



LOAM
Locative Oral/Audio Media

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What is Loam?

A free platform for oral historians and sonic artists to develop locative audio experiences on mobile devices. Loam can be used to create multi-layered, immersive audiowalks and sonic environments from a wide range of data sources.

Loam will launch publicly in 2013 in three 'flavours':

Loam Player – Easily create Loam applications by dragging and dropping files into the Loam player and distributing them online.

Loam Code – Open Source libraries for developing your own apps or extending Loam functionality.

Loam Bespoke – An all in one sound production, transcription, editing, programming and distribution solution.

What can I use to make Loam apps?

You will need files containing geo-coded data alongside well as any text, transcriptions and narrative elements that you wish to include. Loam will support:

XML
KMZ / KML (Google Earth)
Transana Databases *
Stories Matter Databases *

** To use these databases you will need to add to keys to each transcription record containing the decimal latitude and longitude associated with the narrative.*

Loam is primarily a sonic experience, therefore sound files are also necessary: MP3 or FLAC formats are recommended. Files can be hosted virtually, or packaged locally with your Loam app.

Sound files can be delivered across four layers depending on their context:

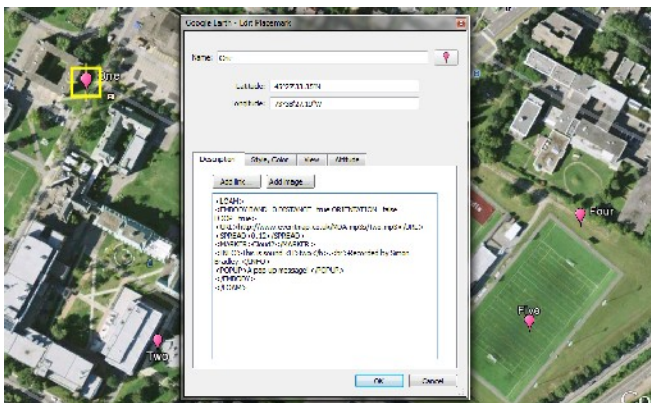
Guide – This layer retains a consistent volume and can be used for voice overs and directions to guide the user.

Embodied – Embodied sounds increase and decrease in volume and spatialisation depending on the user's proximity and orientation to them.

Cloud – A 'cloud' is a particular type of embodied sound, which also loops upon and replicates itself into new sonic textures. Clouds can be used to create more experimental interpretations of source audio, or even to create aleatoric soundscapes.

Background – The background layer might contain music or ambient sound – it 'fills in the gaps' and can be made to rise and drop in volume in relation to the other sounds the user is experiencing.

Loam supports its own flexible XML-style definitions, which can be included in descriptors (such as the 'Description' tag of a KML file) in order to construct behaviours:



In this example an 'embodied' sound is created on the Concordia campus. Loam media can be divided into multiple 'bands' reflecting categorical or historical grouping – users can select bands akin to tuning a radio.

Embodied sounds can also be sensitive to distance and orientation. Here 0.12 km area of propagation is here defined for a remotely hosted file. Files may also be held in local (SD card) storage, or even connect to live streams.

Prototypes

As a part of the development of Loam there are currently three prototype applications for Android phones:

Almias – An experimental soundscape sited at Almscliffe Crag, North Yorkshire. Implements Embodied and Cloud layers. See www.almias.org.uk

Holbeck Audio Walk – A new version of Simon Bradley's 2010 tour of urban Leeds. Implementing the Guidance layer and KML support. See www.holbeckaudiowalk.org

Concordia Displaced – A short and sweet audio test, implementing Embodied and Background layers.



Getting Involved

We encourage all interested parties to get in touch. We would be particularly interested in making contact with:

- collaborating on specifications to support existing or additional database/transcription formats;
- suggestions or wish-lists for the functionality of the system;
- scholars / artists who wish to test pre-release versions of the platform with their own projects;
- programmers interested in developing the platform for iOS.