Interm Project Report:
Design for Pervasive and Locative Systems
PSU, Department of Art 2007

Our NWACC project continues to be in development. As such, this report details progress on key areas and expenditures to date. Please email Mary Agnes Krell [maryk@pdx.edu] with any questions or to request further information.

Table of Contents

1. Completed Activities

During the initial months of the projects, our efforts have been focussed on discussions, planning, and a review of the current state of mobile and pervasive media.

1.1   Collaborative Meetings and Online Discussions

In June of 2007, we traveled to the UK to meet with members of the Bridging Certain Distances with Mobile Media project. That project, funded as a part of a scheme to encourage creativity in teaching and learning, focused on integrating mobile media in the graduate classroom. During our meetings, we were able to visit new facilities and review plans for lab spaces currently under construction. We also met with recent MA students and interviewed them about their experience with mobile media in their MA curricula. Finally, we had individual meetings with technicians and professors teaching on the mobile media curricula. This curricula was introduced over the last two years and notes from its reception proved useful to our project.

1.2   Development of MakeLab

While the initial grant application called for the acquisition of mobile media devices, our department chair suggested that we might develop a working space for the exploration of pervasive, locative and emergent media. As a result, we have spent the early part of the project clarifying the needs of such a space and identifying possible locations. At the time of this report, a location has been identified and some materials have been obtained through in-kind donations from within and outside of the department. We are currently exploring the possibility of future employment of work-study students in the space and we have been

given permission to name it a MakeLab. This MakeLab will act as a test bed environment for work on this project and for future research.

1.3   Review of Mobile Media Devices and Practices
We have been undertaking a review of the artifacts and practices currently linked to mobile media. We have supervised the work of a research student (from the aforementioned UK "Bridging Certain Distances With Mobile Media" project). That student's work is situated at the intersection of performance and digital media and she has produced a report about her findings. We have also enlisted students in our Design Program to research interfaces and, as such, we have supervised those students in conducting interviews about the use of mobile media. Students were tasked with interrogating the visual interfaces through which such devices are controlled. Their interviews focused on three key areas (ease of use, inherited practices, scale). Finally, we have spent many hours analyzing industry publications alongside conference proceedings from key multimedia and digital-art based events.

To date, our review of mobile media devices and practices has confirmed that there is a significant need to develop design standards for the visual interfaces of digital media. We have identified some practices that have emerged and some shared (though visually variant) iconography.

1.4   Workshop by Visiting Artist
In August of 2007 we hosted Music Technologist and Composer, Mr. Stacey Harvey. As he was visiting from the UK, Mr. Harvey agreed to meet with students involved in our project to discuss the use of audio in mobile media and the possibilities and limitations that arise. His lecture took approximately ninety minutes and involved introducing students to computer based sequencing, composing (including response to set briefs, particularly those with such limitations as found in working with mobile media), and explanation of use of audio across different hardware, recording techniques and audio formats. Following the workshop, students were interviewed about the experience and encouraged to comment on the experience. Their feedback showed the workshop to both "informative" and "useful". Students asked for more of these kinds of presentations.

2. Initial Expenditures
2.1   Travel
During the summer of 2007, a proportion of the travel funds were spent for travel to the UK to participate in the meetings described in 1.1 above. Additional travel was undertaken by research partners and was subsidized by host institutions.

2.2   Staff Time
Funds were spent to support staff time (approximately 10 hours per week) during the summer. Most of this time was spent in collaborative meetings, developing the lab (see 1.2 above) and conducting research (1.3 above). The amount of staff time spent during the summer months far outweighed the amount of hours charged. The same was true for student house (as most of those were donated). In future applications, the charges for staff time will be seriously reconsidered.

2.3   In-kind donations

There have been in-kind donations to the project in the form of space, equipment, time and travel. The PSU Art Department has provided lab space for our work. We have received equipment from internal PSU departments and external commercial entities. To date we have obtained computers, monitors, mobile media and wireless controllers. As mentioned above, both staff and students have given large amounts of their time. While we are pleased to be working on a project that encourages such enthusiastic support, we shall seek to change the balance between paid and volunteer time in the future. Finally, much of the travel expenses arising (including airfare for our Visiting Artist, accommodations for researchers in the UK and in Portland, and ground travel) have been donated.

3.

Mapping Objectives to Activities

Each of the activities we've undertaken recently (and shall continue with in the coming year) address one or all of these objectives. To assist interested parties in the mapping of activities to objectives, we've developed the grid below.

It is worth noting that, in section 4.1 of our application, it was stated that, "At its core, this project is about gathering, integrating, and disseminating information about design practice that addresses the ways in which mobile media are used. The positive outcome of this application ensures that the information gathered can be widely disseminated." As such, our key objectives could be summarized as: developing curricula, developing a mobile media workspace, and knowledge transfer.

Activity	Develop Curricula	Develop Workspace	Knowledge Transfer
Collaborative Meetings	x		x
Online Discussions	x	x	x
MakeLab Development		x	x
Review of Contemporary Mobile Media Devices	x	x	x
Review of Mobile Media Practices	X	x	
Workshop by Visiting Artist	x		x