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Hidden History: Locating Communications Heritage



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



The idea

Imagine a journey...

What if we could re-connect the history of technology found in museums and scholarship to the mobile user?

What if the public's experiences and memories can be channelled back? Can the full potential of citizen mobile for history of technology be tapped?

Project Partners

- Jon Agar, University College London
- Tilly Blyth and Mia Ridge, Science Museum
- David Hay, Head of BT Heritage
- Andrew Chitty and Davie McGirr, Illumina Digital

Project Aims

- Engaging Communications Heritage
Can geolocated heritage increase public engagement with and access to museum collections?
- Networking Organisations
Can humanities and heritage organisations inform interaction and application design or vice versa?
- Experience Design
What are the appropriate service conventions for user interaction with mobile heritage?

Museum Collections Mobile Service

Tell me about the history of technology where I am

- Bring together objects and history within our landscapes
- Breaking down spatial boundaries of museum, collection and audiences
- Informing personal histories of technology with scholarly histories

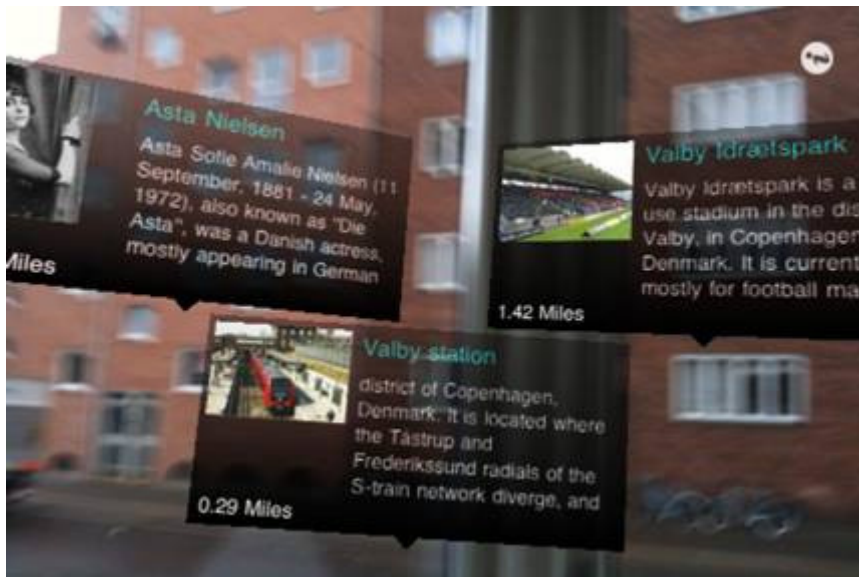
What we did: Practical Questions

- Who are the audience and what are their mobile devices?
- Sample size – 10s, 100s, 1000s?
- Types of content – text, images, video
- Service area
- Geographical location of object – Lat/Long, postcode, building?
- Location data in database – manufacture, birth, use
- Blog to track audience suggestions

What we did: User Journeys

- General Interest User: Individual
Nina, 26, Bethnal Green, Digital Native
- General Interest User: Family
The Smiths, Dad 40s, Mum 40's, Daughter 13, Boy 15, all interested in culture, kids like science and technology
- The Academic Expert
Simon, Urban Geographer, 40, reads, interested in science and technology but likes social side of his subject
- The External Expert: The Technology Enthusiast
Tony, 65 retired ICL programmer, evangelist for British Technology

What we did: Scoping other services



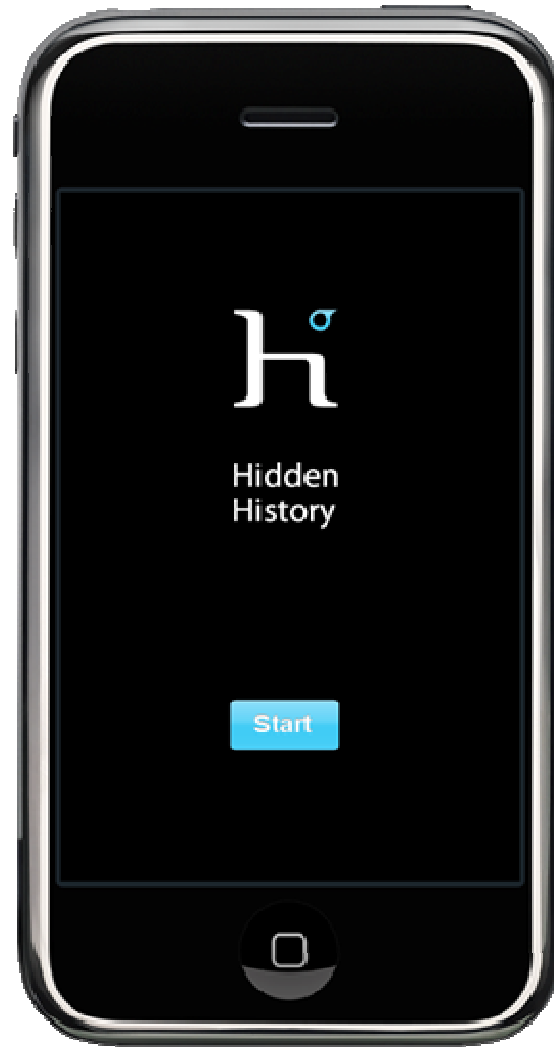
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Issues

