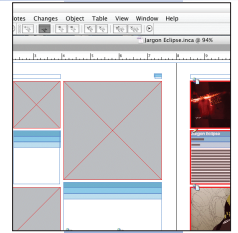


Getting creative with Adobe



Recent discussions in this column have focused mainly on systems and software becoming more and more compact, and on software that is available through the Web or a server as opposed to the client or the personal computer. As for hardware, the column outlined the movement from mainframes to minicomputers to desktop PCs to laptops and eventually to the pocket-top computer, now known as a mobile or cellular phone handset.

Today's discussion goes in the other direction—that of enterprise-use software that resides on PCs (desktop or laptop).

Two decades ago, when I was conducting engineering analysis and writing a final report, I would ask our company's graphic artist to take my diagrams and graphs and turn them into something understandable. She took out her T-square, placed it on her drafting table, brought out the ink bottle, added some color, and transformed my report into a completed document.

Today all of that is done on the computer, generally by engineers themselves. Adobe Systems released its latest versions of Adobe Creative Suite in April. Creative Suite 3 Design Premium delivers a toolkit for print, Web, interactive, and mobile design. This software integrates new releases of InDesign CS3, Photoshop CS3 Extended, Illustrator CS3, Flash CS3 Professional, Dreamweaver CS3, and Acrobat 8 Professional for creating publications, Web sites, rich interactive experiences, and engaging content.

These products are not necessarily the easiest to learn or to use. However, they are practical enough for everyday use and powerful enough to produce very professional documents, reports, and Web sites. They provide all the tools needed to enhance photographs, create illustrations, visually improve graphs, and create motion-based images in almost any documentation medium. The enhanced user interface improves the end-to-end integration. With this suite of products, there is one point of purchase and one installation instead of the previous six sets

of installation instructions.

Although I have used Adobe Creative Suite 3, I cannot say that I have tried all the features and functions—it is way too feature-rich for that. I can say that I have tried several of the new features and have been pleased with the results.

InDesign

InDesign provides the tools to lay out, export, and print pages and documents. A key advantage of using this integrated version is best demonstrated by bringing a photograph into a document. In the past, the photography enhancements had to be done separately; now they can be done right in the InDesign document. Place an image in an InDesign frame and then apply a gradient feather, for example. You can adjust the image within the frame so that gradient and image interact exactly as you want. No more going back and forth between Photoshop and InDesign to perfect the effect.

With this integrated version you can experiment with complex creative effects, including bevel and emboss, inner and outer glow, and drop and inner shadows. You can also apply transparency effects separately to objects, fills, strokes, and text, and make transparency effects part of object styles. Because these effects are live and nondestructive, you can try different possibilities without permanently altering the original image.

Photoshop

Photoshop is the graphics editor for bitmap and image manipulation. This improved version focuses on three goals: making routine image-editing tasks faster and more flexible for everyone, integrating more tightly with other Creative Suite components, and delivering new tools designed specifically for professionals in manufacturing, engineering, and science.

One feature that I particularly like is the new Quick Selection tool. Instead of painstakingly outlining a region, you can loosely paint an image area using this tool, then press modifier keys to enlarge

or reduce the selection. The tool automatically completes the selection for you. You can then fine-tune the selection even further using the new command called Refine Edge.

For 3D images, Photoshop now lets you easily open, rotate, paint, edit textures for, and save out 3D models to incorporate back into 3D workflows. You can also composite 3D models directly into 2D images for a number of creative or practice uses—for example, to visualize a 3D component in a 2D flat version that could be incorporated into a report. In addition, the new 3D controls enable you to rotate, roll, drag, slide, and scale, as well as to specify settings for lighting and appearance and for cross-section viewing.

Illustrator

Illustrator is the vector-based drawing program that lets you create sophisticated artwork for virtually any medium (print, Web, or Flash). The industry-standard drawing tools, flexible color controls, and professional type controls enable you to capture ideas and easily experiment with them to get the best possible visual you can deliver.

This is the 13th full release for Illustrator, which is still getting new features. A key innovation in this release is a set of tools called Live Color. Its Color Guide panel, for example, lets you find compelling colors and save them in color groups to the Swatches panel. The new dialog box provides tools for dynamically applying colors to artwork. You can preview changes live as you adjust individual colors, or all colors at once, with maximum precision.

Illustrator is a compute-intensive workhorse that has been around for a while. In earlier versions, these new features could never have been tried—they would have brought the computer to its knees. Now, with computers having become more powerful, Illustrator's new features allow you to try more images in a shorter length of time and ultimately to get more lifelike results.

Flash

Flash is the vector-based interactive content tool (originally developed and brought forward because of the Multimedia acquisition). Earlier on, incorporating Photoshop and Illustrator files into Flash was an indirect process that sometimes produced less-than-desirable results.

One of the main components of this version is integration—enabling designers and developers to shave hours off production schedules. With the Adobe-standard Pen tools that have been added to Flash, you can now add, delete, and convert anchor points using familiar Illustrator cursors, keyboard shortcuts, and modifier keys. And because Flash and Illustrator now share the same underlying drawing algorithms, the artwork moved back and forth between them retains its fidelity.

Another feature involves animation sequencing. In the past, designers worked out animation sequences visually on the Flash stage and in the Flash timeline, and then Flash developers coded their sequences from scratch. With this new version, designers can work visually and then, by simply choosing Copy Motion as ActionScript, output their designs directly as well-structured ActionScript code. Developers can then easily fine-tune and leverage the code.

Dreamweaver

Dreamweaver is a Web development tool originally created by Macromedia. Early

versions served as simple WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) HTML editors, but more recent releases have incorporated notable support for many other Web technologies, such as CSS, Java-Script, and various server-side scripting frameworks.

The key addition here is the integration of the various tools that can be used in developing Web pages. This feature enables more effective use of all of the packages in developing such pages. All of the tools are relatively well integrated.

Acrobat

Acrobat is the family of applications that use Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) as their native file format. Acrobat was created to allow any type of document to be viewed and printed, as long as it was printed in the PDF format, from any computer, server, or printer.

The new version has a new task-based interface and built-in support for industry standards such as PDF/X and Job Definition Format (JDF). This release of Acrobat enhances these workflows by further automating key interactions, such as automatically launching InDesign, opening specified layouts, exporting PDF files using the specs from a JDF file, validating the exported PDF files against the JDF file, and then handing them off for the next steps in print production.

Acrobat creates open-standard JDF files that can integrate easily with other industry-standard, JDF-based automated printing processes.



I have used several of these products in the past, and I will agree that the single installation and user interface is a big plus. This version gives the Macromedia-acquired products a user interface similar to what the other Adobe products use. This certainly improves the overall "ease of use," but more important, it improves efficiency.

Not everyone uses these products every day, eight hours a day. Many use them infrequently, and trying to remember all the syntax, menus, and other terms is difficult if there are several products that each have a different user interface. This version ties these products together.

Another example of the interface advantage is in importing a Photoshop image to Flash. Now Photoshop preserves its layers and other attributes, such as editable text, that are imported directly into Flash. This greatly improves the efficiency of developing Web-based photos into effective visualization on the Web.

One big downside of this suite is that it may take some time to learn how to use all these tools effectively. But for those who have used one or several of the modules, the CS3 suite is a real benefit. It provides all the tools you use (and some that you have not used, but wanted to), all at the same release level. There are no incompatibilities among modules. This alone should save an enormous amount of time and increase productivity.

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NOTED IN BRIEF

Pentek (Upper Saddle River, N.J.) [<http://www.pentek.com>] released the newest version of its **SystemFlow** real-time recording and development software for the Pentek family of RTS (real time systems) products. New to the Model 4990 suite are a **File Manager**, which simplifies management of files and data, and a **Signal Viewer** with enhanced display and analysis functions. The RTS now support both RAID and JBOD Fibre Channel disk arrays, boosting real-time recording capacity to 6 terabytes and higher. The new GUI, written entirely in Java development language, broadens host software support from Windows systems to new host platforms, including the Linux platform. Complete application programming interfaces for both the host and target boost productivity for custom development at a much higher level. Finally, engineers receive full source code so they can customize all acquisition, recording, and display functions.

Quantum3D (San Jose, Calif.) [<http://www.quantum3d.com>] announced the release of **IData 3.0**. This suite of PC-based HMI (human-machine interface) tools lets developers rapidly prototype, develop, and deploy dynamic and interactive cross-platform 2D and 3D HMIs. These are geared for high-performance graphics and video-intensive applications such as avionics, vehicle electronics, unmanned vehicle control, C4ISR systems, industrial automation, and embedded training. This version of IData includes a new Logic Engine with comprehensive logic modeling capabilities. With this release HMI developers can graphically construct logic models that specify the dynamic behavior of each element of the HMI in a graphical modeling environment. Developers can specify complex conditional expressions, mathematical expressions, calls to user-specified external routines or state logic, allowing the HMI's dynamic behavior to be captured in the model itself rather than in third-party tools or source code.