

THE **e**LEARNING DEVELOPERS' JOURNAL

Strategies and Techniques for Designers, Developers, and Managers of eLearning

THIS WEEK — DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Flash® Development Experts Tell All

BY BILL BRANDON

Macromedia™ Flash® is a multimedia tool with a long history of progressively increasing capabilities. Yet because of this slow but steady evolution, even experienced designers and developers of e-Learning are often not aware of everything Flash can do. And, while it may be true that Flash is the single most-often used e-Learning development tool, its lengthy learning curve challenges designers and developers who want to master the full potential of Flash.

One way that people learn is through the experience of others, as encompassed in stories. In anticipation of *The eLearning Flash Developer's Symposium* that will be held in Boston April 20-21, 2004, I interviewed five of the expert presenters on the program by telephone, to tap into their experience by asking three basic questions:

- How are they using Flash in e-Learning applications?
- How do they and their associates learn to use Flash?
- What are some of their "lessons learned?"

Participating in the interviews were:

- Amanda Saba, Web Author and Course Developer with The Plus Group (for Sandia National Laboratories)
- Andrew Corbett, Independent e-Learning Developer, Corbett Learning Media
- Ben Glazer, Chief Technology Officer and co-founder, Enspire Learning
- Paul Clothier, Principal, Photon Learning
- Thomas Toth, Owner and Chief Designer, Tothweb

The interview transcriptions have been edited.

Continued on next page

Flash is widely used for e-Learning development, and yet its power is seldom fully tapped. Believing that experts' insights, tips, and tricks can be a valuable resource, we have interviewed five top Flash designers and asked them to spill all. If you are going to The eLearning Flash Developer's Symposium, use this article to guide your preparation. If you always wanted to know how experts use Flash, how they learned Flash, and what their tips are, this is the article for you!

Publisher David Holcombe

Editorial Director Heidi Fisk
Editor Bill Brandon

Copy Editor Charles Holcombe

Design Director Nancy Marland

The eLearning Guild™ Advisory Board

Ruth Clark, Conrad Gottfredson, John Hartnett,
Bill Horton, Kevin Moore, Eric Parks, Brenda Pfaus
Marc Rosenberg, Allison Rossett

Copyright 2004. The eLearning Developers' Journal™. Compilation copyright by The eLearning Guild 2004. All rights reserved. Please contact **The eLearning Guild** for reprint permission.

The eLearning Developers' Journal is published weekly by **The eLearning Guild**, 525 College Avenue, Suite 215, Santa Rosa, CA 95404. Phone: 707.566.8990. **The eLearning Guild** is an operating unit of Focuszone Media, Inc., 1030 Beatrice Street, Eagan, MN 55121.

The Journal is included as part of **Guild** membership. To join the **Guild** go to www.eLearningGuild.com.

The eLearning Developers' Journal™ is designed to serve the industry as a catalyst for innovation and as a vehicle for the dissemination of new and practical strategies and techniques for e-Learning designers, developers and managers. The **Journal** is not intended to be the definitive authority. Rather, it is intended to be a medium through which e-Learning practitioners can share their knowledge, expertise and experience with others for the general betterment of the industry.

As in any profession, there are many different perspectives about the best strategies, techniques and tools one can employ to accomplish a specific objective. This **Journal** will share these different perspectives and does not position any one as "the right way," but rather we position each article as "one of the right ways" for accomplishing a goal. We assume that readers will evaluate the merits of each article and use the ideas they contain in a manner appropriate for their specific situation. We encourage discussion and debate about articles and provide an Online Discussion board for each article.

The articles contained in the **Journal** are all written by people who are actively engaged in this profession at one level or another — not by paid journalists or writers. Submissions are always welcome at any time, as are suggestions for articles and future topics. To learn more about how to submit articles and/or ideas, see the box on page 7, or refer to the directions on our Web site: www.eLearningGuild.com.

How are you using Flash in your e-Learning projects?

In the past two years, **The Journal** has published several articles about using Flash in e-Learning. (See Sidebar 1, Journal Articles on Flash, below.) However, these examples are by no means the only uses e-Learning developers have for Flash. Each of our five experts brings particular backgrounds and skills into their projects, and this means that each one uses Flash in a different way.

Andrew Corbett

Primarily I've used Flash in the sciences. I come from a background in biology, and I have a math background as well. While any instruction needs life, I have especially tried to use Flash's mathematical capability to bring math and science content to life.

I was trying to do this with Java at first, because I came from a modeling background, and Java was more comfortable for me. But Java didn't live up to its potential in terms of cross-platform compatibilities, whereas with Flash cross-platform compatibility was great.

When they added the math functions to Flash, you were able to actually do simulations. You can simulate random samplings, for example, or plot complex functions in order to modify the plot by choosing parameters, and these applications

will work across all platforms. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3 on pages 3 and 4.)

