

DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA PLAYERS AND PLUG-INS STANDARD

Category: Application
Effective Date: September 2004
Review Date: January 2006

Summary:

A standard for digital multimedia players and plug-in software is required to support the presentation of LearnAlberta.ca multimedia files.

Specification:

The following players and plug-ins, categorized by operating system environment, apply to multimedia content developed by Alberta Learning. A multimedia product commonly utilizes combinations of media components that require some or all of these players and/or plug-ins.

Plug-in/Player	Windows 98, NT, 2000, XP	Mac Classic 8.6 – 9.2	Mac OS X
	Version		
QuickTime	6.2	6.2	6.2
Windows Media Player	9	7.1	7.1
Flash Player	6	6	6
Shockwave	8.5	8.5	8.5
Java	J2SE version 1.4.1	Mac OS Runtime for Java (MRJ) 2.2.5 Classic	J2SE version 1.4.1 Native in OS X
Acrobat Reader	6	6	6
Adobe SVG	3.0	3.0	3.0
Authorware Web Player	6.5	6.5	6.5

Rationale:

- Digital multimedia players and plug-ins facilitate the playback of digital multimedia files (presentations, video, animation, and interactive media). Alberta Learning distributes multimedia products via CD-ROM, the Internet, and SuperNet. Without the correct player or browser plug-in version installed on the computer, the multimedia file will not be presented properly.
- Standardization is important to minimize the impact on client desktops and the overall cost to support these software components.
- Only players and plug-ins that are widely used, available and based on international standards have been considered for inclusion in this standard.
- Standardizing on the number of players and plug-ins reduces the complexity of the client software installation, the effort and cost required to support that desktop and the number of target environments for which developers must develop software.
- This standard addresses the requirement for selected players and plug-ins to support the *LearnAlberta.ca Content Development Technical Specification* to ensure users can properly view multimedia content developed for and by Alberta Learning.
- The following criteria were used to determine the recommended standards:
 - Be freely available at no cost to clients.
 - Be available for a number of operating systems and web browsers.
 - Present multimedia content consistently across required operating systems.
 - Be able to properly present multimedia content developed in previous versions of the content development tool(s). For example, the Flash player/plug-in must be able to present content developed by all older versions of Flash tools.

Timeline:

It is expected that each version of the players and plug-in standards will be issued in two releases, a beta release and a production release. This is being done to allow a full year of overlap between the beta version and the production version, which will provide stakeholders sufficient opportunity to make necessary internal configuration changes in advance of a release becoming final. All content developed for a given version will be forward compatible between versions; however, content developed around a new beta or production version will not necessarily be backwards compatible with earlier versions. The version release timeline is as follows:

Release	Version	Effective Period
Production	Release 1	September 2002 – September 2004
Beta	Release 2	September 2003 – September 2004
Production	Release 2	September 2004 – September 2006
Beta	Release 3	September 2005 – September 2006
Production	Release 3	September 2006 – September 2008

Notes:

- The Safari browser may be included as a standard browser for the Mac OS X platform.
- Each player/plugin is available directly via the Internet from the corresponding owner.
- Alberta Learning is looking into the potential of providing a central location from which the jurisdictions could retrieve the standard players and/or plug-ins.

Contact:

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See also: LearnAlberta.ca; *Content Development Technical Specifications (Version 1.1)* located at www.learnalberta.ca on the developers page.