

ROSE BRUFORD COLLEGE  
SOUND & IMAGE DESIGN

**New Media Authoring Unit**

# **ILLUSTRATOR ACTIONS**

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## **Chapter 1 - Aims & Objectives**

# **Aims & Objectives**

I have been asked to present a 5 minute seminar on the 'Actions Window' within 'Adobe Illustrator'. I will endeavour to extensively research the selected area, and produce both handouts and software based examples to aid my presentation.

I have also been asked to write a 1000 word report documenting my research.

### **Deliverables**

A CD-ROM in ISO format, containing example Illustrator 'actions', a physical hand out (with backup on CD), and an accompanying report in PDF format.

## Chapter 2 - Introduction

# Introduction

As with any new technology, the initial stages of investigation undertaken, allow the user to become accustomed to the new aspects, (such as navigation / file formats) and develop an eye for their purpose. However, before long the user often becomes increasingly aware of the repetition involved with their work, and therefore searches for methods of augmenting both speed and efficiency.

In the world of the multimedia developer/graphic designer, such repetition is wide and varied often involving all forms of media, e.g. page layouts. It is for this reason that much of the software used by such artists are highly configurable, and becoming more so with each release.

Many large software companies such as 'Adobe' and 'Macromedia', strive to retain a semblance across all of their products, providing the user with a base knowledge of most applications, e.g 'Adobe Photoshop' and 'Adobe Illustrator'.

Both 'Photoshop' and 'Illustrator' are exceptionally configurable, with many useful and global abilities. One such ability, known as 'actions', allows automation of oft repeated tasks. I shall discuss the basics of 'actions' in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 3 - What Is An 'Action'?

# What Is An 'Action'?

An action is essentially a macro, which enables automation of tasks within 'Adobe Illustrator'. It allows the user to assemble a sequence of commands into a single executable operation. In other words, Illustrator will 'record' each and every command carried out by the user, and then allow this to be 'played' back - either in full, or in certain stages.

Built into Illustrator 8.0 is a collection of simple actions, (which although have little practical use), provides a nice introduction to the novice user, allowing he/she to experience and edit simple actions.

## Chapter 4 - Controlling Actions

# Controlling Actions

### Playing An Action

In order to utilise an 'Illustrator' action, you must firstly ensure that the actions window is open. If this is not the case, go to **'window > show actions'**. You will note that the actions window is not unlike the 'layers' window.

A set of standard actions 'Default Actions' can be accessed by clicking on the small arrow to the left of the folder icon. After selecting your desired action, clicking on the 'play' icon will carry out the pre-defined string of tasks.

***\*NOTE: Certain actions can only be applied to specific items, e.g. (Cast Shadow - TYPE) will only function on text.***

### Recording An Action

To record an action, simply click on the large arrow situated at the upper right of the actions window, and select 'New Action'. You are then prompted for a name for your action, which 'set' for it to belong (I will discuss this later), and are given the option to assign a hot key to this action.

Clicking on 'Record' begins the process, Illustrator will now chronicle your commands. Be sure to click on the 'stop' icon at the end of your process or Illustrator will continue to record your every move, (including opening a new project!)

### Editing An Action

Clicking on the arrow to the left of each action title allows the user to view all of the stages involved. These stages can be rearranged, amended, and deleted. The ability to add new stages can also be achieved by simply clicking on the 'record' icon.

To amend an existing command, simply double click it and enter the new values. To amend the options for the entire action, (i.e. the name, assigned hot key, and to which set it belongs), simply double click the action name.

## Chapter 5 - Further Tips

# Further Tips

### Text

The automation of tasks such as the creation of borders etc, is not the only use for the actions window. Actions can be utilised to perform laborious tasks such as the formatting of text. For example, one action could be tailored to create body-text, and another to create paragraph headings.

### Playback Options

When creating long and complex actions, it is likely that you will make some mistakes, and therefore, playback of the action will often produce unexpected results. The fact that playback is at a fast rate, means that it is often difficult to detect at which stage the problem resides.

In order to curb this issue, the user can alter this speed. Simply click on the actions options button (top right), and select 'Playback Options'. This offers three preferences, 'accelerated' - default, 'step by step' - which redraws the image before moving onto the next command, or 'pause' - which waits for a predefined interval between each stage.