Thomas Toth

I've been using Flash since version 4, so that's about four or five years. About half of my work is in e-Learning projects and the rest is your typical Flash development: product demonstrations, banner ads, web sites, that kind of stuff.

I started using Flash for e-Learning because, as far as I'm concerned, it's the de facto standard for any kind of multimedia work on the Web. Once ActionScript "grew up," in Flash 5, it started turning into a tool that was a programmer's dream. It allowed an advanced level of interactivity and variable control, so that users could, for example, type their name in, answer some questions, and the program would evaluate those responses in such a way as to give them feedback or to change the program in a certain way. Once Flash started allowing you to easily import video elements, it then became a no-brainer.

When you're developing multimedia or e-Learning for the Web, if you need something to move or if you need to import video or audio, you've got to be using Flash.

Editor: Oddly enough, I still occasionally hear e-Learning designers who think that Flash isn't interactive. Apparently they've never seen it used that way.

SIDEBAR 1 The eLearning Developers' Journal articles on Flash

Macromedia® Flash™ MX and XML: More Than Just Movies, by Gregg Wygonik

July 23, 2002. In this article, Gregg explains how to use XML and Flash MX to represent the user interface and the sequence of content, not the content itself. The project demonstrates how to build a small "shell" application in Flash MX that will be able to work for many projects without the need to recompile anything.

Getting Interactive: Rich, Rapid e-Learning With Macromedia® Flash™ and Breeze™, by Paul Clothier

September 2, 2003. The most sought-after e-Learning features involve rich media, animation, and simulation to raise interactivity levels. At the same time, organizations want shorter development times, lower costs, and better collaboration between designers and subject matter experts. Find out about two tools that are providing a "building block" approach to these goals for leading e-Learning vendors, and learn how these tools can also work for you!

Tutorial: e-Learning with Flash® MX 2004, by Paul Clothier

November 17, 2003. The latest version of Flash MX has been specifically designed for the instructional designer or subject matter expert who has no experience with Flash or ActionScript. Here is a fast tutorial that will introduce you to the main features so that you can start using this tool in your e-Learning projects right away!

Back when Flash first came out and became very popular, you'd access a Web site, then sit back and watch and, boom-boom, something exciting would happen on the screen. Then you'd click on "Skip Intro" and enter the web site. That's all that a lot of beginning developers in Flash knew how to do. Number one, they were afraid of ActionScript. Number two, all they needed to do for their customers was accomplished on the time line in Flash. You'd build a movie to start, five or ten seconds later it stops, and then it loops. (Editor's note: For those unfamiliar with the software, Flash multimedia applications are referred to as "movies." They can be created by dragging objects to a graphical "time line" or by programming in ActionScript, which is the Flash scripting language.)

You didn't really need to understand ActionScript in order to develop Flash movies. And then the developer community got hold of it and said, "Wait a minute! This tool is much more robust." You can dynamically load data from databases into Flash movies, or have information typed into a Flash form that gets processed and stored in the database. And you've got various Web services, which are XML data streams that you can incorporate into Flash. These are examples of advanced level components of current Web technology.

Macromedia has done a great job of incorporating this cool technology that talks to databases and adds a level of interactivity into Flash. You just have to take the time and energy to learn ActionScript. Get a Macromedia *Training from the Source* book or a friends of ED book and figure out how to make this happen. (Editor's Note: See Thomas' comments in the section below "What's the best way to learn to use Flash?" and the book list in Sidebar 2, Resources, on page 5.)

Flash is a much more visual way of developing. When you're developing e-Learning, static HTML pages are great, and pictures are great, but if you can actually use animation or 3D or motion capture or video capture to draw your learner in, your e-Learning programs are going to be much more effective.

Editor: Do you use other tools along with Flash for e-Learning development?

Yes. I use a program called Swift 3D. That's my 3D development program. I can export the files out of Swift 3D as Flash files. Let's say I have a globe or a cube that I'm rotating for some reason. I

can bring that rotation into Flash and control it using ActionScript or using the time line from within Flash. I also use a program called SWiSH. I don't use SWiSH for its Flash programming capabilities, I use it for text effects. If you want to blow up some text or have text appear in a certain way, it's a great way of very rapidly developing text-related effects. I recently downloaded their SWiSHpowerFX, a Flash plug-in that is an extension that I've

started to play with and it's a nice addition.

Of course I use Fireworks and Photoshop for the graphics I bring in, and Dreamweaver for mounting the Flash movies.

Editor: Do you have other developers working with you?

