A Flash Slideshow

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This slideshow (*slideshow.fla*) will handle any number of photos. The working version includes six photos. You should delete all of these and use your own photos instead. You can use more or fewer photos by changing the movie clip named "Photocollection" inside the FLA. You will also change the captions within the movie clip.

Test the SWF before you begin to modify the FLA. Test all three buttons several times. Get a feeling for how this slideshow works for the user. What changes, and what doesn't change? How's the timing?

There is no sound in the working version. You can add a loaded MP3 file with the "loadSound()" method if you follow the instructions in Lesson 8 in *Flash Journalism: How to Create Multimedia News Packages* (Focal Press, 2005).

Exercise 1: A Slideshow with Auto-Play

There is a file prepared for this exercise: *slideshow.fla*
>> *Copy* the file (rename the new copy) and open it in Flash MX or later.

Learn by Example

Explore the movie by clicking on these *keyframes* and examining what they contain:

- Actions layer, Frame 60: This script changes the photo and replays the movie.

- Labels layer, Frame 10 and Frame 45: The two labeled frames here are used by ActionScript. They are directed related to the layer named "fader" (see below).

- Buttons layer, Frame 1: Look at the script on *each* button. Even though this slideshow plays automatically, the buttons give the user some means of controlling it. *Each button has a different script on it.*

- Border layer, Frame 1: *Turn off visibility* for this layer (click the dot under the eye in the layers panel of the main **Timeline**) to understand what is in this layer. It is visible throughout the entire movie. Any graphic images you want can be included in Frame 1 and then seen throughout the entire movie, as long as the layer extends to the final frame. These graphics will be *on top of* the photos (notice the layer order). To *turn on visibility* for this layer, click the red X under the eye in the layers panel of the main **Timeline**.

- Textboxes layer, Frame 1: Click on each text field (there are four) to see whether it is *Dynamic* or *Static*. Also check the *Instance Name* given to each text field (**Properties** panel, lower left corner). The *Instance Name* of the text field is used to change the captions dynamically. (See Lesson 9 in the book for more details.)

- Fader layer, Frames 1, 10, 50 and 60: This layer contains the graphic symbol named "Rectangle," which is the same color as the background color of the movie. Using alpha, in Frames 1–10, the rectangle instance goes from full visibility (100 percent alpha), where it hides the photo below it, to no visibility (0 percent alpha), where it reveals the photo below it. In Frames 50–60, the rectangle does the opposite, and it hides the photo again.

- Photos layer, Frame 1: There is a movie clip here. *Double-click* the photo to enter Symbol Editing Mode so you can see the **Timeline** for this movie clip. (If you do not see any photo, turn off visibility for the "fader" layer!) *All the photos* for the slideshow are inside the movie clip! Look at the script (in the "actions" layer *in the movie clip*) for *each* frame. This is where the *caption text* is written for each photo; it causes the text to change dynamically. Only the first three frames have the scripts to change the captions. *You* will add scripting to the last three frames.

Modify the FLA

After you have examined the lesson file *slideshow.fla*, make the following changes to the file:

1. Add ActionScript for the Dynamic text fields *caption1_txt, caption2_txt* and *location_txt* for the last three photos inside the movie clip. You can *copy* the script from one of the first three photos there in the same movie clip. Make sure that the **Actions panel** is open (press F9) and—*if* you are using Flash MX, *not* Flash MX 2004—that you are in "Expert Mode" (select that from the "View Options" icon on the Actions panel). Change the caption text to match the photo in that frame. *Test the movie* (Ctrl-Enter) after you have done this. Look for your new captions!

2. Import a new photo (File > Import to Library). To get the best result, both in *file size* for your completed Flash movie and in the *quality* of your photo, the photo *should not be in a compressed format* when you **Import to Library** in Flash MX. The file formats BMP and PNG-24 both work well. (JPG does not!) You can save in either one of those file formats in Photoshop. (This is explained in detail in Lesson 7 in the book.)

