

Your mobile in (and out of) the museum
– utilising users' own devices

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30 March 2010

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The focus of my presentation is the use of visitors' own phones, particularly smartphones, For many these devices are the centre of their world, and their communications.

I will touch on what makes these devices different to the audio guide.
Are we looking at evolution or revolution?

Past projects



- World Textiles Gallery at the Whitworth (2006)
 - interactive work stations giving access to text panels, laminates and labels on web, plus further searching
 - Wi-Fi network for users' own devices

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This arrangement enabled visitors to connect not only to web pages focusing on interpreting the Gallery, but also provided access to almost all the collection through the online catalogue, accessible on the workstations and via their own devices.

Past projects



- London Museums Hub (2008)
 - research into barcode and RFID tagging
- Renaissance North West (2008-9)
 - Royal Northern College of Music historic instruments

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My research for the London Museums Hub, now Renaissance London, looked at collections management and visitor access. As part of this I arranged a trial of 2D barcodes which I will talk about later. The research is published at http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/find_a_network/regional_networks/sustainable_storage

For the RNCM I provided support and advice for the creation of audio and video recordings of their historic instrument collection for use in the collections area and on their website. They applied to Apple to publish the recordings on iTunes U to make it possible for visitors to listen to recordings of instruments which were displayed in display cases around the building.

Revealing Histories pilot



- 2D codes
 - pilot with 'Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery' display at Manchester Art Gallery
 - link to text, audio, submitting of user content

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This pilot was arranged with Manchester Art Gallery to demonstrate the capabilities of 2D barcodes in museums. The graphic on the right shows the way in which the codes work. The QR codes were placed in the display cases after the display was set up.

Revealing Histories pilot

Bonbonniere



This bonbonniere was used as a storage box for sugar coated mints, and was made around 1770 in Staffordshire. It's on display in the gallery atrium on the Ground Floor.

Tell us what you think

My thoughts are:

Other links

[Tino Tamsho-Thomas' Poem](#) [MP3](#)/[ACC](#)/[Text](#)

[Curator's Interpretation](#) [MP3](#)/[ACC](#)/[Text](#)

[Mike Leng's Interpretation](#) [MP3](#)/[ACC](#)/[Text](#)

[See other objects](#)

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A mobile-friendly website was created which had small size images and little text. Users could listen to audio and submit their own comments. This provided an alternative to the printed comments cards.

Informal evaluation of the project demonstrated that the technology worked. The main issues were already known – only a small proportion of phones supported mobile internet, an even smaller proportion had barcode reader software installed, and users were reluctant to download the software and were nervous of using the internet on their phones if they hadn't done so already.

British Museum choices



- **Multimedia Guides**
 - 200 objects in 61 galleries
 - ‘ick’ factor

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The British Museum offers a multilingual Multimedia guide which is a development of the familiar audio guide. It is limited to 200 objects and there is no corresponding online offer. One factor is the limits to providing Wi-Fi and 3G access in the building. Should museums invest in installing this facility? At the BM this was costed at £1m. Oh, and the ‘ick’ factor remains – some people don’t like using devices that have been used by others!

Dan Dare - Science Museum



- [Dan Dare and the Birth of Hi-Tech Britain](#)
 - Audio tour
 - Call 020 7112 2020 from your mobile and dial the number on the object label

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Of course, visitors can use their mobiles in a simple, direct way. Visitors to the Dan Dare exhibition at the Science Museum can simply call a number to hear a commentary on an object.

iPhones at Tate



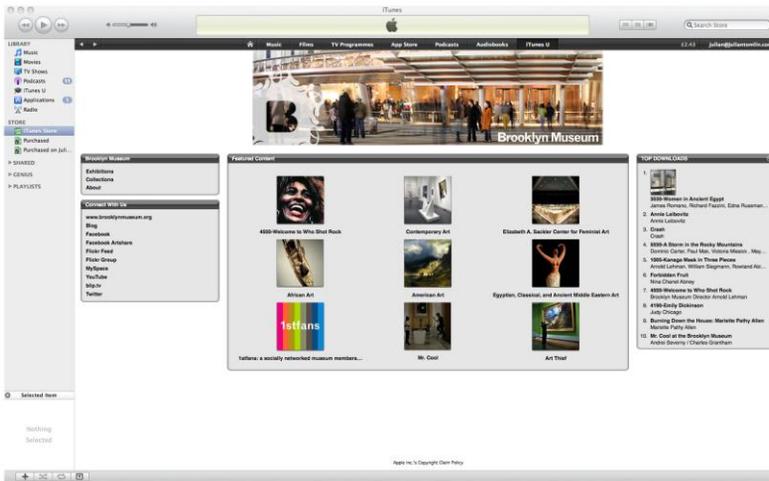
- iPod Touch available for hire £3 (£2)
- iPhones supported via Wi-Fi network
 - [Link to Tate](#)
 - Other phones with internet capability supported!
- iPhone app for latest show in Turbine Hall

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Tate have provided audio guides to visitors via hired iPods, downloads, and an online alternative.

But the latest offer of iPhone apps such as that for the Turbine Hall show is obviously limited to those who carry iPhones. Is this too restrictive?

iTunes U - Brooklyn Museum



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Some museums have placed their resources, audio, video and PDFs on iTunes U, the learning arm of iTunes making them accessible to devices that connect to iTunes, both iPods and iPhones.

Decoding Art pilot

- Interpretation of Public Art in Manchester
- Curated by Manchester Art Gallery
- Follow up earlier pilot of QR codes
- Possible RFID, GPS later
- Web based resource – WordPress site



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This project offers interpretation where it normally limited and static – engraved lettering on plinths.

The artworks will carry QR codes which will identify that there is interpretation available. In Albert Square there is a public Wi-Fi zone on trial. But what about overseas visitors and others whose tariff doesn't provide free internet access?

We are looking at adding some RFID tags to demonstrate the capability of this technology.

A locations aware approach was looked at but considered a separate project. Being out of doors there wouldn't be the same limitations as in a building but there might be issues over accuracy.

Augmented Reality software such as Layer and Wikitude were an interesting alternative approach but one that wouldn't support the information requirements that we had.

Decoding Art pilot

- Testing Traffolyte labels
- Minimal information on labels
- Label directs users to mobile site – page for individual artwork
- Read journalistic style 'label', listen to commentary, submit comments



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This pilot is to be launched this Spring. We are currently testing the labels and the website.

QR code readers



- BeeTagg – open app, select camera, app auto-detects code, launches web browser, or email etc
- QuickMark – open app, app opens camera, auto-detects code, prompts to confirm link (to web, email etc)

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There are many barcode readers – these are just two. They work in different ways.

Decoding Art pilot



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The site still in testing mode is at
<http://www.manchestergalleries.org/decodingart/>

You can see what it looks like on an iPhone at
<http://www.testiphone.com/>

Please note the browser should display the mobile version of the site.
You can check which version is displayed at the bottom of the window.



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