I sub-contract out a little bit, but most of the work is done by me. There's a graphics guy I sometimes go to for mak-

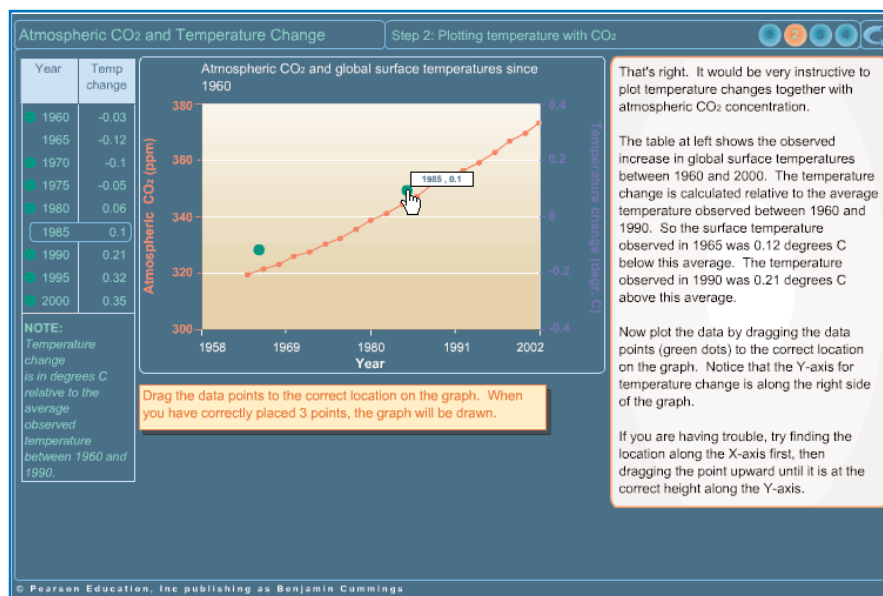


FIGURE 1 This is one of a suite of tutorials developed with Flash. The students demonstrate their understanding of graphs by dragging data points to the correct location on the plot. (Andrew Corbett)

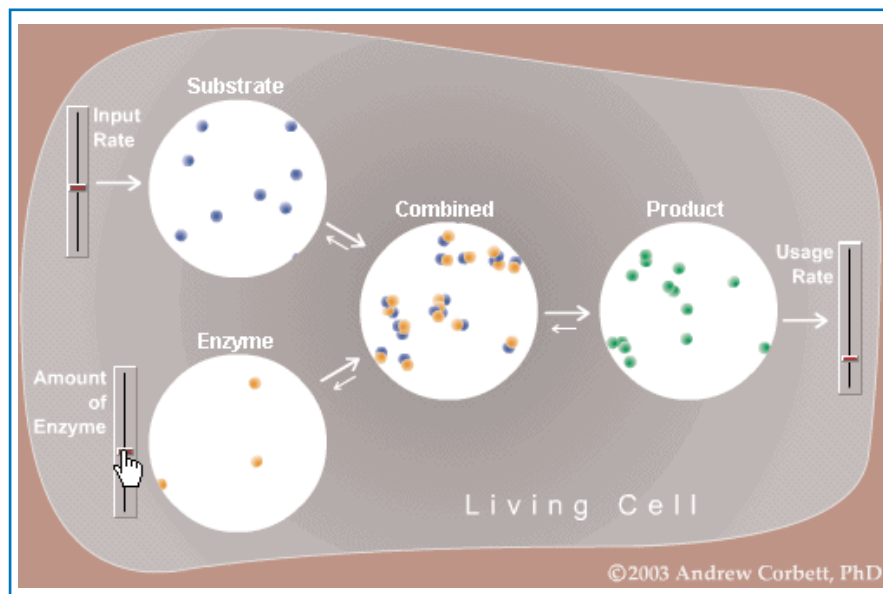


FIGURE 2 This Flash movie simulates an enzyme-mediated biochemical reaction. It is driven behind the scenes by a valid mathematical model of the chemical reaction. The student can explore the behavior of the reaction by moving the sliders to change key variables. (Andrew Corbett)

ing icons — he's really good at making icon sets. I've got another guy who, if I just need to dump a lot of text or create a bunch of pages, is really good at generating the HTML pages for me. There's a woman who's a database guru that I go to. I've got a team that I work around. I don't have any employees, but I sub out to about three or four different people all over the United States.

Amanda Saba

Actually, in my current assignment, I am not developing e-Learning with Flash right now. My comments relate to my experience when I was a multimedia programmer and developer with Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), working at AFOTEC, the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center.

The applications we were building were for blended learning purposes and also to take the place of some of their classroom courses. We decided to build one of these applications in Flash, because previously we had been using Authorware® and the limitations of Authorware were getting frustrating. We needed some video and we were having a lot of problems, so we decided to go to Flash.

In doing this project, instead of building individual course pieces, we were building a player, where it was all XML-driven. It would grab all the content externally and put it into the Flash player. The external

content was .swf files (Flash), jpegs (images), text files, Flash files that were videos, pdfs, all kinds of different files.

Editor: You said you were using Flash because of the limitations of Authorware. You had other options — why did you choose Flash?

There were two of us on the development team and we had worked with Flash before. We were looking at the dynamic capabilities of it. At AFOTEC they were running Cold Fusion version 5, so the future plan, when they upgraded Cold Fusion, was to connect all of the e-Learning to a database and have all the content dragged from the database. We were pulling it from XML files.

