

Classroom Multimedia

Adobe Products Shine



Sarah Chauncey ("Classroom Multimedia: Adobe Products Shine," p. 24) has combined her technical expertise with her commitment to public education by becoming a school library media specialist. She serves at Grandview Elementary School in the East Ramapo (NY) School District.

As the school year comes to a close, our attention begins to shift from lesson plans to vacation plans. But by August, I often find I've amassed a bunch of photos and video footage whose value extends beyond a summer's worth of memories. These are the raw materials for digital storytelling in the classroom.



Freely available Web-based tools can help in creating your own multimedia projects. However, desktop programs offer richer features and don't have file-size limitations.

Adobe's Digital School Collection, a desktop suite of multimedia programs, is both accessible to the novice and sophisticated enough for advanced users. The Collection includes Photoshop Elements 6, Premiere Elements 4, Contribute CS3, and Acrobat 8 Professional software, along with a teacher resource DVD. In this review, I'll focus on Premiere and Photoshop.

Premiere Elements 4

Premiere Elements 4 shines as an entry-level post-production video editor. The User's Guide is excellent—all you will need to get started. Import your footage via live capture (webcam or live audio source), or from a video camera, hard drive, or external storage media. With Premiere's built-in themes, you can create a movie in a few clicks. But after mastering the basics, you'll want to experiment with the program's visual effects and interactive menus.

Premiere allows you to share your projects on the Web or create a DVD or Blu-ray disc. The product is at its best when outputting high-quality DVD file formats

such as MPEG. Premiere's encoders for Flash, Windows Media, and QuickTime do not generate files of the same quality as the native applications. According to an Adobe rep, the encoders are upgraded as new releases are made available. And as outlined below, there are workarounds to achieve the best quality for each file type.

Here's the scoop. Frustrated with my inability to create a quality Windows Media (WMV) file, I imported the raw video into Windows Movie Maker and outputted a lovely WMV file. I noted the file properties and proceeded to set the advanced properties in Premiere Elements to match. Alas, the results were unaccept-



able. A call to Adobe technical support stopped the hair pulling. I should not expect Premiere's Windows Media file to be comparable to that produced by Windows Movie Maker, I was told, regardless of the advanced settings. The solution: once the raw file is edited and enhanced in Premiere output to AVI format, import the AVI file to the native program, which has a fully functioning encoder for the file format you wish to produce.

Photoshop Elements 6

The image-editing program Photoshop Elements 6 is a snap to use. Simply load

files from your digital camera, online photo service, cell phone, or what have you, then access your images through the Organizer. Once opened, the Organizer automatically saves your images to a Catalog. Photoshop allows you to create multiple Catalogs. Adding captions and notes is another way you can identify your files.

Photoshop allows you to work in Full, Quick Fix, and Guided Edit modes, and auto tools are available within each. Once you apply an auto feature, you can tweak changes to your liking. You'll learn a lot simply by playing with the auto fixes. Unless you are a professional photographer or artist, cropping, resizing, color correction, and sharpening will suffice for most images.

For some real fun, check out the gallery of filters, which you can use alone or in combination to render just about any look you can imagine. In one practical application, filters enable you to display photographs of children in a Web project. Applying a filter to the image of a child can alter it just enough to protect his or her identity.

Premiere Elements 4 and Photoshop Elements 6 are available as a bundle. Educator's price: \$119.

For more information about the entire Adobe Digital School Collection, including pricing, visit www.adobe.com/education/k12/adsc/.

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