

Parsons The New School for Design

Pre-eminent design school incorporates Adobe® Flash® Lite™ technology throughout mobile design curriculum to prepare students for creative leadership careers

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www.parsons.edu

PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN

Industry

Higher Education

Challenge

- Explore an interdisciplinary learning approach to mobile media design

Solution

- Collaborative Learning
Students at Parsons embrace Adobe Flash Lite technology to explore how visual design for mobile, user experiences, and interface design impact social issues.

Results

- Prepared students for design leadership positions
- Integrated mobile development tools across curriculum
- Provided students with real-world projects
- Enabled cross-functional learning with integrated tools

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Flash Lite
- Adobe Flash Player
- Adobe Creative Suite® 3 Web Premium. Components used include:
 - Adobe Device Central CS3
 - Adobe Flash Professional CS3
 - Adobe Illustrator® CS3
 - Adobe Photoshop® CS3

New generation for tomorrow's designed society

Parsons students rise to the challenge of working in a world where the human experience is increasingly designed. As a division of the renowned New School in New York City—where social agendas have been integrated into the classroom experience since the school's founding in 1896—Parsons focuses on creating engaged citizens who are outstanding artists, designers, scholars, and business leaders.

Students in the Communication Design and Technology undergraduate and graduate degree programs take from Parsons a breadth of skill, depth of knowledge, and fearlessness in confronting change. Parsons' rigorous programs and distinguished faculty embrace curricular innovation and pioneer how technology is used across disciplines, with a variety of innovative solutions including Adobe software as important learning tools to help modern designers reshape society.

David Carroll, assistant professor of media design, is paving new roads to help Parsons students understand the emerging world of mobile design through a unique, compelling learning approach with Adobe Flash Lite and Adobe Flash Professional software. "We are embedding mobile media design as a core literacy skill in a broad range of classes," says Carroll. "We are looking well beyond the vocational model to prepare students for creative leadership positions."

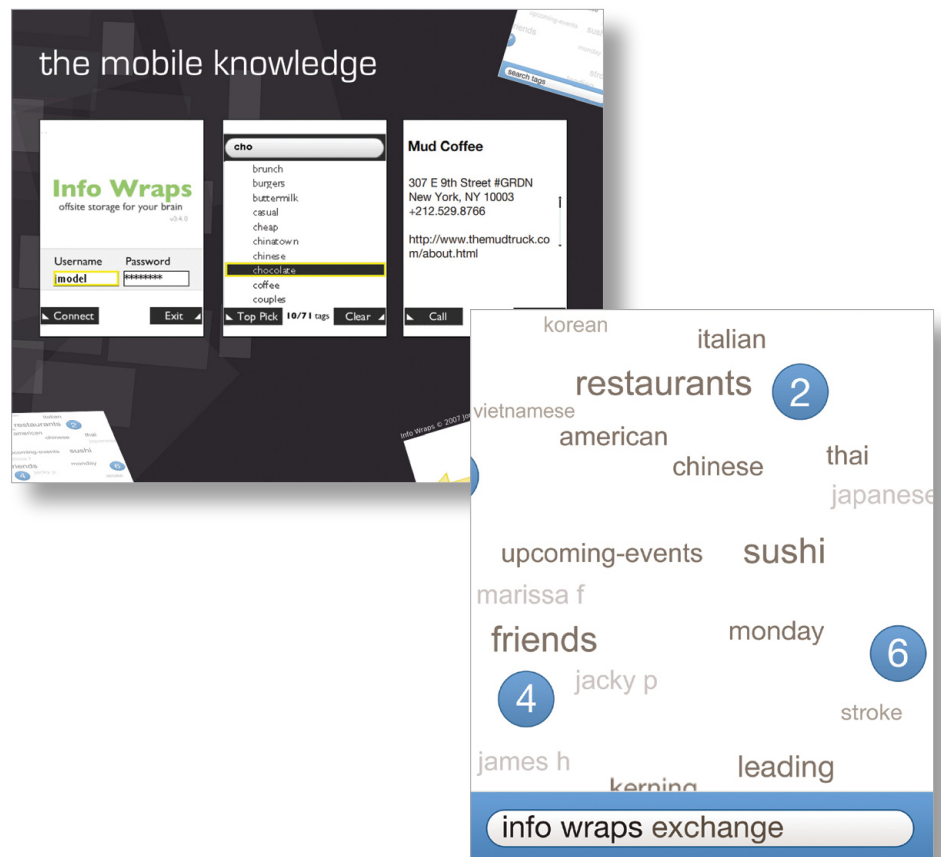
Migrating from desktops to pockets collaboratively

Carroll believes that educators need to embrace the social issues of an increasingly mobile society to help students face the unique challenges of designing for mobile media. "Tomorrow's designers will carve out career niches as media migrates from fixed machines on desks to the powerful machines sitting in our pockets," he says. "Mobile media will change the nature of what is designed and how it is created."

According to Carroll, the mobile media design class at Parsons is a fertile incubator to bring innovative mobile projects to fruition. Typically, students with Flash experience find the transition to mobile design with Flash Lite quite smooth. Novices are also quick to grasp the skills. "Using the technology is easier than they think which frees up their mind to embrace the creative process," adds Carroll.

Each student in the mobile media design class is provided with a Nokia N80 handset, and is encouraged to develop projects that take advantage of the untethered aspects of social anthropology in New York City. Initially, the class tackles small experiments to get comfortable with mobile design basics—creating wallpapers, ringtones, and building mobile websites in HTML viewable on handsets. Students quickly learn to consider screen dimensions from a design standpoint and how to transfer files to the mobile device.