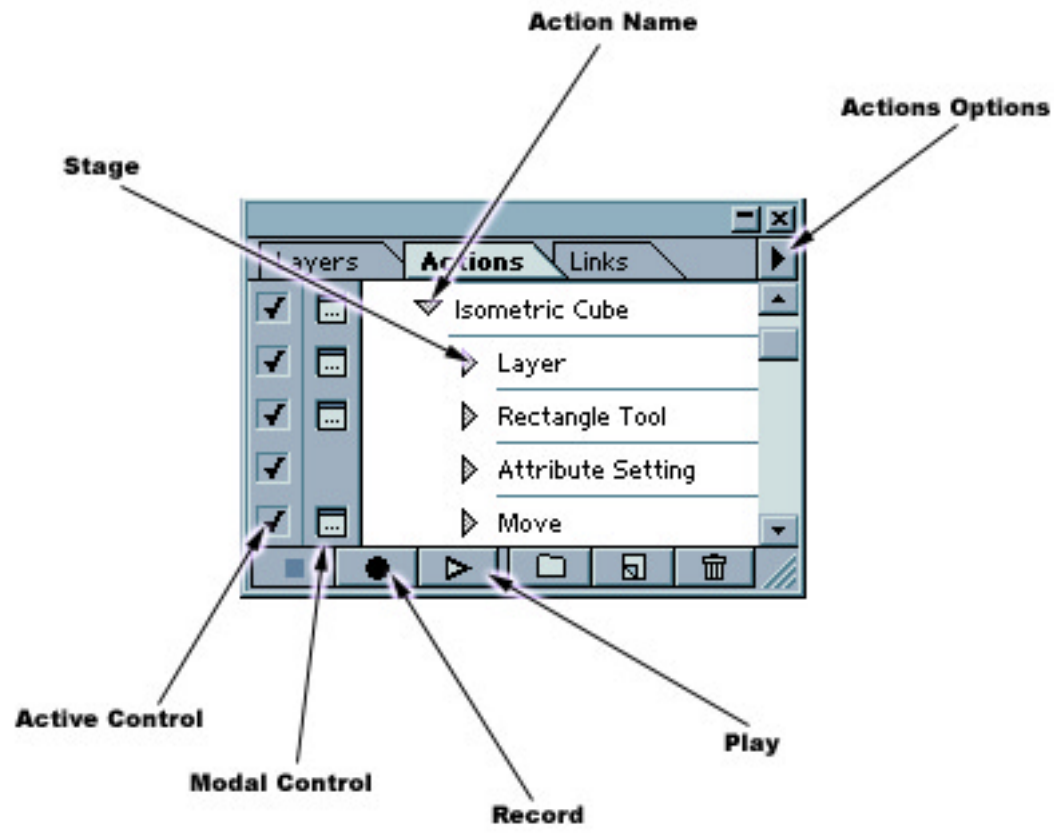
### Modal Controls

A further function of actions is the ability to pause for user input before desired stages, to specify different values/commands. This is known as a 'modal control'. To set a modal control, simply select the desired stage in the action, click on the actions options button, (top right), and select 'Insert Menu Item'. On playback, when this point is reached, a menu window will appear requesting values. An alternative to deleting unwanted stages in a action, is to simply instruct Illustrator to ignore selected commands. To do this, merely uncheck the appropriate left hand box containing a tick.

### Organising Actions

In order to assist the user's organisation, actions can be arranged into groups or 'sets'. Aside from the obvious benefits, sets can be extremely useful when used within a small workforce, i.e. sets can be saved as an external file, allowing all colleagues access to actions necessary to certain projects. These sets could contain actions vital to aspects such as continuity, e.g. magazine page-layouts. **NOTE: You can only save entire sets, not individual actions.**

Chapter 5 - Cont (Diagram Of Actions Window)



## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

# Conclusion

Previous to this assignment I was unaware of the use of 'actions', and feel that I have learned a great deal. Being only too familiar with the laborious tasks faced in the world of multimedia development, I welcome the concept of automating repetitive tasks.

In conclusion, I believe this assignment has been successful, and with the aid of my handouts, those attending my presentation will be able to access convenient information as required, and apply this to similar tasks - e.g. Adobe Photoshop's actions window.

**Glossary**

**Glossary of Undefined Terms**

**Macro** a set of commands that can be played back to perform a given task.

## Bibliography

# Bibliography

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URL: <http://www.adobeforums.com/cgi-bin/webx.fcgi?.ee6b328>