The other reason we went with Flash rather than Authorware was because we needed to have the training be both online and on a CD. With Authorware the player is up to, I think, 14 megs now, while the Flash player is only around 700K, so the distribution of the player was another factor.

Our most successful project was one we finished right before I left. It was an introduction to AFOTEC — this is what AFOTEC does, the structure of the people there. It was pretty much a "Welcome to AFOTEC" on CD and it was also going to be online. This had been a standup course previous to that and they decided they wanted it on a CD to send out to everyone.

Ben Glazer

We custom develop courses and simulations. The vast majority of what we do is in Flash. So we have a number of very talented Flash designers and developers who help us to develop high-quality, engaging, and effective learning experiences for our clients.

Our clients are a pretty mixed bag. Our first client was Harvard Business School. We developed a 20-hour course on statistics that is now a required course for the business school. It's a pre-matriculation course, so students have to complete that course prior to getting in the MBA program. We've also done some macroeconomics work for the World Bank, and sales training for Dell.

We're working with Canon USA right now. Previously we did some work with them to develop a printer queue-manager software simulation to support the sales people in the field. What we're doing with them now is developing sales scenarios. They have sales people who need to sell print services, and the scenarios put them in the shoes of their customers. They can understand their customers' perspective, and how the customers are then going to use these printers to resell the services.

We've been using Flash since the start of the company. We did a fairly extensive evaluation of the technology available at that time. We wanted the technology to be an enabler, rather than a barrier to the content that we develop. We considered a variety of different options. We looked at Macromedia Director® and Authorware and Java, as well as Flash. Flash was really the clear winner — there wasn't anything else that was close. If you're going to develop online interactive multimedia, then Flash offers a development capability that's fairly easy to get up and running quickly. Flash has a large developer and designer community that you can tap into, and that helps provide support for the tool. It's clearly optimized for deployment, with direct support for things like vector graphics, MP3 compressed audio, and so on. Perhaps the most telling factor is that it's by far the most commonly found browser plug-in.

Along with Flash, we use tools for developing other forms of media that are included in Flash, like video and audio editing. We've developed our own platform that sits on top of Flash and enables us to do things like separate out textual content from graphics and logic.

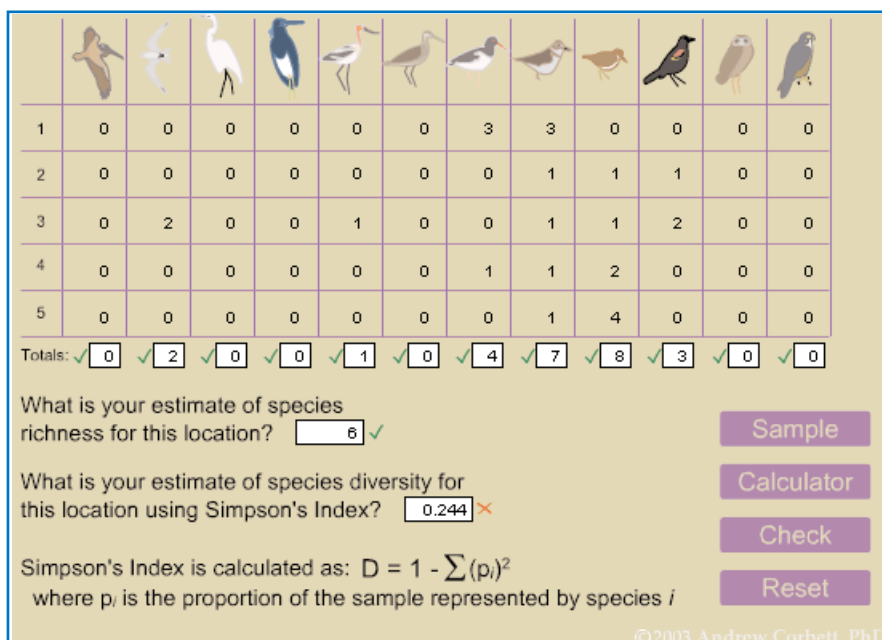


FIGURE 3 This Flash movie simulates the monitoring of bird diversity in a hypothetical coastal marsh. Students click "Sample" to randomly generate a new sample, they do some calculations, and they can then check their work. (Andrew Corbett)

Our writers actually develop their scripts in an Excel spreadsheet, so they can click a button that runs a macro that exports the content to an XML format that our engine can then read in directly to Flash. It enables us to pipeline the development effort to a large extent. Our clients also benefit because we provide them with the ability to then edit that content without having to have any Flash expertise.

Paul Clothier

I develop e-Learning with a number of tools as well as Flash. I use various tools, from plain HTML with Dreamweaver, to Flash, to simulation tools like Qarbon and RoboDemo. I do use Flash a lot, especially when I've been working with high-tech companies. Quite often there are concepts they want to communicate that are not always easily understood by using diagrams and two-dimensional pictures with labels on them. I often use Flash to simplify concepts.

