

The Audio Market

Developed by Steve Woollard

www.woolofsky.co.uk

For Watershed Media Centre and Hewlett Packard 2007.

Purpose of Mediascape

This mediascape has been developed as a practical example of the audio functions that can be found within the HP Mediascape Authoring software. It has not been designed as full technical explanation for using audio in a mediascape, but as a 'hands-on' tutorial experience.

Before you start

Before you get out there and try The Audio Market at your designated spots please take a moment to take a look at these brief notes, as they will aid your experience greatly.

- The Audio Market is designed to be viewed in landscape format on your iPaq. To find out how to change the screen orientation on your device please consult the manual. (If you have thrown out the manual like most people do, don't worry, everything will still work, but not as well as in landscape mode.)
- Choosing your mediascape location – the optimum size for this mediascape is around 150m in diameter but can be easily scaled up or down for any open space you have access to.
- To get the most from the experience you need to set aside 10 minutes. This will ensure you get to visit all the regions and listen to all the important audio functions that are available. If you do have more time however there is a lot more content at The Audio Market for you to explore and this may take up to 25 minutes.

Audio libraries

Although both the mp3 and WAV format can be used in the HP Mediascape client I would recommend sticking to a format you are familiar with. Try to keep audio within the ranges 128-192kps as it will ensure good quality and small file sizes.

Stock audio websites such as sounddogs.com and The Freesound Project are very handy for collecting a wealth of different sounds, but if you get the chance record them yourself. They will sound more accurate, you can share them with other people, and they are a good laugh to make.

The Audio Market - How & Why?

There are a number of audio functions available within the authoring software but how do you know which is best for your needs? In the following passages I will explain how I created The Audio Market, and the tricks and tips I have discovered during my own practices of making mediascapes.

- *Background/ambient sounds* – Within the grounds of The Audio Market (large square orange colour region) there is a background sound of a busy market place. This looped audio is there for a number of reasons; firstly to set the scene of the mediascape but also to reassure the user that everything is working correctly. This constant feedback allows the user to relax and enjoy the experience more. When the user walks out of the market area the sound fades out and stops. This was made using the OnExit.FadeOutandStop feature.
- *Fruit & Veg stall* – In this region the simple OnEnter.Play and on OnExit.Stop region has been applied. This is the simplest use of audio in the mediascape software, but has to be used very wisely so ensure it does not play over the top of any other sounds or cut out part-way through. The best way to use this audio function, which includes the OnEnter.FadeIn and OnExit.Pause features, is to only use it within regions that are well spaced out. It is also a good idea to use OnExit.Pause rather than the OnExit.Stop, therefore if GPS sway was to occur or the user left a region by accident, they could re-enter the region and resume where they were cut off.

- *Toy stall* – In the instance of the toy stall the desired outcome was to create a chaotic ambient mix made from a number of different sounds. For this I used the `OnEnter.Play` function and looped the audio tracks in their properties box. I added these sounds as individual regions then layered them on top of one another. Now when the user now walks into these regions they will get a selection of toy sounds all playing at the same time and creating the desired toy stall atmosphere.

Also used on the toy stall audio was the mediascapes pan function. As life is not always heard in stereo this property allows a sound to be more prominent through one audio channel or headphone than the other. This then gives the audio more direction and makes sounds more realistic.

- *Fish stall* – To recreate the call of the fishmonger I have used a feature that can be found just under your map in the mediascape software called a 'speaker region'. The closer a user walks to the centre of this region the louder the defined sound will become. This can be great for creating mood and also for easing transition into different regions. They could also be used for non-direct user navigation such as making the user follow a sound to a particular point.
- *Advice/buying tips stall* – Playlists can be used for many things in a mediascape, but they are especially useful for narrative pieces of audio. This is because audio in a playlist will never play over the top of another and will not cut-out mid sentence. For example, within The Audio Market all of the advice and tips content is created using the playlist feature. A user can then enter one region that contains more than one piece of audio, and instead of them all playing at once, they will play in a desired order. In computer programming terms this is called a 'list', meaning the first one in is the first one out. The result of this playlist function can be seen within The Audio Market when the 'haggling tips' region is entered. There are 6 haggling tips here and each will play through until its end, one after another, unless user interaction changes this. Such interactions can come in the form of leaving a region, where the remaining tracks in the playlist can be cleared (`Playlist.Clear`) or through button interaction such as pressing to skip a particular section. Clearing

allows the audio currently being heard to will play through in its entirety, whereas skipping will stop the track right there and move onto the next one in the playlist. (Helpful tip – Never add a looped piece of audio to a playlist, because it will never end and stop any other regions working!)

Another incredibly useful feature within the playlist is the `Playlist.AddIfNotPlayed(mediaIn)` statement. Also used within The Audio Market this allows for an individual audio track be listened to only once. This prevents repeating of content such as the function explanations and allows useful content to be listened to straightaway.

If you haven't done so already, go off and try The Audio Market. I hope it gives you some more insight into the audio features you can use in your own mediascapes and that you enjoy the experience I have created.

Any comments or questions can be sent to me at steve@woolofsky.co.uk

Enjoy