The development of music software is one of the most dynamic fields in the history of musical instruments and music technology. Since the 1950s, music software did not only embrace more and more aspects of music creation and performance, it also spread socially as well as spatially. While music software companies and open source software projects started to work and distribute their applications globally, these applications not only facilitated the democratisation of the means of musical production, they also enabled and constrained new ways of creating and performing music. In this interdisciplinary field of research, it is necessary to understand how music software applications work and which ideas of music making they incorporate. What are the main lines of development in the history of music software?

So far, historical accounts of music software development only concentrated on the history of particular applications, companies or communities. On the way to an integrative and comparative history of music software, this paper describes the change and integration of the main paradigms of music software development drawing on journal articles, manuals and tutorials, the analysis of the respective interface design and on interviews with developers. From the score paradigm of the early Computer Music Programming Systems to the contemporary interactive performance systems, music software appears as a dynamic field of knowledge formation, conflicting interests and the result of diverse processes of translation, appropriation and (re-)invention.