The technology behind 1831 Riot!

Using GPS (Global Positioning System) and an electronic graded grid of Queen Square, it is possible to plot individual sound samples as .mp3 files on a mobile computer and a server located nearby.

By picking up a visitor's position on the grid, the different .mp3 files are triggered and relayed through headphones. The route they choose determines the order of files heard, so that visitors 'mix' their own experience. Programmable logic adds another layer of variety and complexity to the ways that files are delivered.
In response to the technology, a non-linear script form has been devised, with over 150 separate script files written and recorded for specific locations throughout the Square. These files are capable of relating to each other in any order or combination so that every visitor's experience makes sense whatever route they take.

Field trials

Field trials took place in Queen Square in April 2004. Over a period of three weeks, members of the public tried out the combined technology and content and fed back into the research programme of Mobile Bristol. Mobile Bristol was a collaborative programme run by Hewlett Packard Laboratories, University of Bristol and Appliance Studio to investigate how pervasive technology could be used to enhance how residents and visitors experience and interact with their physical environment and each other in urban and public spaces.

Educational applications

During the field trials, Liz Crow and Ralph Hoyte worked with teachers and children from two local primary schools in a pilot study to develop 1831 Riot! as a continuing learning resource.