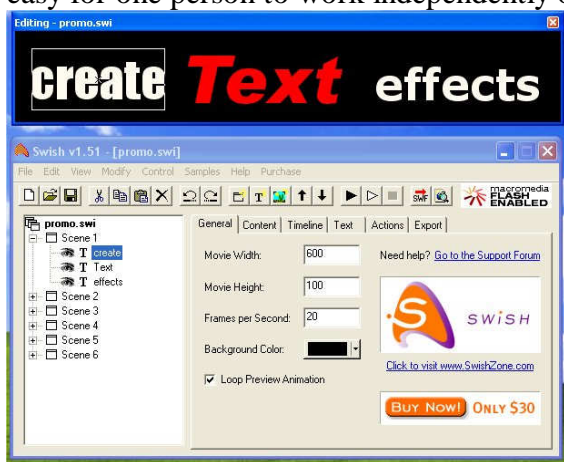


TECH EXCHANGE No. 5 – Suffering From Internet Buzzword Overload? (Part 2)

Technology Exchange (TE) is now also available from the web - browse to [HTTP://WWW.ENDHOUSESOFTWARE.COM](http://www.endhousesoftware.com) and select 'Technology Exchange' from the links page. At present this site is still under construction and you can only download issues of TE in PDF format. There are plans in the pipeline to develop the site into a community with the exchange of technical information in forums. This part covers the technologies used within the web browser.

Browsing the web is considered an integral part of today's technologic society. We take for granted that we can type in a web page address and the page just appears in the browser. In this article we will take a look at the technologies used to display the web page. We can divide this into two sections - presentation and application technologies. The web page address is known as a **URL** (Uniform Resource Locator) and comes in two main parts **protocol://web_page_address**. For web browsing we use two protocols '**http**' (see part 1) and '**https**' which is the secure version. In the secure version you will also see a padlock icon on the bottom status line of the browser as confirmation of this mode. The secure version is used on website exchanging sensitive (e.g. financial) data. The end part of the URL gives you an idea of the purpose and location of the web site. Be careful to type the URL in correctly - there is a craze of **Typo-Squatting** occurring where people register the URLs representing all the common typos of big Internet sites. A little finger trouble can take you to a web sites serving up anything from spyware to pornography. Other common protocols are **ftp:** (file transfer protocol) and **news:** (newsgroup protocol).

First the presentation technologies, at the simplest level the web pages you view are written in a language called **HTML** (HyperText Markup Language) that describes the page layout in terms of alignment, fonts, colours, etc. The problem with **HTML** is that it mixed the presentation and application code, making it difficult for different people to work on these two areas of the website. There are several scripting enhancements to **HTML** that add extra functionality - **PHP** (Personal Home Page), **ASP** (Active Server Pages), **VBScript** (Visual Basic Script), and JavaScript to name a few. We will explore these scripting languages in later articles. To help separate the presentation and application technologies, **CSS** (Cascading Style Sheets) can be used. The CSS provides a global place to describe the styles used in the website as a whole. The benefits of this are two fold - one it is easy for one person to work independently on the CSS and two any changes to your corporate image can be



made in one place rather than have to change every web page. Web pages can also contain animations and mini-movies. One common technology use here is **Flash** (<http://www.micromedia.com>) from Micro Media. One good program I have found for creating Flash Animations is **SwiSH** (see screen shot) (<http://www.swishzone.com>).

Second the application technologies. Self-contained applets (mini applications) can also be embedded on a web page. These can perform numerous actions and are often written in the **JAVA** ([HTTP://JAVA.SUN.COM](http://java.sun.com)) or **PERL** (<http://www.perl.com>) language. If your website processes data that needs to be saved between invocations, chances are that you will use a database. One common database is **MySQL** ([HTTP://WWW.MYSQL.COM](http://www.mysql.com)) this runs on most platforms including Windows and Unix. Communication with the database is via **SQL** (Structured Query Language) statements. The above is of course not an exhaustive list and web techniques are developing all the time. When you develop a web site you can choose to hand code it all using a text editor or use one of the many design programs available on the market.

One final piece of the puzzle is the web site needs to be saved on a computer that can be reached by the whole Internet. This is what is known as the **hosting** of your website. Hosting companies come in all shapes and sizes

offering a whole range of deals. The most common configuration is '**shared hosting**', where you share a hosting computer with other people's websites. The hosting company will take care of computer maintenance, backup, etc. When the number of visitors (hits) to your website exceeds a certain threshold you can switch to '**dedicated hosting**' where you have sole control over the hosting computer.

This week's recommended site is Windows Plant ([HTTP://WWW.WINPLANET.COM](http://www.winplanet.com)) for all your windows needs. That's it for this week; please send any questions or comments to TECHEXCHANGE@ENDHOUSESOFTWARE.COM.

By Gavin Baker.