times to locate the start of the filler; a region is selected at $t_0 = 9.75$s, and deleted at $t_1 = 13.9$s. The audio is played to verify the cut ($t_2 = 14.7$s), and the user realizes he has removed too much. The deletion is undone at $t_3 = 16.6$ s, adjusted and deleted again. The edited segment is played back twice to verify the edit is now satisfactory.

6.6 Results and Discussion - Study B

Examining the logs captured during the experiment verified our hypothesis that having audio feedback does indeed alter users' behavior while editing. Sample plots of the interaction for the removal of a single filler sound with no feedback and *skipping* are shown in Fig. 12 and 13. These plots show how the audio feedback reduces the uncertainty when users select the filler to cut; users can rely on the audio feedback to help align the selection start and end points, instead of using trial and error.

A quantitative analysis of task times did not reveal any further results beyond those obtained in Study A. This is not surprising, given the open-ended nature of the task we asked users to perform: they would often verify their cut by playing the audio a variable number of times, for example. While it would have been possible to create a setup where all such variability is removed, we felt such a test would not be representative of a real usage scenario, thus bringing into question what the implications of any obtained results would be.

7 Design Implications

Based on the above results, we propose the following guidelines for designing audio navigation interfaces:

For targets close to the current playhead position in the audio timeline, a circular positioning device such as a jog dial or touch wheel is significantly faster

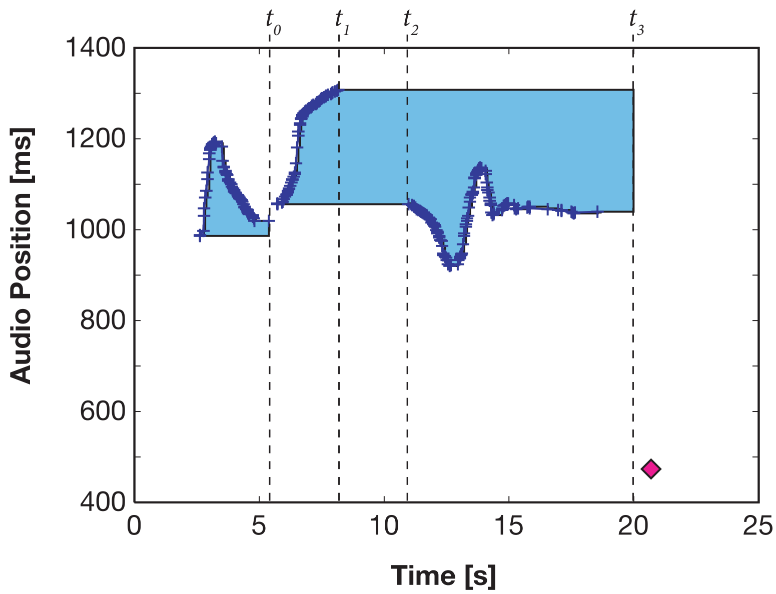

Fig. 13. Removing a filler with *skipping* feedback. After an initial start to locate the starting cut point ($t_0 < 5.5$s), the user selects a region and adjusts the ending cut point until $t_1 = 8.2$ s. At $t_2 = 11$ s, he goes back to fine-tune the starting cut point. He deletes the selection ($t_3 = 20$s) and plays the edited clip once to verify.

than a rate control such as a scroll ring. Based on prior research in document navigation, we believe 90 to 100 seconds is a minimum upper boundary, below which position controls are significantly faster. Users also prefer these position controls over rate control for searching in this range.

Time-stretching should be employed for searching tasks where the play rate of the audio does not drop below one-quarter nominal speed. Not only is audio time-stretched at extremely low rates disturbing to the user because of the artifacts it introduces – targeting performance can become worse than if no audio feedback was provided at all. We believe this threshold value will change as time-stretching algorithms continue to improve, however.

For targeting tasks where the play rate frequently drops below one-tenth nominal speed, either *resampling* or *skipping* should be used for audio feedback. *Resampling* should be utilized for users with prior experience working with tape, as they have the ability to recognize certain cues more easily with audio shifted down in pitch. Most users, however, will prefer *skipping* feedback.

8 Conclusions and Future Work

Interfaces to navigate through an audio timeline can be constructed using a variety of input and feedback types. User input can be used to control the playback position or the play rate; audio feedback at play rates not equal to 1 can be provided via *skipping*, *resampling*, *time-stretching*, or not at all. We performed a series of user studies examining this design space for audio navigation, from which we uncovered some unexpected results. Rate controls are frequently used in audio navigation interfaces; we discovered, however, that position control using the jog dial or touch wheel is, on average, 15–19% faster than rate control with the scroll ring for targets 90 to 100 seconds away in the audio timeline. We hope to conduct further user tests with a larger variety of distances to verify that Hinckley's "crossover effect" for document navigation also applies to audio navigation.

Time-stretched audio produces results closest to what most users expect when audio play rate is altered. If the task requires the audio to be time-stretched at extremely low (less than $\frac{1}{10}\times$) rates, however, feedback provided using *time-stretching* can result in worse targeting performance than no audio feedback. In these situations, we found *skipping* and *resampling* to be two alternatives to assist users for such precise targeting tasks. Designers often automatically disregard *resampling* as a viable method for audio play rate modification, as the pitch shifts it produces render the audio incomprehensible. However, certain user groups, such as audio editors familiar with cutting using reels of tape, will prefer *resampling* over other types of feedback. These results indicate that a hybrid feedback mechanism could be developed for certain applications such as audio editors. *Time-stretching* would be used by default, for example, but when the audio is zoomed in for fine cuts, the system could switch to either *skipping* or *resampling* feedback.

We limited the scope of this work to navigation through an audio timeline, a purely temporal medium. Similar studies could, of course, be performed with other media types, such as video. Video differs from audio in that it contains spatial semantics, in addition to temporal: a time-instant of video can still be interpreted as an image. While we expect the effects of input and feedback type to be similar with such media, we hope to verify them in future studies.

As continuous, time-based media and devices become increasingly ubiquitous, we hope our work will inspire continued research in improved interfaces to navigate audio, and also increase their adoption in popular devices.

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