

THE FLASH MICROMEDIA A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF WORK-FORCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

E-learning has come to stay in the third world countries' educational system and therefore there is need to produce teaching packages that will boost the educational sector and to provide entrepreneurial skills for both teachers and learners so as to equip them with the task ahead which ICT and technology is posing in the 21st century classroom. Technological advancement which is related to computer knowledge/skills and abilities have been of paramount importance in educational system and society today. Computer technology has become an important and effective tool in delivering information to the learners and the society at large. This advancement in technology also plays an important role in helping teachers to deliver their instructions to students effectively. The focus of this article is to discuss the basic steps to follow to acquire the skills of producing teaching packages in various fields of endeavor and to support the work-force development in education. Therefore the Meaning of Flash MICROMEDIA and its various functions were highlighted and how to use the Flash Basic step by step. Finally it is recommended that teachers and students of education should equip themselves by attending training in programming aspect of computer. Agency such as National Information Technology, Development Agency, should encourage young talented youth in the field of education that are already practicing and producing teaching packages for undergraduate and postgraduate student projects but are constraint by finance while others need higher training so that they increase their skills.

INTRODUCTION

Flash is an authoring tool that designers and developers use to create presentations, applications, and other content that enables user interaction. Flash projects can include simple animations, video content, complex presentations, applications, and everything in between. You can make media-rich Flash applications by including pictures, sound, video, and other special effects.

Flash is extremely well suited for creating content for delivery over the Internet because its files are very small. Flash achieves this through its extensive use of vector graphics.

A Flash document has four main parts:

The Stage is where your graphics, videos, buttons, and so on appear during playback.

The Timeline is where you tell Flash when you want the graphics and other elements of your project to appear. You also use the Timeline to specify the layering order of graphics on the Stage. Graphics in higher layers appear on top of graphics in lower layers.

The Library panel is where Flash displays a list of the media elements in your Flash document.

Action Script code allows you to add interactivity to the media elements in your document. For example, you can add code that causes a button to display a new image when the user clicks it. You can also use Action Script to add logic to your applications. Logic enables your application to behave in different ways depending on the user's actions or other conditions.

Functions of Flash

With the wide array of features in Flash, you can create many types of applications. The following are some examples of the kinds of applications Flash can generate:

Animations: These include banner ads, online greeting cards, cartoons, and so on. Many other types of Flash applications include animation elements as well.

Games: Many games are built with Flash. Games usually combine the animation capabilities of Flash with the logic capabilities of ActionScript.

User interfaces: Many website designers use Flash to design user interfaces. The interfaces include simple navigation bars as well as more complex interfaces.

The Flash Micromedia a Tool for Sustainable Education and Development of Work-Force in Nigeria

Some Popular Applications Built Using Flash

Who wants to be a millionaire?

Mavis Beacon Typing tutor

Hangaroo

Web advertisement Banners

Some websites (Insight Nigeria,) CHECK

Similar software

Swish max

Flash Basics

Flash Basics

The Macromedia Flash Basic 8 and Flash Professional 8 workspace consists of a Stage on which you place media objects, a Property inspector for organizing and modifying media assets, a Tools panel with tools for creating and modifying image content, and many other panels for accessing the wide range of functionality in Flash.

STEP 1: Using the Start page

Whenever Flash is running with no documents open, the Start page appears. The Start page provides easy access to frequently used actions. The Start page contains the following four areas:

- Open a Recent Item lets you open your most recent documents. You can also display the Open File dialog box by clicking the Open icon.
- Create new lists Flash file types, such as Flash documents and ActionScript files. You can quickly create a new file by clicking the desired file type in the list.
- Create from Template lists, the templates most commonly used to create new Flash documents. You can create a new file by clicking the desired template in the list.
- Extend links to the Macromedia Flash Exchange website, where you can download helper applications for Flash, Flash extensions, and related information.
- The Start page also offers quick access to Help resources.

STEP 2: Using the Stage

The Stage is the rectangular area where you place graphic content, including vector art, text boxes, buttons, imported bitmap graphics or video clips, and so on when creating Flash documents. The Stage in the Flash authoring environment represents the rectangular space in Macromedia Flash Player or in a web browser window where your Flash document appears during playback. You can zoom in and out to change the view of the Stage as you work.

STEP 3: Using the Timeline

The Timeline organizes and controls a document's content over time in layers and frames. Like films, Flash documents divide lengths of time into frames. Layers are like multiple film strips stacked on top of one another, each containing a different image that appears on the Stage. The major components of the Timeline are layers, frames, and the play head.

Layers in a document are listed in a column on the left side of the Timeline. Frames contained in each layer appear in a row to the right of the layer name. The Timeline header at the top of the Timeline indicates frame numbers. The playhead indicates the current frame displayed on the Stage. As a Flash document plays, the playhead moves from left to right through the Timeline.

The Timeline status displayed at the bottom of the Timeline indicates the selected frame number, the current frame rate, and the elapsed time to the current frame.

NOTE

When an animation is played, the actual frame rate is displayed; this may differ from the document's frame rate setting if the computer can't calculate and display the animation quickly enough.

You can change the way frames appear in the Timeline, as well as display thumbnails of frame content in the Timeline. The Timeline shows where animation occurs in a document, including frame-by-frame animation, twinned animation, and motion paths.

