

Xerte

(pronounced Zertee)

There are now 4 different things someone could be referring to when they say "I've created a learning object with Xerte!"

Xerte is a suite of tools for the rapid development of interactive learning content. *There are now 4 different things someone could be referring to when they say "I've created a learning object with Xerte"*

This document aims to outline the different options and to summarise the use of Xerte content on different types of mobile device.



<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~cczjrt/Editor/>

1. The 'raw' authoring tool

Main target audience = specialist developers.

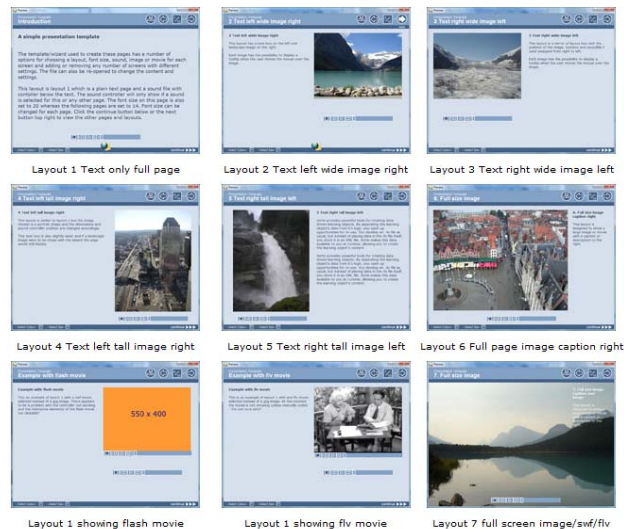
Xerte provides a visual, icon-based authoring environment that allows learning objects to be easily created with the minimum of scripting. Functionality that would be time-consuming to develop from scratch in other tools can be created very quickly in Xerte. If you're a designer or developer but don't write code yet, you will be able to use Xerte to integrate text, graphics, animations, sounds and video, create simple interactivity, and deliver it in an accessible interface. Content can be SCORM compliant for delivery in any LMS or VLE. If you write some code, you will be able to create more complex structures and sophisticated interactivity. You'll be able to customise the default interface and develop your own interfaces and navigation systems for your learning objects.

If you write lots of code you'll be able to develop powerful components, extend the Xerte authoring interface with your own tools, and even contribute to the Xerte project itself.

In developing Xerte Julian and the team at Nottingham University have sought to make it very easy to perform simple, common tasks, yet possible to create rich, sophisticated interactivity. Xerte seeks to provide a focus on the types of problems and situations that developers of interactive learning content frequently encounter, and accelerate the development process.

2. The TechDis Template

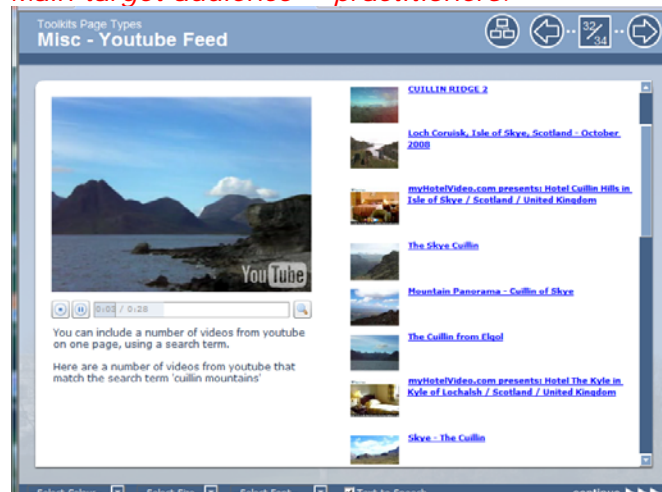
Main target audience = practitioners.



This is a template developed to help practitioners to easily and quickly create accessible presentations. Each LO can include text, html including hyperlinks, images, animations (swf), video (flv) and sound and was developed to encourage wider use of Xerte by both practitioners and developers in demonstrating the power of the tool to provide easy to use templates and facilitate re-usability. Development of the template helped improve the raw authoring tool, including accessibility features and also helped inform the subsequent developments detailed below.

3. Xerte Page Templates

Main target audience = practitioners.



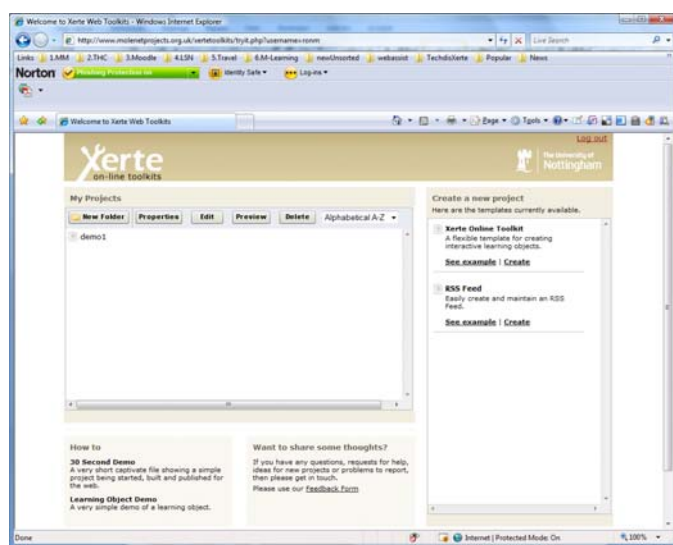
The page templates developed by the team at Nottingham are a fantastic addition to the raw Xerte tool. By providing a wizard/form based