Parsons students learn about mobile design through a unique learning approach with Adobe Flash Lite and Adobe Flash Professional software. Classes tackle small experiments to get students comfortable with mobile design basics and quickly move them to learn to consider screen dimensions from a design standpoint and how to transfer files to the mobile device.



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David Carroll,
Assistant professor,
Parsons The New School for Design

From there, students tackle semester-long projects. About half the class develops casual games including situated games, ecologically oriented games, and portal games. While casual games are played with simple one-button controls, the social concepts behind Parsons students’ games are anything but ordinary.

For instance, one student developed a social connectivity game that used ice fishing as the means to build community. “The ice fishing game was a sophisticated experiment in partial attention for an ambient game in a social space,” says Carroll. “It was interesting to see that students consider mobile phones as private devices that work in public arenas.”

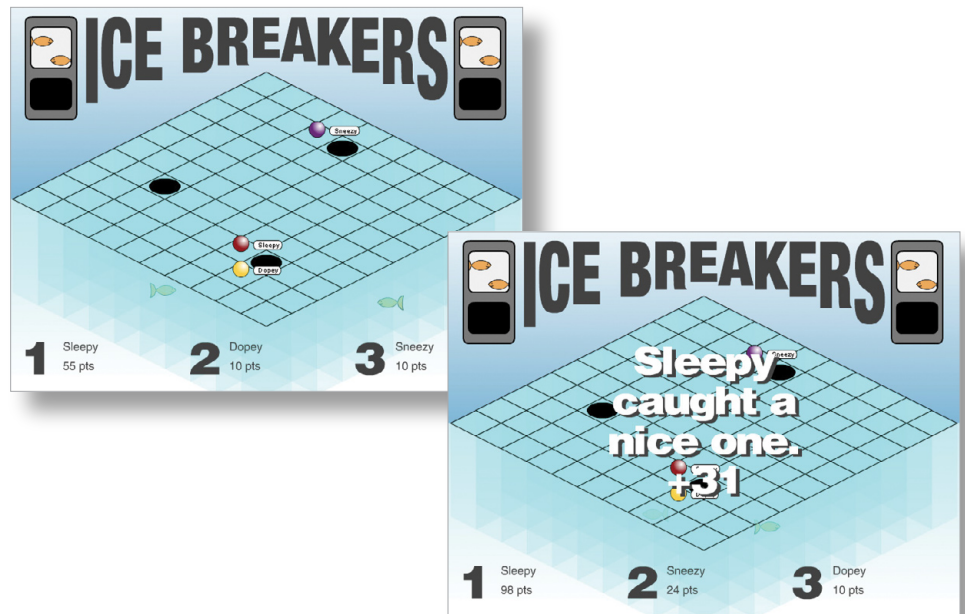
The other half of the class typically opts to develop mobile utilities. For example, one student designed a character animation system linked to a music player. When a user listens to an MP3 player, the genre of the music affects the visual qualities of the characters. The idea is that people have customizable, visual pets connected to their music—punk looking characters for punk rock music, techno-ravers, and more.

Integrated learning model

As Flash Lite technology and Adobe Creative Suite 3 Web Premium software weave their way into Parsons multidisciplinary learning approach, graduate level students learn to connect Flash Lite projects to Bluetooth technology, digital cameras, and global positioning systems, as well as develop a broad range of Short Message Service (SMS) interactions. Students quickly learn that mobile development requires teamwork and flexibility using a host of other Adobe tools in integrated workflows.

To build a game, typically a student will draw the concept using Adobe Illustrator CS3 software, develop other assets in Adobe Photoshop CS3, and then export content to Adobe Flash Professional CS3 for compatibility testing with Flash Lite. Adobe Device Central CS3 helps students easily test and preview their mobile content on a range of mobile devices. “Rather than design the entire project in Flash, we encourage students to move through the integrated Adobe tool set throughout the development process,” says Carroll.

To build a mobile game, students typically use a variety of Adobe software. An ice fishing social connectivity game was created using Adobe Illustrator CS3 and Adobe Photoshop CS3 software, and content was exported to Adobe Device Central to emulate the Flash Lite content.



Developer Information and Resources

The Adobe Mobile and Devices Developer Center provides plenty of online resources and information on mobile development using the Flash Professional authoring tool, tips and tricks, and code samples at www.adobe.com/go/mobiledeveloper. Adobe also offers a free Standard-level Mobile Developer Program with access to CDK's, discussion forums, early access software, and other benefits at www.adobe.com/go/mobileprogram.

For More Information

www.adobe.com/mobile/
www.adobe.com/products/flashlite/
www.adobe.com/go/devicecentral/

"As more and more design projects fall into the category of 'transmedia,' where a unified concept traverses the boundaries of medium and device—from print to web to mobile—the design curriculum will embrace these types of software to adapt designs for mobile media," says Carroll. He explains that integrated suites of Adobe tools are a boon for design technology educators because less time is spent teaching students to work with disparate programs and more time is devoted to pursuing design excellence.

Carroll also offers that the ever improving video support in Flash means even more creative potential for Parsons students. "Whether it's integrating seamless, alpha-channeled video into immersive interactions, such as games or motion-tracking art installations, we'll see these capabilities tapped to their full potential. Furthermore, our classes that use Flash for filmmaking will appreciate the newly improved output capabilities that allow for more flexible character and background animation techniques."

From an international perspective, Carroll has first-hand experience how mobile media design in education impacts world events. He was deployed to teach an exchange program between Parsons and Tsinghua University in Beijing to design a prototype interactive mobile visitors' guide for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"Adobe Flash technology offered the best platform to rapidly design and prototype the project," says Carroll. Using Adobe Flash Player to deploy the desktop web feature prototype and Flash Lite to deploy the mobile media prototype, students easily integrated design and content across delivery mechanisms for total user engagement.



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