Controls in the layers section of the Timeline let you hide, show, lock, or unlock layers, as well as display layer contents as outlines.

You can insert, delete, select, and move frames in the Timeline. You can also drag frames to a new location on the same layer or to a different layer.

STEP4: Using frames and key frames

A keyframe is a frame in which you define a change to an object's properties for an animation or include ActionScript code to control some aspect of your document.(Birgitta,2006) Flash can tween, or automatically fill in, the frames between keyframes you define in order to produce fluid animations. Because keyframes can produce animation without drawing each individual frame, they make creating animation easier. You can easily change the length of a tweened animation by dragging a keyframe in the Timeline. The order in which frames and keyframes appear in the Timeline determines the order in which they are displayed in a Flash application. You can arrange keyframes in the Timeline to edit the sequence of events in an animation.

WORKING WITH FRAMES IN THE TIMELINE

In the Timeline, you work with frames and keyframes, placing them in the order you want the objects in the frames to appear. You can change the length of a tweened animation by dragging a keyframe in the Timeline.

You can perform the following modifications on frames or keyframes:

Insert, select, delete, and move frames or keyframes

Drag frames and keyframes to a new location on the same layer or on a different layer

Copy and paste frames and keyframes

Convert keyframes to frames

Drag an item from the Library panel onto the Stage to add the item to the current keyframe

Using layers

Layers are like transparent sheets of acetate stacked on top of each other on the Stage. Layers help you organize the artwork in your document. You can draw and edit objects on one layer without affecting objects on another layer. Where there is nothing on a layer, you can see through it to the layers below.

To draw, paint, or otherwise modify a layer or folder. You can select the layer in the Timeline to make it active. A pencil icon next to a layer or folder name in the Timeline indicates that the layer or folder is active.

Only one layer can be active at a time (although more than one layer can be selected at a time).

When you create a new Flash document, it contains only one layer. You can add more layers to organize the artwork, animation, and other elements in your document. The number of layers you can create is limited only by your computer's memory, and layers do not increase the file size of your publishedwrite the full meaning of swf before abbreviating (SWF)file. Only the objects you place into layers add to the file size. You can also hide, lock, or rearrange layers.

You can also organize and manage layers by creating layer folders and placing layers in them. You can expand or collapse layer folders in the Timeline without affecting what you see on the Stage. It's a good idea to use separate layers or folders for sound files, ActionScript, frame labels, and frame comments. This helps you find these items quickly when you need to edit them.

In addition, you can use special guide layers to make drawing and editing easier, and mask layers to help you create sophisticated effects.(Birgitta,2006)

STEP 5: About the main toolbar and edit bar

The menu bar at the top of the Flash application window displays menus with commands for controlling Flash functionality. The menus include File, Edit, View, Insert, Modify, Text, Commands, Control, Window, and Help. The edit bar, at the top of the Timeline, contains controls and information for editing scenes and symbols, and for changing the magnification level of the Stage.

STEP 6: Using the grid, guides, and rulers

Flash can display rulers and guides that help you draw and lay out objects precisely. You can place guides in a document and snap objects to those guides, or turn on the grid and snap objects to it.

STEP7: Using panels and the Property inspector

Flash offers many ways to customize the workspace to your needs. Using panels and the Property inspector, you can view, organize, and change media and other assets and their attributes. You can show, hide, and resize panels. You can also group panels together and save custom panel sets to make the workspace match your personal preferences. The Property inspector changes to reflect the tool or asset you are working with, giving you quick access to frequently used features

STEP 8: IMPORTING IMAGES

Still Image File Types; You Can Import a Still Image into Flash

1. Make sure the layer, you want the image to be on, is active.
2. Select File _ Import to Stage.

The Flash Micromedia a Tool for Sustainable Education and Development of Work-Force in Nigeria

3. You can also import numbered sequences of still images. If you do this, the stills will be brought in as successive frames of the layer that is active.

The Library

1. If you can't see the Library panel then go to Window _ Library or /CTRL _ L. Your image file can be accessed in the Library. You can drag further copies of the image on to the Stage from the Library as well as being able to access information about your imported image.

2. The Library can also be used to organize your assets, that is, files you have imported or symbols you have created. If you click on the Name column heading, the files will be shown in order of their names. The same will happen for Type if you click on that column heading.

3. You can use the UP and DOWN arrow keys to move up and down in the list of files.

4. If you go to the Library Options menu and choose Edit, this command launches Fireworks or another image editing software package if you don't have Fireworks on your machine. If you select Edit With, you can choose which image editing program that you want to use.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The importance of computer technology in teaching and learning in various fields of education cannot be over emphasized. Moreover, the internet has become the paramount technological tool in conducting training for many courses. The teachers and learners should learn how to adopt the technology. This will ensure that educational program is relevant to the society. Hopefully, in the future, computer technology and computer-based technology will become common instructional medium for defining courses in various educational fields. Finally it is recommended that teachers and students of education should equip themselves by attending training in programming aspect of computer. Agency such as National Information Technology, Development Agency, should encourage young talented youth in the field of education that are already practicing and producing teaching packages for undergraduate and postgraduate student projects but are constraint by finance while others need higher training so that they increase their skills.

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