mscape – Free Toolkit to Create and Share Mobile, Interactive Experiences

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Developed by HP Labs, mscape is a software suite that enables people to design, play and share mediascapes -- location-based experiences, games and tours. Earlier this year, HP made the authoring toolkit and mobile player software available for download at no cost from the community website www.mscapers.com.

The toolkit allows people to associate physical locations with digital media, such as video, music, images and text. Users equipped with a GPS-enabled mobile device running the mscape player can move through the physical world, triggering media in response to physical events such as location, proximity, time and movement. By blending digital media with gaming, storytelling and the outdoors, mscape offers people of all ages a fun new way to experience their surroundings.

At mscapers.com, designers of all ages can create, post and share their digital location-based mediascape experiences. Mediascapes can be created using simple, web-based authoring wizards. For more advanced mediascapes, a PC-based authoring toolkit is available for download. The mscape player also is available from the site for mobile devices that support the Windows® Mobile operating system and with GPS capability.

Unlike PC-based applications, mscape technology provides a highly interactive, fun and engaging experience when users are out and about in the real world. mscape's context-sensitive logic, combined with GPS and mapping technology, allows gamers, travel, GPS and outdoor enthusiasts to take their experiences to a higher level. The solution is so flexible that different digital files can be overlaid in the same space and delivered at different times, depending on which other locations in the mediascape the user has already visited.

The website provides everything people need to develop their own mediascapes, including training and tips to get started. There are numerous ready-made mediascapes at the site, which can be downloaded by anyone with a GPS-enabled HP iPAQ or other handheld device running the Windows Mobile operating system.

The mscape authoring tools are designed to be easy to use and provide near limitless opportunities for mediascape designers, including:

• Creating mediascapes to bring to life a community's history and stories;

• Designing augmented reality games, sharing the fun with friends and strangers;

• New ways of socializing, entertaining and learning.

Once a user has created a mediascape, it can be published on the website so others

can try it for themselves.

HP Labs, the company's central research facility, has been investigating the use of pervasive, context-aware services for several years. Versions of its mscape technology have been used extensively by artists, media professionals, schoolchildren of all ages, educators and community groups to design and create their own mediascapes. So far there have been more than 3,900 downloads of versions of the mscape toolkit. The mscapers site puts HP Labs technologies in the hands of consumers, gamers and professional designers so they can imagine what's possible and create it. HP will continue to use this open, collaborative model to bring new innovations to market.

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