

## **2010 Student Radio Awards – Best Technical Innovation Scott Robinson (Radio Sonar) – I Love Student Radio Player**

The I Love Student Radio Player allows student stations to broadcast to a much wider audience than previously possible. The application was developed with the aim of providing an easy mobile platform for student stations to broadcast their streams without any additional work from themselves.

The application itself is an iPhone application, which allows the user/listener to choose the student station they wish to listen to. Once they have chosen the station they are able to listen to their stream live, alongside information provided by the station, which currently consists of the current and upcoming show and the currently playing track information. At present the application is only available on the iPhone platform but development for the Android and Blackberry OS's has already begun.

I set out looking to create an application for my station, Radio Sonar, but soon realised that creating a mobile application would be no easy task. I've spent many years programming applications and websites so programming is nothing new to me, but the complexity of the iOS platform meant there would be numerous obstacles to overcome and a lot of learning required. For this reason, before even starting development I looked at how I could expand the application. There are an awful lot of student stations out there, and I'm sure they would have problems creating an iPhone application as well; if they even had anyone who was technically minded enough to do so! I decided to look into a way of creating an application that other stations could use - perhaps a framework based application where other stations can simply add their stream information and some graphics. I soon decided to create one application for all stations. This would mean everyone's information could be centrally stored and centrally managed. Should the application need fixing or updating then I could simply update the application and push it to Apple and everyone would be able to access it straight away rather than waiting for their stations to update their own application.

Having decided upon this method of creating the application I had to look at how to create it. Where would I store all this data? How would I go about getting all the data from stations to begin with? I contacted the Student Radio Association who were more than happy to help and we developed a custom XML format which the application uses to receive schedule information, stream data and graphics. As the SRA website is kept up-to-date by its users and members this allowed for an up-to-date information source for the application.

Now the data source has been provided an application needed to be developed. The development time took about a month in between the rest of my studies and general station tech duties! It was developed using Titanium, an application framework for developing mobile applications. Using Titanium was a safe move as it saved a lot of time and hassle rather than coding in the iPhone's native language. At present the application consists of two main 'functions': the station select screen and the player screen, both of which are fairly obvious in functionality. The application updates its internal database at set intervals with any new information from the SRA website. The station select screen then reads this information and displays it to the user. Once a station has been selected it is passed back to the player allowing them to play a stream. The now playing data is also updated at a set interval to keep the information displayed relevant.

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The application in its current state is very basic, but has allowed for so many stations to broadcast on the iPhone platform which would not have been possible before. The application has already been expanded to allow for more features which currently include the SRA chart show data and an easily viewable catalogue of student stations allowing you to see more information on them. This release is currently awaiting approval from Apple. It is hoped that in the close future an Android version will be released, but due to the complexity of this platform this takes some time!

The application was developed by me alongside Radio Sonar. It was decided at an early stage that due to me using the SRA's systems for a lot of the data that I should name it under the SRA's brand, for this reason it is called the I Love Student Radio player, in conjunction with the SRA's I love Student Radio scheme. Since this application has been released we have seen listening figures for our station nearly double, which for a student station is an extraordinary amount! Listening figures aren't the only way of judging the success of the application; I have been in contact with many other student stations who are hugely grateful for my work, and with organizations who are interested in working alongside me to develop the application and applications for themselves.

