Searching the Spoken Word

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Modern search technology evolved as a way of shifting the locus of control over information dissemination away from creators and publishers and closer to the ultimate consumers of that content. Today, however, we are increasingly able to apply similar techniques to recorded speech. In this talk, I will describe some of the challenges and opportunities that present themselves when making this transition. I’ll draw on examples from three projects: one focused on improving access to oral history interviews, one focused on reconstructing the spoken record of the Apollo missions to the Moon, and one focused on supporting information access for low-literacy users. In each case, I will highlight some specific technical issues that are on the critical path to developing affordable, effective, and scalable solutions, and I’ll describe our progress in addressing those issues.

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