3. Compress the bitmap (photo) in Flash for optimum file size and image quality. To do this: Double-click *your new photo file* in the **Library** panel in Flash (to open the Library: press F11). In the Bitmap Properties dialog, *un-check* "Use document default quality." Then change the **Quality** number to 60 and click Test. If the file size is about 40 KB or less (for a photo), click OK. If the file size is *larger* than 40 KB, change the **Quality** to 50 and test again. Remember: five 40-KB photos means that your Flash file will be at least a 200-KB download! (Huge!)

4. Make a new frame in the *Photocollection* movie clip for your new photo. **Here's how:**

a. Follow the instructions under the bullet point "Photos layer, Frame 1" above to get into the **Timeline** for the movie clip *Photocollection* (Instance Name: *photoset01*).
b. *Shift-click* on Frame 6 in all three layers. Press F5 once to add a new frame. Note that you need to keep all three layers the same length, because the last frame affects the end of your slideshow (that's where you'll find the text that says "The End").
c. On Frame 7, in *both* the "actions" layer and "photos" layer, make a new keyframe (F6).
d. Delete the old photo that's on the Stage in Frame 7.
e. Drag your new photo from the Library to the **Stage** and position it nicely there (make sure that in the **Timeline**, you are in Frame 7 of the "photos" layer).
f. Select Frame 7 in the "actions" layer and add or modify the necessary scripting. (You can *copy the scripts* from another frame in that layer, but be sure to *change the text* for your new photo!).
g. Test the movie (Ctrl-Enter or Cmd-Return) after you have done this.

From this brief exercise, you should be able to see how to build your own automated slideshow from scratch in Flash. Some ActionScript is required, but not very much.

Exercise 2: Your Own Slideshow with Auto-Play

Use a new copy (with a new filename) of *slideshow.fla* for this exercise.

1. Use *eight* (8) photos of your own (not six). This means you need to add TWO frames inside the movie clip named Photocollection.

2. Change all the *captions, location* and *credit* information to match your photos.

3. Change the background color of the movie.

4. Open the Rectangle graphic in the Library panel (press F11) and change the color to match the new color of your background.

5. In the "border" layer, change the color and appearance of the graphic.

6. In the "textboxes" layer, change the color of all four text fields to match your new color scheme. Don't forget the text on the last frame inside the movie clip!

You may also want to change:

- The buttons—if you do, make sure you copy and preserve the script to use on your new buttons.
- The layout of the text fields and the photos.
- The font family used—if you do, make sure you *embed your font* (see Lesson 9). Don't forget the text on the last frame inside the movie clip!
- The Timeline—maybe you'd like a longer fade-in and fade-out. If so, add frames!

Save and test your movie.

Exercise 3: Add Sound to Your Slideshow

Use a new copy (with a new filename) of *your own* slideshow FLA from Exercise 2.

You'll need one MP3 file for this exercise, either a *music* file or a *narration*. A narration might be you speaking, or it might be an interview you recorded that is relevant to your photos.

- If you just want a music file, you can download one from Flashkit.com.

- If you create an original narration, make sure it's not too long or too short. Each of your photos appears for 60 frames, or 4 seconds (unless you modified the Timeline). Thus eight photos (8 x 4) will require 32 seconds.

Make sure you do not use any music files without permission from the copyright owner!

Turn to Lesson 8 in the book *Flash Journalism: How to Create Multimedia News Packages* (Focal Press, 2005). Find Exercise 8.2. Follow the instructions to load the MP3 file into your movie when it runs (that is, when you play the SWF).

Of course, you already have an "actions" layer in your movie. So just write the script on Frame 1 in your existing "actions" layer.

If you want to use a music loop, follow the instructions in Exercise 8.1 in the book. In that case, you should have a WAV or AIFF file, and *not* an MP3.

NOTE: You can use ActionScript on the last frame inside the *Photocollection* movie clip, or script on the buttons, or both, to make sure your sound file does not play multiple times on top of itself. The keys to controlling your sound file (assuming you are using the variable name "x") are these ActionScript commands, as explained in Lesson 8:

```
x.stop();
x.start();
```

Inside the movie clip, you would need to use:

```
_parent.x.stop();
_parent.x.start();
```

It would be a great idea to give your users a fourth button that allows them to *turn off the sound*. You can find instructions in Lesson 8 for that as well. Based on the sound file you are using, you can decide whether you want a Pause button (Exercise 8.5) or a Mute button (Exercise 8.6).