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Chapter 35

Conclusions

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Now that the book has been completed, I take a brief bit of time to write a bit of a conclusion.

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Articles

While this chapter marks the end of this first book, Flash is still quite prevalent on the web so I will be writing more material about Flash. This material will take two forms. The first form will be the second volume of this series (which will be described later) and the second form will be individual articles that will be released on the site that describe the details of the creation of an open source game that was released or is about to be released.

I am sure that many people would be able to go through the source .fla file and be able to figure out everything that is going on, but having the article just clears up how the game works making the source file easier to modify. It has the added benefit of giving people who are new to Flash and have stumbled upon one of my open source releases the ability to aid in their learning of how to create Flash content. The material in the article may be Flash oriented, but that does not mean that the concepts behind the code can not be applied to many other languages. In fact, I have personally found that it is fairly easy to port code between Java and Flash (the two languages I use for the games that appear on the Blazing Games website).

I am also considering releasing articles that would focus on an algorithm or technique and not be game specific. Such articles would look into how to use a certain feature of Flash or would explain how a certain algorithm works. If there is demand for such articles I will write them. The algorithm articles may be written in a language neutral way.

In other words, keep visiting BlazingGames.com for additional Flash articles.

Volume 2

Some of you may have noticed that this book is named volume 1. You may be asking if there are going to be more volumes in this book and if so what will be in those books. When thinking about doing additional books in this series I had a lot of options to choose from. Here are some of the options I had considered writing about:

Single Game focus

This book would focus on the creation of a single medium to large scale Flash project. Most likely this would be a strategy game or a role-playing game.

Three Dimensional Flash

Taking the creation of Flash games to the third dimension.

Advanced Action Script

This would deviate most from my other books, and would just focus on advanced algorithms in Action Script and how they can be used within games. Some of the things I would take on would be memory structures, AI techniques, the A* algorithm, and of course concepts behind 3D.

The first option appealed to me the most so I started thinking about what game I should do. All sorts of ideas popped into my head but one point seemed to hit me the most. I already have a fairly large scale game being created in very small chunks that is being released on the site as I type this. I definitely want to finish creating this game, and the small chunks make easy translation into small chapters about that chunk. The only downside to this project is that when you get right down to it, the game is really just a bunch of very small adventure games so the second volume would really be very similar to the first except instead of covering 10 games it would be covering around fifty games. Still, if future volumes of this book also focus on larger scale projects, this would be the ideal transition project from the multi-game format of the first volume to the single-game focussed format of the later volumes.

I don't think I really need to tell anybody which game I am talking about, but for those who haven't tried to figure out what series I was hinting at, the second volume of this book will focus on the creation of the One of those Weeks adventure game.

Future of Flash

Other than the re-writing of this chapter, I had actually finished this book a long time ago. The slow release of the chapters was more a function of the release schedule of my site than of my desire to release this material. While this may not be the greatest Flash book ever written, it is a free book. While I can not say it is the only free book on creating Flash games that is available, it is the only one that I know of (email me if you know of others). That being said, Flash has changed quite a bit since the start of this project and will probably continue to change.

When I started writing this book, I was using Flash 6, which was officially known as Flash MX. Shortly after I finished my first draft of the book, Flash 7 (officially Flash MX 2004) was released which extended the Action Script language into a more Java-like language. While I never covered the features of Action Script 2 in this book, all the Action Script code that was developed in this book can be used just fine under Action Script 2. The big change is the better support for classes and interfaces, not to mention typed variables.

As I re-write this final chapter of the book, it is August of 2005 and three very interesting things have just happened that will be of great significance to the future direction that Flash takes. First, Adobe is acquiring Macromedia. As I personally believe that one of the big reasons Adobe decided to do this was for control of Flash, I think this will only help Flash in the long run. The acquisition is suppose to take place later this year and has to pass federal approval.

The second big event was the announced release of Studio 8. This includes Flash 8. A new version of Flash is always going to be significant. While I don't have a copy of Flash 8 yet (I didn't have enough spare time to sign up for the beta program as beta testers are expected to use the new version for a significant amount of time every week). The new version has added a lot of visual effects to Flash, and has improved the video support to the extent that actually imbedding video as part of a Flash applet may make sense.

Finally, Microsoft has been letting rumours about Sparkle slip to the media. Sparkle is their animation tools for the upcoming Windows Vista OS. These tools seem to be very Flash like, which leads to the obvious possibility that they are going to make an attempt to take over the Flash market though my understanding is that Sparkle will be a windows-only product (possibly Vista-only).

I just hope that Flash continues to thrive (and if not, that future Java versions greatly improve their applet support). The features I would love to see is support for stand-alone Flash applications, 3D support, and Action Script support for threading.

Final Words

It has been a long journey, but at last this book has been completed. The goal I had when I started writing this book was to actually finish writing a technical book. That goal has been completed, so at least I know that one of my life goals has been accomplished.

The concept of writing a book at first glance sounds like a fairly easy task. In reality, I have found that writing a book is a huge amount of work. Still, writing is something I enjoy doing and want to get better at. The only way to improve a skill is by using a skill.

The purpose of the book was to give people new to Flash an idea of how it could be used for the creation of games. The book covered the creation of a wide spectrum of games so I believe that it has accomplished it's goal! Still, feedback is always nice so if you have any comments about the book, especially comments on how I could make any future book that I write better, feel free to email me.