Let me give you an example. There's one company I worked with last year that needed to explain how a certain part of its software reacted if other parts of the software went down. In other words, if a particular executable stopped running, how this "coordinator" component would actually go ahead and restart these other components. That's not always easy to explain in words or with one or two diagrams, so Flash was used to animate that to simplify the concept.

What's the best way to learn to use Flash?

Because our experts came from a wide range of backgrounds, they each tended to have learned Flash differently over time. And because some of them work in settings where others are involved, they each have their own views as to the best way for beginners to learn Flash now.

Amanda Saba

I went to some Macromedia-certified courses. Those were usually three days long and they were a really good way to get inducted into the program. But I think it's really good to mess around with it on your own before you actually go to a class. The classes really teach you how to use ActionScript and how to make Flash interact with other programs.

Editor: Did those classes address much of the XML knowledge you need?

No. I kind of learned on my own and through books. A book that I used a lot

was the O'Reilly *ActionScript: The Definitive Guide* by Colin Moock (This book has been updated; see Sidebar 2: Resources, below). I didn't find XML very complicated, and I don't know if I actually had a book to reference for that. There are a lot of resources online. I usually go to Google Groups if I have a question about something and try to find resources.

Andrew Corbett

I had a lot of programming experience: C, Java, and Visual Basic. I didn't come from a visual design background, but I very much wanted to take advantage of the capabilities of Flash and create visual interactions. I just learned on the job. I wanted to build these certain kinds of activities, so I dove in and figured out how to make them work. Some of my programming skills were helpful and others were not. There's a learning curve at the beginning.

Editor: Is that how you developed your XML skills as well?

Actually, I took a two-day course on XML. Usually when I'm learning something new, I collect a bunch of books on it and have a very specific task. I dive in and learn while I'm completing that task.

Editor: Were there any resources for Flash, ActionScript or XML that stand out in your mind?

When I was first learning, Flash was in version 4, and there was a *Flash 4 Magic* series that New Riders came out with.

That gave me a sense of what was possible. (*Editor's note: The reference is to Emberton, David and Hamlin, J. Scott, *Flash 4 Magic*. This book is now out of print, but New Riders published a successor in February 2004. See Sidebar 2, Resources, below, for the details.*)

For ActionScript, there wasn't a lot of help. I found it pretty obtuse at first, but then they changed it in version 5. After that change, I relied a lot on *ActionScript* by Colin Moock (*Editor's note: This is the same book referred to by Amanda Saba, above.*) That was my bible of programming in ActionScript for Flash 5 and after. Another book that I used, especially for components, was Branden Hall and Samuel Wan's *Object-Oriented Programming with ActionScript*.

Ben Glazer

Most of the Flash folks that we have around here got started in some form or another as designers, and most of them are formally trained in design. They studied that in college and had some level of interaction with Flash at that time, to the point at which they graduated and developed their skills professionally. A couple of folks come from a Web development background and Flash was a tool that provided them with a higher level of interactivity multimedia.

Our Flash developers tend to have a Computer Science background, and although a couple of them didn't know

SIDEBAR 2 Resources

- Bhargal, Sham. *Foundation ActionScript for Flash MX 2004*. December 2003. friends of ED. ISBN: 1-590-59305-7
- Capraro, Michelangelo, et al. *Macromedia Flash MX 2004 Magic*. February 2004. New Riders. ISBN: 0-735-71377-4
- DeHaan, Jen. *Macromedia Flash MX 2004: Training from the Source*. November 2003. Macromedia Press. ISBN: 0-321-21342-4
- Franklin, Derek and Makar, Jobe. *Macromedia Flash MX 2004 ActionScript: Training from the Source*. November 2003. Macromedia Press. ISBN: 0-321-21343-2
- Hall, Branden and Wan, Samuel. *Object-Oriented Programming with ActionScript*. September 2002. New Riders. ISBN: 0-735-71183-6
- Moock, Colin. *ActionScript for Flash MX: The Definitive Guide, 2nd Edition*. December 2002. O'Reilly. ISBN: 0-596-00396-X
- Shuman, Jim and Patel, Piyush. *Naked Macromedia Flash MX 2004*. November 2003. Muska & Lipman Pub. ISBN: 1-592-00124-6
- Stallons, Jeanette. *Macromedia Flash MX Professional 2004 Application Development: Training from the Source*. May 2004 (not yet released). Macromedia Press. ISBN: 0-321-23834-6
- Webster, Steve. *Foundation PHP for Flash*. September 2001. friends of ED. ASIN: 1-903-45016-0

Flash at all when they started, they certainly knew more advanced languages like Java and had a high level of familiarity with JavaScript. Given that ActionScript and JavaScript are based on the same standard, it was very easy for them to get up to speed quickly and really start making an impact.