- Ambitions to create app, not just share ideas and approaches
- Different knowledge frameworks from partner organisations
 - Museum focus on objects and collections
 - HEI focus historical and location context
 - Commercial partner focus on creation of viable service
 - BT Archives across all three
- Limited staff time and resource to research locations, images, audio and video
- Databases holding confidential information that cannot be shared openly

Successes

- Small team with diverse skill sets, enabling different perspectives
- Complimentary but not overlapping skills
- Clear partner objectives (commercial, institutional, research)
- Support and work with the best teams from creative industries, HEIs and museums
- Understanding of where project fits in wider strategy and policy (e.g. museum, BT, UCL, AHRC)
- Creation of prototype!



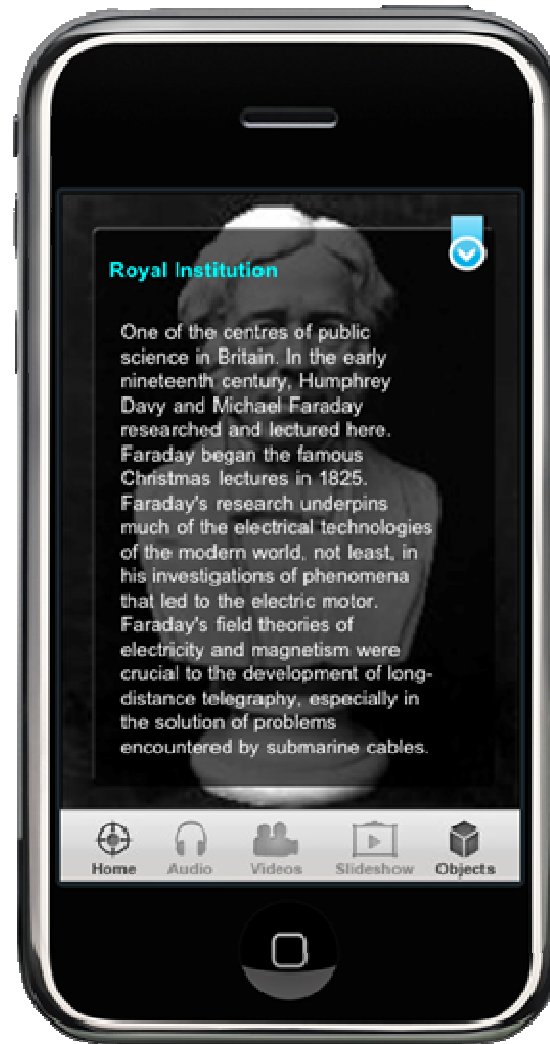
