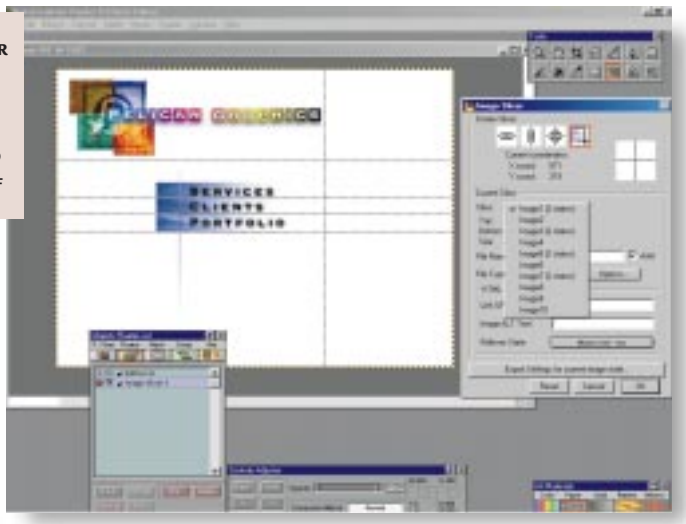
Push the button

Interactive web pages are a doddle... if you do them the Ken McMahon way.

Why do so many web pages look so dull? At least part of the reason must be that producing exciting, interactive graphic pages requires a degree of technical know-how most people don't even want to think about. So anything that makes the task easier has got to be A Good Thing. Step forward Metacreations Painter 5.5 Web Edition. The software best known for its "natural media" tools which mimic the real stuff — oil, canvas, watercolour, pastel, crayon and the like — has been upgraded to include a raft of web authoring facilities.



▶ THE IMAGE SLICER AT WORK. EACH SEGMENT IS NAMED AND OUR THREE BUTTONS HAVE TWO STATES, ON AND OFF

Slice and dice

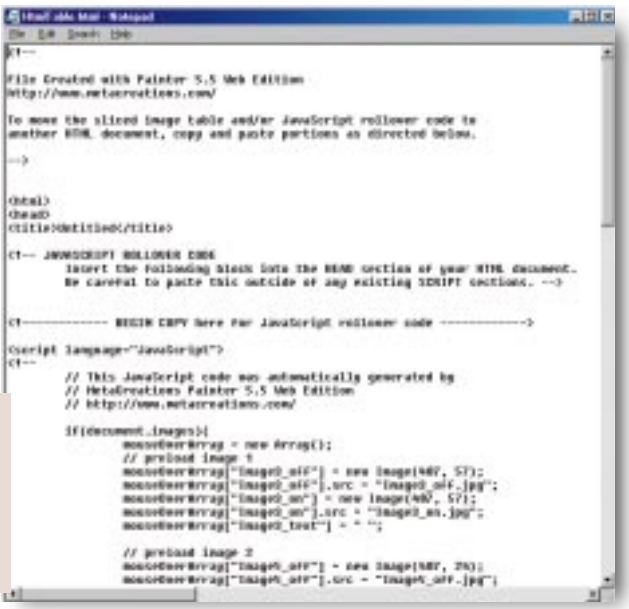
Most exciting of these, for me at least, is the Image Slicer which, like most of the additions, is a plug-in floater. The Image Slicer pretty much automates the task of dividing up large images into bite-sized chunks and slotting them back together in an HTML table. Why? Because big images can take several weeks to download, so slicing them up means you can compress the bits that will take it (flat colour backgrounds, for example) while maintaining quality in the bits that won't, e.g. photos. Painter's new Image Slicer takes on another real chore: the creation of Javascript Rollovers. So now you can have interactive buttons without all the grief of having to code and test them yourself.

Anything that makes the task easier has got to be A Good Thing

Very briefly then, here's how to create a sliced-image HTML table with Javascript buttons in Painter 5.5 Web Edition. Before you do anything else, make sure you have all the components ready. My graphic has three two-state Javascript buttons and they alter their appearance when the Javascript events *mouseout* or *mouseover* occur — in other words, they change colour when your mouse pointer is over them. You can use three-state rollovers which have a third appearance (mouseclick) if you like. Since my buttons have two states, there will be two export operations: one for the mouseout state and one for mouseover. I've therefore got two floaters: one with all the buttons in the off state and another with them all on. Designate the "on" floater the bottom one and make sure it's not visible on-screen by clicking the "eye" icon in the floater list.

