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Lecturer

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(SIAL) Sound Studios,**RMIT university****Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory**

The SIAL Sound Studios were officially opened on December 3, 2004 with the inaugural SPECTRUM series of concerts. This followed an intensive period of development starting from early 2003 with the construction of a lab, multi-user space and offices, and ending with the completion of the Pod studio in August 2004. Funding for the equipment was provided by a Systemic Infrastructure Initiative (SII) Grant, and matching funds from the University.

The Studios are based in the Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory, led by Prof Mark Burry, which is a specialist unit of RMIT University's School of Architecture and Design, dedicated to innovation in transdisciplinary design research and education. While utilising the tools, techniques and technologies of a traditional computer music studio, the Studios' position within a school of spatial studies supports a broader teaching and research agenda than might be pursued in a traditional studio.

The Studios have grown rapidly during the establishment phase of 2003-04. Undergraduate teaching is offered through two modes: architecture teaching studios, and cross-university electives. The teaching studios have included *MemoryGames* and *The Future Sound of Cities*, both based in games engines enabled with surround sound for soundscape design projects. Another teaching studio in 2004, explored architectural designs for a *Museum of Sound*. The two electives currently on offer are *Soundscape Studies* and *Spatial Sound Composition and Diffusion*. The role of the electives is to provide a path by which students from any discipline may commence working in the studios. Another two electives are planned for 2006.

In early 2005, the post-graduate cohort expanded to 12 Masters and PhD students whose projects range across software development, soundscape design, composition, architecture projects, new media and noise management issues. Three post-graduate students hold scholarships, from the CRC Construction Innovation, an APA, and a School of Architecture and Design award.

Engaging with the broader community and a range of partners is seen as one way to sustain a vibrant research environment within the Studios. The *CitySounds* project emerged from previous undergraduate studios

and other research as a new method for community noise/sound surveys. The City of Melbourne Noise Unit commissioned the project, which involved integration of three key components: a 3D model and soundscape design of an inner-city precinct, an embedded sound survey, and a method to collect results online. Respondents were able to navigate around an indicative inner Melbourne precinct while hearing a range of sounds, associated with survey questions, designed to investigate the communities' awareness and attitudes to sound and noise in the CBD of Melbourne. A full report of the results is in preparation.