

Develop a Project

FOLDERS AND FILES

There are many different ways of developing a sequence. However, there are some aspects that many workers are agreed on. One of these is the need for a good discipline with regards to file names and folder structures.

Folder structure

Having a good folder structure is essential if you are going to successfully keep track of all the items that make up an audio-visual sequence. Each project should have its own folder. Within that folder, possibly in a series of sub-folders, should be all the images, sound files, video clips, research notes etc. If you intend to use some items in multiple sequences, hold a separate copy of those items within each of the relevant project folders. Hard disk storage is cheap these days.

Filenames

Devise a filename standard that makes sense to you. For image files, pay particular attention to preserving the name given by the camera in all derivatives. This will allow you to quickly locate the original of any of the derived images. When you start to assemble your PicturesToExe project, it is recommended that, from time to time, you save your project using a version number (e.g. projectname_v2.ptx). This provides you with a simple means of abandoning a build that isn't going in the right direction and picking up an earlier version of it. Perhaps the easiest way of achieving this is to start each day by doing a File > Save As...

Images

Start by copying into the project's folder structure, all the images that you think you might want to use. You can always delete those that you don't use later. If you process any of those images in an image editor, you should save the processed file in the format appropriate for that editor; e.g. as a .PSD file if using Photoshop or a NEF Version if using Capture NX2. This will allow you to go back and do more work on it at a later date. Produce from each image file a JPEG file for use by PicturesToExe (or a PNG file if you want to preserve transparent areas in your image).

Sound

Start by copying into the project's folder structure, all the sound files that you think you might want to use. You can always delete those that you don't use later. If you process any of those files in a sound editor, you should save the processed file in a lossless format appropriate for that editor; e.g. as an .aup file if using Audacity or a .asnd file if using Adobe Soundbooth. This will allow you to go back and make further changes without compromising the audio quality. If you are getting your music by track-ripping a CD, rip to WAV format in order to preserve the highest audio quality.

Video

Start by copying into the project's folder structure, all the sound files that you think you might want to use. You can always delete those that you don't use later. You may not need to use an external video editor program as PicturesToExe has its own Video Converter. Any video files that you convert using PicturesToExe will automatically have a new name assigned.

Archived items

In a complex AV sequence it is likely that you will create multiple versions of several of the files. Give consideration to having a sub-folder in the project folder structure into which you can move old versions. These should not be deleted until you are satisfied that you have truly finished work on this sequence.

A ROADMAP FOR AV WORKERS

This is offered as a guide. Users should consider how it fits with their philosophy and be prepared to "cherry pick" those parts which suit them. The more complex an AV sequence is, the more thought needs to go into the planning and preparation of it. The start point, however, is usually the same for all sequences: the IDEA (i.e. what is this sequence going to be about?)

- At this very early stage it can be useful to address some essential questions. Why are you making this sequence? Who is going to see it?
- Depending on the subject, it might be necessary to do some research. This could involve web-surfing for information, reading books and journal articles, visiting museums and archives, etc.
- As your knowledge and understanding of the subject matter increases, you will be able to start thinking about the structure and general content of the sequence. How are you going to grab the audience's attention? What message do you want to leave in their minds? In other words, you are setting out the shape of the sequence: beginning, middle and end.
- If you are planning to have a voice-over on the sequence, you will probably need to produce a script. This can then serve as the detailed roadmap for the sequence. The story told in the voice-over will need to be illustrated with some combination of images, sounds and video.
- At some point you will probably need to go out and shoot/record/film your raw material. This will then need to be post-processed: select/discard, correct/enhance, trim/edit, etc. Finally, you arrive at the point where you are ready to assemble your masterpiece. Once you have completed the assembly you might think that you have finished.
- However, all that effort that you have put in, has brought you too close to your project. You now need to lay the whole thing on one side, and leave it for two or three weeks. When you go back to it and play it through you will, almost certainly, see and hear things that now seem unacceptable.
- You have arrived at what can sometimes be the hardest part of all: refinement. It helps enormously at this point to have someone more experienced than you take a look at your work, and offer constructive comment on it.

- However, the biggest challenge in the refinement phase is knowing when to stop. Ask yourself: is this change that I am about to make going to improve the sequence? Or is it simply going to make it different? If the latter, then you are now tinkering, and not refining; and it is time to cease all further work on this sequence.

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