We have provided training at other companies for instructional designers who had no familiarity with Flash. What we've done to make Flash a bit easier for them to pick up and start using, is that we developed a simple framework that provides the basic functionality — Next and Back buttons, basic navigation, simple branching. We teach them the basic tools. We teach them the animation tools, we teach them about tweening and the basic drawing tools. I think that if they start with a relatively simple template and they're not trying to do something too sophisticated, Flash is probably the best tool that's out there. We have had a lot of success taking that softer approach. If you don't have a template to start with, I can see how Flash may be a

bit daunting. It's not particularly targeted toward people that don't have a design background or who aren't very comfortable with new software programs.

Paul Clothier

I used to use the online tutorials. Various companies create e-Learning for Flash. Macromedia has tutorials online. Some third-party Flash introductory manuals are pretty good. In fact there's one I found recently that I recommend. It's called *Naked Macromedia Flash MX 2004*, by Jim Shuman and Piyush Patel. It seems to me that you quite often need to go to third party manuals like this because Macromedia manuals tend to be very dense and I think they put off the average user, even though they are fine for the developer. But a book like the one I just mentioned really does simplify things for the end user.

For ActionScript, I usually use the online Help.

Thomas Toth

For ActionScript, start with *Macromedia*

Flash MX 2004 ActionScript: Training from the Source and *Foundation ActionScript for Flash MX 2004*.

A friend of mine said, "Thomas, I have to make this happen, the customer wants to use Flash with PHP." So I referred him to a friends of ED book called *Foundation PHP for Flash* and it taught him exactly what he needed to know.

One of the guys I work with is constantly lamenting that it is so hard to stay on top of the technology in this industry. I'm a "front end person" — I know a little bit of PHP, I know a little about iSQL, I know a lot of Flash, a lot of HTML, a little bit of XML. You figure out all of your skillsets and then you augment that. If I need ASP and a SQL database, I can run ASP, I can kind of work SQL, but you know, my gosh, I'm going to go to Janice for that. If it's iSQL or PHP, I can handle that, but if it's Cold Fusion, I've either got to learn that or go find somebody who knows Cold Fusion.

You can't be a master of everything that's out there. You have to pick and choose your areas. The technology

e-Learning for e-Learning Professionals...

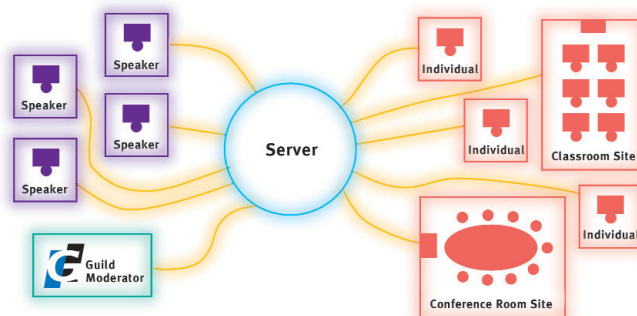
The eLearning Guild's ONLINE FORUM™ SERIES

The eLearning Guild has created *The Guild Online Forum Series*, a new series of online events that will be held throughout 2004. On the 2nd Thursday of every month (except January) you can register to participate as an individual, or as a group, in a one-day "virtual conference" that includes four highly interactive seventy-five minute sessions designed to explore a specific topic.

Here's how the Online Forums work:

Individual or Site Registration:

Participate as an individual or you can pay a site fee, set up your meeting room, and have your e-Learning team participate in an Online Forum as a group!



Here's a brief description of the next Online Forum in the series...

APRIL 8, 2004

A Practical Look at e-Learning Standards & Learning Objects

Examine the current state of standards and learning objects. Learn about the most commonly used standards, and how they may or may not impact your building and purchasing decisions. See practical, real-life examples of how standards and learning objects are being used in a variety of organizations.

Target Audience: This Online Forum is for those who need to know about e-Learning standards and Learning Objects, how to use them, and how they can impact e-Learning design and development.

To learn more about each upcoming Online Forum and to register, go to:

www.eLearningGuild.com

changes so fast, and Macromedia upgrades the product line every year. Just when you get through your current training manuals and get on top of the software application, they come out with a new version.

I'm an early adopter, the kind of developer who downloads the product the day it comes out. In addition to doing the development, I go out to the Training Center and I train. The first couple of weeks after a product comes out, everybody wants to have that training course on their schedule. Two weeks after the product comes out, I'm in the classroom training. If I don't have the time and energy to get on top of the products, or get it early enough to get on top of the product, I've lost that revenue. It gets expensive.

Do you have any "lessons learned" that you'd like to share?

Finally, I ended the interviews by asking the experts for their insights into the use of Flash for e-Learning development. It won't be any surprise that each of them had a slightly different way of answering that question.

Amanda Saba

I think that there's a misconception about Flash because it can be used for so many different things. Some people think it's just for making pretty little intros to Web sites and they don't understand that it can be a powerful tool. To convince these people that Flash can be used to create e-Learning (or anything else) can be a challenge.