Let's deal with the default "off" page first. Select the Image Slicer from the front drawer of the plug-in floaters palette and click Apply to pull up the Image Slicer dialogue box. There are three slicing tools, for dividing the image horizontally and vertically, and for creating an intersection. The fourth tool is a segment selector. Each time you divide the image, the segments are named sequentially from left to right and down the page, and then added to the pulldown list. You can enter a link URL and an ALT label which will display in the window while the image is loading.

The page is now divided into ten segments. We are only going to export images one, three, five and seven, since there is nothing in the other bits. But they could, for example, contain other images or dynamic text. If you don't want to export part of the image, you can just select "No export" in the File-type pulldown. If you inadvertently create a slice in the wrong place, you



▶ PAINTER 5.5'S AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED HTML AND JAVASCRIPT, COMPLETE WITH CUT AND PASTE INSTRUCTIONS

Questions & answers

Q I took one of my three CorelDraw books on holiday with me to give me a chance to read it properly.
I noticed the "Creating Images for the Web" section and thought I'd have a go at it. I'm adequately familiar with HTML but not Java and definitely not Corel Barista. I created a drawing and used the "File/Publish To Internet" option to save it, and all I can ever see on my browser is a large square box, whether I use Netscape or Explorer and whether I publish a drawing or text.

The book says I can publish directly to HTML or Corel Barista, but I'm stuck with Barista as the only option. Any ideas on how to proceed would be most appreciated.

FRED BURNETT

***A** There are four options for exporting files using the Publish to Internet command from the File menu in CorelDraw 7. You can simply export your graphic as a gif or jpeg bitmap image, you can create a Barista file, or you can export your graphic as an HTML image map. In this last case Draw creates two files — a gif file of the map graphic, and an HTML document containing a reference to the gif and all the relevant HTML code to make it work as a client-side image map.*

Once you assign a URL to an object in your drawing, you can define the hotspot — the area you click to access the linked document. To use an object as the hotspot, click Toolbars from the View menu, enable the Internet Objects check box and click OK. Select the Internet Object with the Pick tool and click the Use Object Shape to Define Hotspot button in the Internet Objects toolbar.

If the internet toolbar isn't displayed, right-click any toolbar and click Internet Objects from the pulldown menu. When you export to the image map, Draw will save the graphic as Graphic1.GIF and the HTML as Graphic1.HTM. If the Export to Image Map option is greyed out or not working, it's probably because you haven't got the image map filter installed. You need to insert CD 1 and re-run the installer. Select Custom Setup and uncheck every single box in the Component panel (so you're installing no applications), then hit the Next button which will take you to the Filters panel. Expand the Internet Filters menu and check the second option — the Corel image map htm — then follow the rest of the installation procedure.

can delete it by Ctrl-clicking. The five sections on the right — two, four, six, eight and ten — can be grouped. The documentation states that if these contained a single background colour, you could export it as a single gif file with a small palette, say 4 bits per pixel. However, I'd be worried that adjacent areas with the same background but a different file format and palette, would display differently.

Once the slices are defined, you're ready to export the HTML table and images. Don't forget to define the rollover state for the buttons using the pulldown at the bottom. Click the Export settings for the Current image state button and in the Export Slices options panel specify the location for the HTML and images, click the Include Javascript button and set the rollover state — mouseout. Check the location you specified to make sure you have an HTML file for the table and an image for each of the segments exported.

Float away

Next, turn all the buttons on by making the "on" floater visible in the list, and, still in the floater list, double-click the Image Slicer floater to bring up the dialogue again. If you add a new floater at this stage, make sure to reposition the Image Slicer floater at the top of the list, as it only works on floaters below it. In the Export Slices options panel select mouseover as the state and uncheck the export HTML box. You should now have an HTML table, image one (the logo) and two files for each of images three, five and seven in on and off states.

▲ SUCCESS, AND SO QUICK! THE FINISHED ARTICLE IN EXPLORER 4

This was the first time I'd attempted this with Painter 5.5 and, to be quite honest, I wasn't expecting it to work. At best, I thought, I'd get everything in the right place but the rollovers wouldn't work. So you can imagine my surprise when the page appeared in Explorer 4 looking absolutely perfect and with three working rollovers.

I'm no Javascript or even HTML expert, so I couldn't say if Painter's automatically generated code is particularly elegant but I do know it works. I also know that creating this first effort took me about half an hour, and the first, last and only time I ever attempted to hand-code an HTML page with Javascript rollovers took me the best part of a week.

PCW CONTACTS

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