Teri Rueb is a professor of Media Study at the Department of Media Study of the University at Buffalo; she is currently completing her doctorate at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. As an artist, she is best known for her interactive site-specific sound installations, which link audio samples played through a participant's headphones to their geographic location using Global Positioning technology: “Trace” (1999), uses GPS to track participants' movements through hiking trails in Yoho National Park, British Columbia, and plays memorial songs, poems, and stories which are linked to specific geographic coordinates. According to Rueb's website, “the project explores loss and transformation in an historical moment when concepts of memory, presence and absence are undergoing significant shifts in cultural meaning” (Trace).

“Drift” (2004), uses a similar format to celebrate “wandering, being lost, and drifting” in one's environment in an age when Global Positioning technologies threaten to eradicate this experience as they enable us to swiftly navigate from point A to point B, enabling a mental schema in which we place more emphasis on the destination than the journey (Drift). “Core Sample” (2007) is another interactive sound walk, which “evokes the material and cultural histories contained in and suggested by the landscape” and attempts to blur the lines between “surface and core, natural and artificial, industrial and organic, past, present and future” (Core Sample). Her installations are concerned with movement, location, spatiality, temporality, identity, and how our interpretation of our environment is shaped by Global Positioning and other mobile and technological media.

“Itinerant” is a sound-scape installation which uses GPS software linked to a portable device which plays audio based on the visitor's specific location. The work is specific to the fifty acres of green-space that comprise Boston Common, and its surrounding neighbourhoods. As participants wander around Boston Commons they hear different audio samples as they visit new locations. The audio samples consist of excerpts from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, as well as fragments of Rueb's original text about the narrator's mysterious uncle. Between the...
spatial locations which correspond to these narrative fragments, the route is interspersed with ambient noises, primarily those of footsteps on different terrains. The narrative and the sound effects frame how the participant views their surroundings during their voyage, while the surroundings themselves determine how the voyager interprets the narrative. Meanwhile, the participant is acutely aware that they are being directed to some extent by the audial cues in their headphones, and that their position is being tracked and monitored by Global Positioning Satellites. The excerpts used from both narratives clearly present Frankenstein, his monster, and the mysterious uncle as outsiders, alienated from society. As the wanderer listens to the narrative, she is conscious of this feeling of alienation or otherness that exists despite the ubiquity of modern day, instantaneous communication technology. This feeling is reinforced by headphones which prevent her from communicating with other people in the environment; for the course of her journey she is an outside observer, a human geographer.

Of Rueb's installations, "Itinerant" is the only one which has been adapted to an online format. The work runs in a Flash applet within the larger browser window; the user is given the option of selecting an interactive map with small sound clips or full-length sound, and told that listening through headphones is the optimal mode of aural consumption. Once the selection has been made, the user is presented with a blueish-gray-scale map of Boston Common and the surrounding neighborhoods. The only labels on the map are 'boston common' and 'charles river'. The map is overlaid with shaded circles and rectangles of varying sizes. When the user hovers the cursor over one of these geometric 'nodes' an audio clip is played through the speakers or headphones. Some nodes yield fragments of verbal narrative, or audial lexias, while others (generally the lighter shaded circles) yield looped audio of ambient noise such as footsteps on varying surfaces, indecipherable chattering, or rickety shopping carts being pushed down a sidewalk. When the user's cursor leaves a node, the audio is immediately cut off. In addition to the sounds played on mouse-over, there is an accompanying photo for each site displayed just underneath the map. The photos are either site-specific, and representative of what one would actually see (albeit with limited scope) at those specific locations, and others are more generally representative, like an apartment building or a tree.

Unlike the installation from which it is adapted, the user is free to visit the nodes in any order. On foot, individuals could take different paths, ignoring some nodes altogether, but they must pass through some nodes sequentially. When navigating the map, one may wish to start at the left and weave through the nodes more or less sequentially, but it is possible to skip from one node to the next and to 'revisit' distant nodes with ease.
the installation, it is movement that drives the narrative, and a
unique route will generate a unique narrative; the journey's
sights, smells and experiences combine with the narrative to
create a new narrative within the memory of the participant.
The online version is devoid of this link. The narrative informs
the viewing of a largely blank map of what the user knows or is
told represents Boston. There is no interplay between the
narrative and the experiential quality of the "journey." The
pictures that come with each node are not particularly
informative, though their content does usually mirror some
aspect of the accompanying excerpt.

Though the map and the pictures are indicative of real places,
adaptation to the internet has removed the primacy of place in
informing the narrative and vice versa. On the other hand,
sitting at home, alone, on one's computer, viewing maps and
pictures of a distant place, meditating on how they relate to
Frankenstein, his creation, or a shunned uncle that nobody
really knew, certainly reinforces the notion that despite being
knee-deep in communication technology, we are still to some
extent alone, cut-off from the rest of the world, alienated.

Gregory Mellum was a student of Dr. Kiki Benzon for a course in
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**Screenshots:**

[Image]

**Read the original work online here.**

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