A historical audio and video guidebook for an Android smartphone/tablet

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Abstract

With the increase in popularity of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, guidebook applications written for these platforms are an ideal way for tourists and avid historians to learn about particular locations and can offer several advantages over normal guidebooks. However, the majority of existing guidebook applications do not offer a rich, reliable and responsive user experience; ideally combining audio, video and map technology in one application that could be used by a wide a variety of users (for example people who are visually impaired and non-English speaking users).

The aim of the project was to create an application that had an emphasis on accessibility and usability with all of the features mentioned above. To ensure it was responsive, all the content (including the map data) was held locally on the device. This aspect of the application had the additional benefit of allowing it to be used in locations without Wi-Fi or mobile phone coverage, ensuring the data was always available and allowing the application to run more reliably. In recent years, the increases in capacity of internal memory and SD card capacity have made this option practical.

The final system included all of the features outlined in the objectives plus several other features also implemented to make the application more personal and user friendly. Through the use of sign language videos, high contrast text, easily adjustable font sizes and changeable language, the application should be more open to a variety of users. A large amount of user testing was undertaken to ensure the application was both quick and easy to use. From a tourism point of view, the ability to geolock the guidebooks and to display the user's position on a detailed historical map could encourage people to visit the towns and cities covered by the books. The application was made flexible enough to be used either as an application for a tour guide or for individual use.