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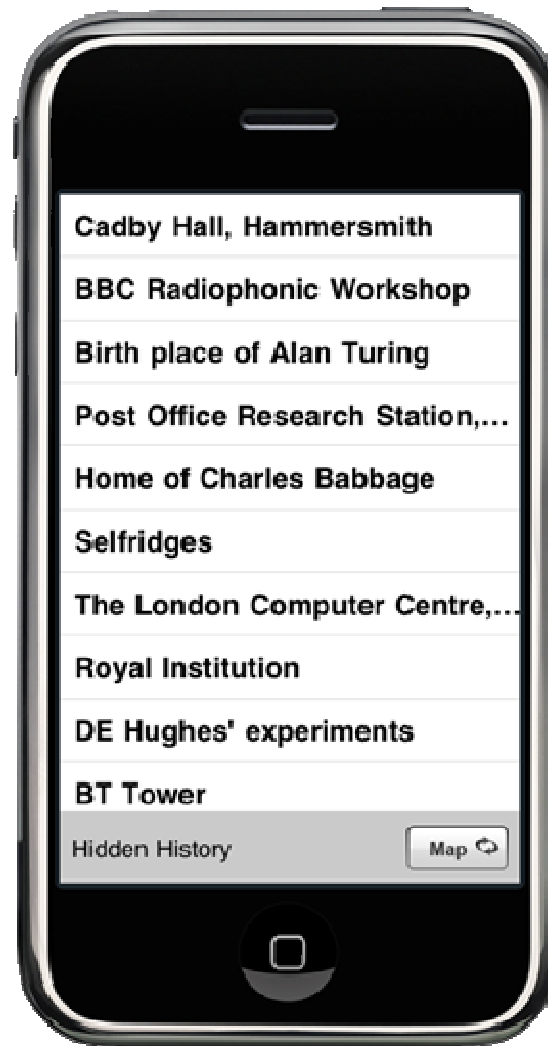
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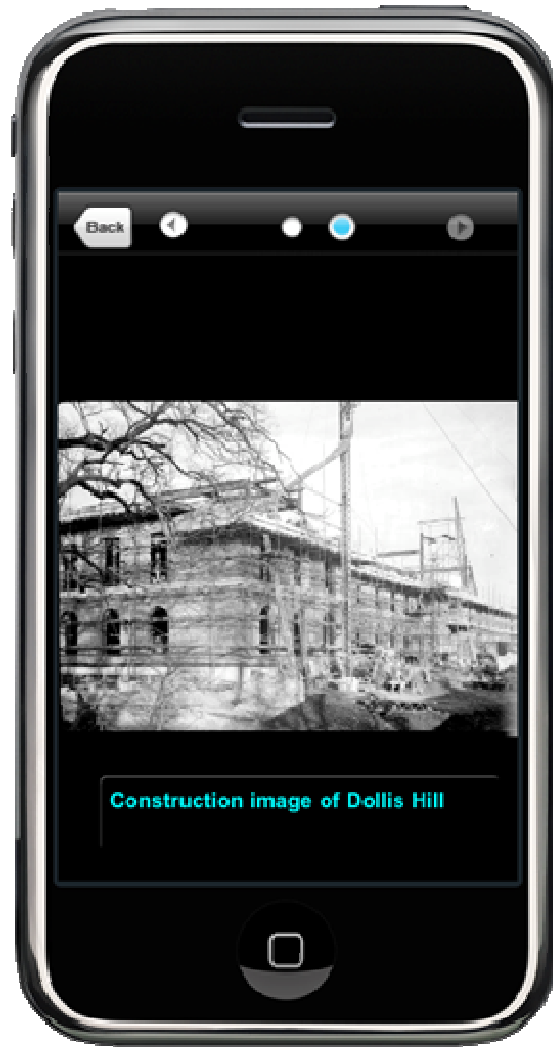
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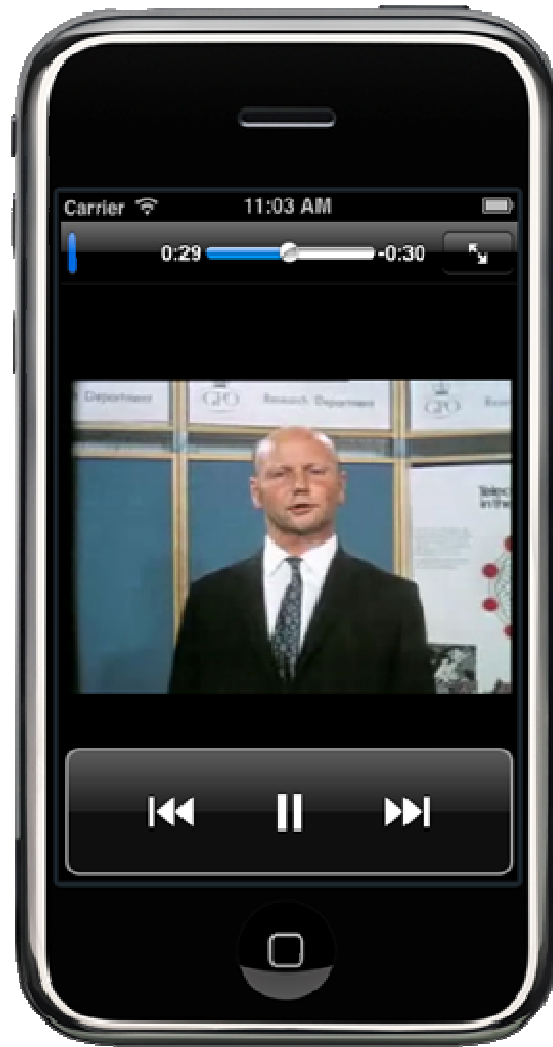
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Taking Forward

- Audience Research on the value of history in locations and functionality of app
- Increase the size of the content sample
 - beyond 20 Points of Interest to 60 we have scoped
 - beyond communications and computing
 - possibility to include further collections
 - need for project Content Management System
- Stability in VR view
- Consistent navigational approach
- User feedback mechanism
- Author led trails and walks

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Thanks!

BT Archives

AHRC

Illumina Digital
Science Museum



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