To get into it, I think it's easier now with Flash 2004 MX. It's aimed more toward the programming side, at least the Professional side of it is. So I think that helps. But I haven't had any experience with designers and SMEs who haven't worked with Flash or ActionScript when they try to use the tool.

I would just suggest that people get into Flash and start trying to develop things — that's the best way to learn it. Unless you try to do something in Flash, you're really not going to understand how powerful it is.

Andrew Corbett

The only thing that makes me a little bit nervous about Flash is that it's completely owned and supported by a single company. But in terms of its capabilities, I haven't found anything I wanted to do that I couldn't do. There is usually a way

to do it within Flash.

As I said, there's quite a learning curve for new users, but it may be a little easier in the new version because of the changes involving the time line, and the addition of the pre-built components and learning interactions.

Thomas Toth

The thing I tell my students all the time, even in my beginning courses, is "Learn ActionScript." I force them to learn ActionScript. Yes, you can do a lot of stuff with Flash just sticking with the time line, but you really understand the power of Flash, especially for e-Learning, when you start learning ActionScript. I didn't start learning ActionScript seriously until 18 months ago. I had been using Flash forever, I just stuck to the time line. I knew how to do a Stop command or a Play command but I never dove into the programming language. I kept saying, I'll never use this, or it's not strong enough

to use. But when MX came out, it was like, "OK, I've really got to get my rear in gear and start learning this." There's a part of me that says I wish I had learned it sooner, I wish I hadn't been as afraid of it as I was.

When you deal with graphics all day you make pretty interfaces and you write HTML code. ActionScript and JavaScript and some of those other server-side scripting languages are pretty intense. If you're a PhotoShop master, you're asking, "What do you mean I have to program this rollover in JavaScript? It does it for me." That's what my attitude was toward ActionScript — I don't need to learn it because I can figure out another way to do it or I can borrow someone else's code and get it done.

But once I started learning ActionScript, my Flash development rapidly accelerated and my ability to give customers what they were asking for in a shorter period of time made my life a lot

Do you have an interesting strategy or technique to share?

Get It Published in...

THE **e**LEARNING DEVELOPERS' JOURNAL™

This publication is by the people, for the people.

That means it's written by YOU the readers and members of **The eLearning Guild!**

We encourage you to submit articles for publication in the **Journal**.

Even if you have not been published before, we encourage you to submit a query if you have a great idea, technique, case study or practice to share with your peers in the e-Learning community. If your topic idea for an article is selected by the editors, you will be asked to submit a complete article on that topic. Don't worry if you have limited experience writing for publication. Our team of editors will work with you to polish your article and get it ready for publication in the **Journal**.

By sharing your expertise with the readers of the **Journal**, you not only add to the collective knowledge of the e-Learning community, you also gain the recognition of your peers in the industry and your organization.

Refer to www.eLearningGuild.com for details on how to submit a query.

easier. So my lesson learned is, "Learn ActionScript sooner rather than later." Don't be afraid of it and don't get stuck on all the pretty graphics you can do. Really start diving into that development so that you can take your projects to the next level.

Ben Glazer

For beginners, it's pretty easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of functionality that's now built into Flash. It's a pretty sophisticated tool. On the other hand, it's easy to be seduced by the amount of power. I guess I would urge people to resist that temptation. Choose to focus on the core of what Flash has offered since it was first created. Have a clear understanding of what those learning objectives are, and what information you're trying to convey. Plan it out before you actually start implementing it in Flash. Write scripts, draw storyboards, and make sure that your ideas and your teaching methodology are sound before you actually dive into the multimedia development.


Paul Clothier

For me the big challenge with Flash was always the learning curve. I think that has improved a bit with the past couple of releases. Even so, it's not an intuitive program. What puts off a lot of people is, if they just sat down in front of Excel or Word they could figure it out. But if they sat down in front of Flash, there are so many terminologies — scenes and frames, movie clips, time lines, tweening — it's a bit overwhelming.

Rather than try to learn Flash as a program from A to Z, pick a specific simple project with simple animation, and successfully do that. In the process of doing that, you will hit on a lot of areas that you can expand on later. When I was learning ActionScript, a lot of the ActionScript I learned was doing something simple and then tweaking it — if I can move it there, can I increase the speed, can I move that there? Rather than learn everything and take it on in huge chunks, I always recommend users take a simple project, and do something fun and interesting. Then you've got the basics, and in your own time you can expand it to a bit more code. Start small and with something

real. That's the way I'll be approaching ActionScript in the Symposium.

Conclusion

Well, there you have the views of some of the top Flash designers and developers in the United States. I hope that these interviews will help you prepare for *The eLearning Flash Developer's Symposium* (if you're going). At the least, I hope you will find the insights and resources useful in your own projects! 