interface the tool becomes usable by practitioners rather than just specialist developers in the creation of a wide range of accessible interactions. Furthermore these templates are proof of concept of the power of the raw tool in facilitating the development of additional page templates to extend the functionality and interactions possible for everyone and to speed up workflow for anyone using the tool in this way. Whenever a specialist developer creates a new learning object there is an opportunity to make that LO a form based template rather than just a static LO.

4. Xerte 'Online' Toolkits

Main target audience = practitioners.

The latest development is an online version of the page templates being referred to as Xerte Toolkits.

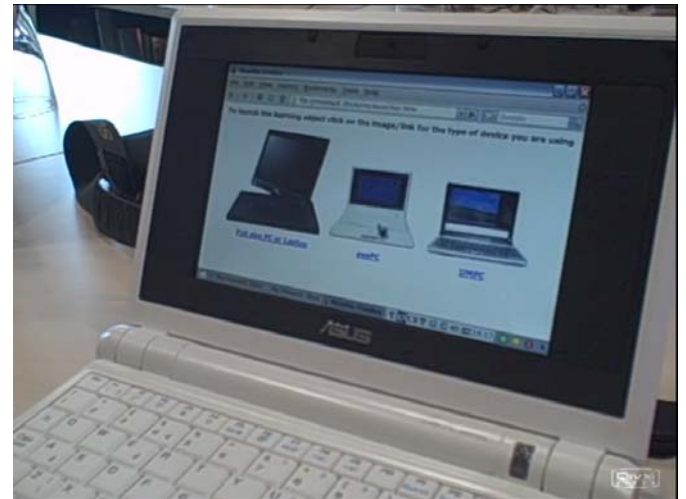


This is an open source package which can be downloaded and installed on a webserver to facilitate online development of accessible interactive learning objects. An organisation can make this available as central tool where users login, develop LO's and link or embed those LO's in their VLE or blog etc to share the LO's with learners or indeed colleagues. The LO's can also be exported e.g. for use on a memory stick or for uploading direct to a VLE or repository. In the first full release of toolkits scheduled for 29th January 2009 users will also be able to import LO's into the online toolkit providing the opportunity to author off-line or online and re-use those LO's off-line or online.

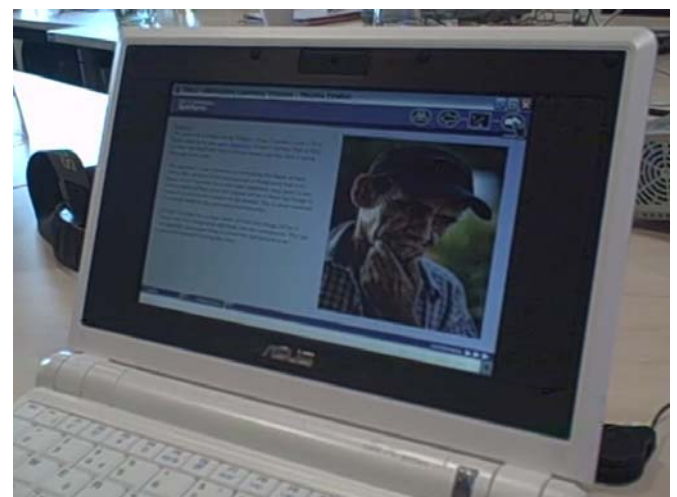
Use on mobile devices

At the moment the Xerte 'raw' authoring tool can only be installed and used on a Windows based system. The tool cannot be installed on the Windows Mobile operating system but can be installed on XP, Vista etc. Any LO's created simply require a web browser with the full Flash Player installed so will play on all systems including, Windows, Linux, Apple computers (or webserver) but again not mobile devices where the flash player is flash player lite e.g. windows

mobile OS. The online toolkit currently requires Apache as well as PHP and MySQL and so will not run on Windows IIS. Authoring with toolkits simply requires a web browser with full flash player so will work on any OS including Apple and Linux. The LO's created with any of the authoring options will play on most devices containing the full flash player but there are some problems with smaller screen resolutions as the default size of an LO is 800 x 600.



Once loaded the LO can be resized up or down using the options built into the standard LO interface e.g. full screen or fill window but on some smaller resolutions these interface options may not be available e.g. can't scroll down to access the options. To fix this a launcher file can be created to optimise viewing on different devices. (Launcher shown above view on 7" eeePC shown below)



Future developments

The future for Xerte and especially Toolkits is an exciting prospect. The ease of which powerful interactive and accessible learning objects can be created by anyone is arguably a development not previously available at this level of functionality. It is already possible to integrate toolkits with other systems such as Moodle and the open source nature of the project will undoubtedly lead to further integrations and additional functionality.