Top Flash MX 2004 Professional Tips

We've plucked Bill Sanders and aYo Binitie from among our talented group of Flash MX Professional 2004 authors to bring you a batch of their latest and greatest tips. Impress the masses with aYo's cues for creating a video slideshow while Bill helps get you up-to-speed on how to play FLV files. It's your best Flash multimedia tasks boiled down to a simple science!

Create a Video Slideshow with Cue Points

By aYo Binitie

With **Flash MX Professional 2004**, it is quite easy to create a slide presentation with cue points.

1. From the Welcome screen choose and click the **Slide Presentation** option. If you have disabled the Welcome screen you can do this from the **File > New** option.

2. Select any of the Slide presentation options. In this case, use the **Classic** presentation option.

3. When the screens appear in the authoring interface, click on the **Title Screen** and change the name to suit your needs. For our purposes here, we'll be making a presentation for **Room99 LTD**.

4. Select the **content header** screen. Select the text field at the top and change the text field there to suit your needs. Here it is changed to **Room99 Presentation.** You will notice that this screen has child screens. The headers in this screen will be displayed in all the child screens. If you wish, you can change the title of the screen in the slide tree panel on the left of the authoring environment.

5. Select the child screen called **marchSales,** double-click the title and change the name to **videoScreen**.

6. Select all of the content within the **videoScreen** slide and press Delete. Open the **component panel** and drag in a **MediaDisplay** component and a **MediaController** component. Name the **MediaDisplay** component **vid_display_mc**, and the **MediaController** component **vid_control_mc**.

7. Open the **Component Inspector** and select **vid_display_mc**. In the **Parameters** screen, type in the URL of the **Flash Video (*.flv)** that you want to display with this component. This URL can be relative or absolute. Untick the **Automatically play** option because you want the controller component to control play. Select **vid_control_mc** and in the **Component Inspector** set the **activePlayControl** option to **Play**.

8. To enable the **MediaDisplay** component to listen to commands from the **MediaController** component, select **vid_display_mc** and open the **Behaviors** panel.

9. In the **Behaviors** panel, click on the **+** sign and drill down to **Media**. Select **Associate Controlle**r. In the Associate Controller panel drill down the slide tree until you get to the **MediaController instance, vid_control_mc**. Select it and click **OK**. If you test the movie, you will find that **vid_control_mc** now controls video playback in **vid_display_mc**.

10. Create **three child screens** for the **videoScreen** slide. To do this, right-click the **videoScreen** slide and select **Insert Nested Slide**. Rename the screens **cue1**, **cue2,** and **cue3** respectively. These slides will be cued to appear at various set times as the video plays.

11. To register the nested slides with the video play back, select the display component and scroll to the bottom of the parameters pane. The table there with titles **Name** and **Position,** allows the developer to register **Slides** as **Cue Points**. Click the **+** button and type in the name of the child slide. The cue point times are set as **hour:minute:second:frame**. Set the times for the cued slides in the **commensurate fields**.

12. To trigger the cued slides during movie play, select the display component and open the Behaviors panel. Click the **+** button and select the **Media** option. Select the **SlideCuePoint Navigation** option and, when the panel pops up, drill down to the **videoScreen** slide (this is your presentation). Click **OK**.

13. Test the movie. When you click the **Play** button the video starts to play and the cued slides show up at the set times.

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FLV File Tips for Flash MX 2004 Professional

By Bill Sanders

Progressive Download

When you play an external FLV file using Flash MX 2004, the user sees what appears to be streamed video, which is almost indistinguishable from true streaming. When the FLV file begins to download from the server, the video is placed into a buffer and begins playing after a short delay while the first portion of the file is buffered. Because the entire file is downloaded, the user can replay the video without having to redownload the file, and even seek different points in the video.

Streaming Download

True streaming begins playing the video almost immediately in real time on the client's computer. Because the streaming is done by a streaming server, any position in the file can be randomly accessed using seek methods (with progressive downloads, only those portions of the file that have been downloaded are accessible to seek). Macromedia Flash Communication Server MX streams FLV files using true streaming. True streaming is the preferred method for longer FLV files. Two key classes are involved: NetConnection and NetStream. NetConnection offers a single method—Connect—while NetStream is a bit more robust (see the chart below).

NetStream Features

Methods	Description
close()	Stops play all together; resumes play at the beginning of the file.
pause()	A toggle method that stops and resumes play in position where stop/start occurs.
play()	Begins streaming play to designated output device.
seek(n)	Moves to the stream position in seconds (n).
setBufferTime(n)	Establishes the number of seconds (n) the stream is placed into buffer before dropping frames.
Properties	
bufferLength	Current number of seconds in the buffer.
bufferTime	Seconds specified in the setBufferTime() method.
currentFps	Frames per second in current stream.
time	How long in seconds the stream has been playing.
Event Handler	
onStatus	Whenever an error or status change occurs this event is fired.

Simple Script to Play FLV File

The following script shows how to put it all together. You will need an embedded video object on the stage. Open the **Library** panel and from the panel's pop-up menu select **Embedded Video**. Then drag the **Embedded Video** object from the **Library** panel to the **stage**. In the **Instance Name** text window in the **Property Inspector** provide it with the name, **output_video**. Place an **FLV** file in the same folder that you plan to save your **FLA** file, name it **sample.flv**, and enter the following script in the first frame of the document:

```
var myConnect_nc:NetConnection = new NetConnection();
myConnect_nc.connect(null);
var myStream_ns:NetStream = new NetStream(myConnect_nc);
output_video.attachVideo(myStream_ns);
myStream_ns.play("sample.flv");
```

Even Simpler Script to Play FLV File

Using **Flash MX Professional 2004**, all you need to do is drag a **MediaDisplay component** to the **stage**, enter the name of the **FLV** file in the **URL text window in the Component Inspector**, and save the **FLA** file to the same folder as the **FLV** file. It automatically runs when you test the movie or play the published movie in a browser.

How to Create FLV Files

There are a few ways to create **FLV** files. One way is to use **Flash Communication Server MX**. Just set up your camera and microphone and start talking, singing, or dancing with a **FCS script** that records the a/v stream. Instead of using **FCS** you can also use **Sorensen Squeeze** to do the same thing. Or, you can record a video in **AVI** or **MOV** format and import it into **Flash MX Professional 2004's Library**. Then, from the Library panel, select the movie icon, right-click the mouse (**Control + Click** on the Mac) to open the **Properties panel**, and select **Export**. The default export format is **FLV**, so just give it a file name and click **Save**.