AUTHOR CONTACT



Bill Brandon is the Editor of The eLearning Developers' Journal. He has been active in the learning and development field since 1968, and created his first e-Learning applications in 1984. Bill lives near Dallas, Texas. You can reach him by email at bbrandon@elearningguild.com.

Additional information on the topics covered in this article is also listed in the Guild Resource Directory.

April 19 - 21, 2004 • Boston, Massachusetts

THE E LEARNING **FLASH DEVELOPER'S** SYMPOSIUM™

Flash is one of the most-used Web-tools for e-Learning development, but until now there hasn't been an event for you to really learn how you can leverage the power of Flash in your e-Learning applications. *The eLearning Flash Developer's Symposium* will get you "under the hood" of Flash to teach you the tips and tricks that will help you create more effective e-Learning. You will discover time-saving techniques, learn from practical case studies, and gain insights from e-Learning Flash experts. A wide variety of examples will be used to illustrate the many ways you can use this versatile development tool.

Register Today!

To learn more about *The eLearning Flash Developer's Symposium* go to
www.eLearningGuild.com

"Definitely the most valuable conference I've ever attended. This symposium format allows for discussion, debate, reflection, and ideas exchange — and that's where the REAL value is! Thank you for making the faculty available for questions and discussions throughout the entire event!"

Sandy Ellis-Byre
Associate Manager
of e-Learning
TDS Telecom

About the Guild



The eLearning Guild™ is a global Community of Practice

Through this member-driven community of designers, developers, and managers of e-Learning, the Guild provides high-quality learning opportunities, networking services, resources, and publications.

Guild members represent a diverse group of instructional designers, content developers, web developers, project managers, contractors, consultants, managers and directors of training and learning services – all of whom share a common interest in e-Learning design, development, and management. Members work for organizations in the corporate, government, academic, and K-12 sectors. They also are employees of e-Learning product and service providers, consultants, students, and self-employed professionals.

The more than 11,300 members of this growing, worldwide community look to the Guild for timely, relevant, and objective information about e-Learning to increase their knowledge, improve their professional skills, and expand their personal networks.

Resource Directory

The Guild hosts the e-Learning industry's most comprehensive resource management system that includes more than 4,500 (and growing) e-Learning related resources in a searchable database. Guild Members can post resources and can update them at any time.

Surveys & Studies

The eLearning Guild conducts continuous polls and more than a dozen surveys and studies each year – including an annual salary survey. Guild Members have unlimited access to all data and analyses.

The eLearning Developers' Journal

The Journal provides in-depth articles about how e-Learning professionals can make e-Learning more successful in their organizations. It's a weekly online publication in PDF format and Guild Members have unlimited access to the searchable archive of every issue published.

Job Board

The Guild Job Board should be your first stop for solving employment related issues. Whether you are an employer looking to fill a key position or an e-Learning professional looking for a new job, you'll find success here.

Info Exchange

The Info Exchange enables members to ask questions of, and get feedback from, other members around the world in a discussion board format.

Member Discounts

Guild Members receive a 20% discount on all optional services offered by The eLearning Guild that are not included in your membership. These services include all face-to-face and online events produced by the Guild, special publications, and other services as they are developed.

The Online Forum Series

e-Learning for e-Learning professionals! *The Guild Online Forum Series* enables you, or your team, to explore the most pressing issues facing e-Learning professionals today with some of our industries smartest people – right from your desktop or conference room.

Engaging Symposia

The Guild's unique and focused symposia drill into the most critical issues for e-Learning designers, developers, and managers. These are

intensive learning events with limited enrollment. Participate in person or online, as an individual or as part of a team.

Annual Conference

The eLearning Producer Conference, held in the fall each year, offers comprehensive and in-depth content for all e-Learning professionals in a collegial environment conducive to learning and sharing.

Event Proceedings

If you attend a Guild event, you have immediate access to all event proceedings. If you do not attend, as a Guild Member you still have access to the proceedings 90 days after an event ends.

Guild e-Clips

A Guild Members-only publication sent by email every week. It's short, easy to read, and includes "clips" designed to keep members connected to the latest information about Guild publications, surveys & studies, and learning events.

eLearning Insider

The *eLearning Insider* is sent by email every other week and includes current e-Learning industry news, excerpts from Journal articles, highlights from Guild surveys, e-Musings, and information on Guild matters.

Professional Development Through Active Engagement

In order to maintain a vital community and provide relevant information, The eLearning Guild seeks the active involvement of all Guild Members and Guild Associates. Consider these ways to engage:

Speak at Guild Events: Members and Associates are encouraged to submit presentation proposals for any and all Guild events.

Write for the Journal: *The eLearning Developers' Journal* articles are written by industry leaders and practitioners just like you who are working in this field every day.

Join the Program Advisory Committee: This committee works to craft the program content of all events produced by the Guild.

Join the Research Advisory Committee: This committee works to identify the topics for Guild surveys and studies, and also develops the survey instruments.

The eLearning Guild organizes a variety of industry events focused on participant learning:

