

FOREWORD

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Human history is marked with events that were pivotal in the development of communication. The Egyptians brought us papyrus, and about a millennium later the Chinese invented T'sai Ko-Shi, the first form of paper as we know it. Al-Khwarizmi, the great 8th century Arabic scholar, is credited with developing the beginnings of what we know as modern algebra, instrumental to the proliferation of the Arabic numeral system we use today. Gutenberg's movable type in the fifteenth century (though various forms of movable type had existed in other lands) was another point at which we saw tremendous change produced by the growth of the print industry and the spread of printed materials.

More recently, in the 1980s we saw the growth of the desktop publishing industry, whereby images and type were no longer a tightly controlled commodity, as the proliferation of personal computers and desktop publishing software transformed the print industry in a few short years. The 1990s saw the rise of the Internet and the introduction of browser technology that enabled users to view network images, animations, and text on their computer screens.

Each of these revolutions greatly enhanced humans' ability to disseminate information. Better yet, each revolution enabled a broader group of people to serve as information providers, to the point that with today's Internet, nearly anyone with a computer can publish content. But with each revolution came the growing pains of learning how to use the new technologies effectively, as well as how to create sensible workflows. The creation of attractive Web pages, with high-quality graphics and sophisticated layouts, is one area where the growing pains of the Internet revolution were all too apparent.

This process of preparing images for the Web, borne out of the previous decade's desktop publishing technology, was, at first, a very cumbersome process: an image was scanned, drawn, or otherwise created and transferred into a computer with a bitmap application. Text was created in a vector application, then brought into the bitmap application and composited with the image or other artwork in that program. Artists would manipulate the images there and then either change the color mode to a 256-indexed mode to save in the GIF89 format or compress the images as JPEGs. Next, the images would be wrung through another application that would examine the pixels and further compress the data for optimal delivery over the Web. Next came the process of coding HTML, creating tables into which to place the images, controlling the positions of the images on the page, and testing in all the various browsers. Uploading these to the server was the final step in the Web publishing process...until the client decided to change the colors or the text or the content of the HTML page, to the dismay of the designer who created the images and text.

Enter Fireworks. Developed from the ground up as a Web (and hence screen) graphics application that brings the best of both vector and bitmap creation and editing technology together into one environment, Fireworks allows the user to optimize, animate, and create HTML tables with graphic content that is ready for Web, multimedia, or other screen presentation. With the exception of the HTML editing, Macromedia Fireworks gives artists the ability to do all the tasks outlined in the

previous paragraph in a single environment. This efficiency makes what once was a long and arduous process an enjoyable experience, empowering the designer/developer to focus on the presentation of content, rather than its workflow. Fireworks MX is the next big step, bringing true integration between itself and HTML editors such as Dreamweaver MX and FrontPage.

Around this groundbreaking software product, a community of users has grown, largely found in the Fireworks Online Forum (<http://www.macromedia.com/go/13012>), a newsgroup that is served by Macromedia and widely read and posted to by a diverse group of individuals who share an interest in Web graphics all around the world. Since its inception in 1998, I've seen many users come, some go and come back, and some that have become part of a core group of regulars. These people make the forum community what it is, and those who come and gain help often return to help others who follow. This spirit of community is what makes my job especially gratifying. Many of the regulars on this forum are authors who write about Fireworks and other software products.

Jeffrey Bardzell is no stranger to this group, having distinguished himself as the resident Flash and Director expert in the forum. I've personally benefited from his comments and help because Flash is just about the only Macromedia product that I haven't supported. Jeffrey's long history of publishing training materials on Macromedia Web development software for the Web and especially in developing e-learning curricula with Allecto Media and Flash-Guru, as well as ehandson.com, qualifies him eminently as the author of the current volume. His previous publication on Fireworks is among the first to show how to use advanced Fireworks features as serious production tools. You'll find more about him in the section about the author. His background is impressive, and I think you'll find the details of this book to be equally impressive.

As the Web has grown from a repository for static pages and images to a platform for producing Web services and applications, Macromedia has been an industry leader in the development of professional authoring tools. The MX line of products is the culmination of our research into the future of Web design and development. Close to the heart of all application development is the process of User Interface (UI) design. Fireworks alone stands in the forefront of all products that enable users to create the graphics that will make compelling application interfaces, whether inside of Flash, XML, XHTML, or ASP.NET and ColdFusion-driven Web applications. Fireworks is going to be the graphic tool of choice in the hand of the designer and developer, because it is specifically designed to meet the production demands of our users, to create and edit a wide variety of vector and bitmap artwork and export these graphics to various other applications in such a way as to enable the smoothest possible workflow.

This book is important to you because it is the springboard you need to accomplish all the tasks that you will find necessary when working not only with Fireworks, but also with those other applications with which it has been designed to work. Jeffrey covers the fundamental skills you need to get started and takes you through more advanced techniques to the more advanced artistry. You'll learn how to work quickly with Fireworks, streamlining your tasks and enabling collaboration by creating and sharing reusable assets. Next, you'll delve into animation and the various kinds of interactivity you can develop in Fireworks, saving time by creating your user interface in Fireworks so that you can use your Web publishing software to do what it does best. Jeffrey has given special attention to the optimization features, expanding this topic into two chapters. Exporting optimized graphics for use in other applications as well as Web pages is given ample treatment. Lastly, Jeffrey wraps up with a section that will take you to the next level with Fireworks: automating and extending

Fireworks. This is where you will learn how to use the batch processing features and create your own commands with Flash interfaces, such as the Align and Modify panels in Fireworks MX. Jeffrey is at the forefront of a new wave of application development wherein Flash movies can be used as front-end controls, enabling developers to make their Fireworks extensibility applications look and behave however their developers want them to.

If you are looking for a complete curriculum to educate yourself and others in the world of Fireworks MX, or if you need an encyclopedic reference, you need this book!