

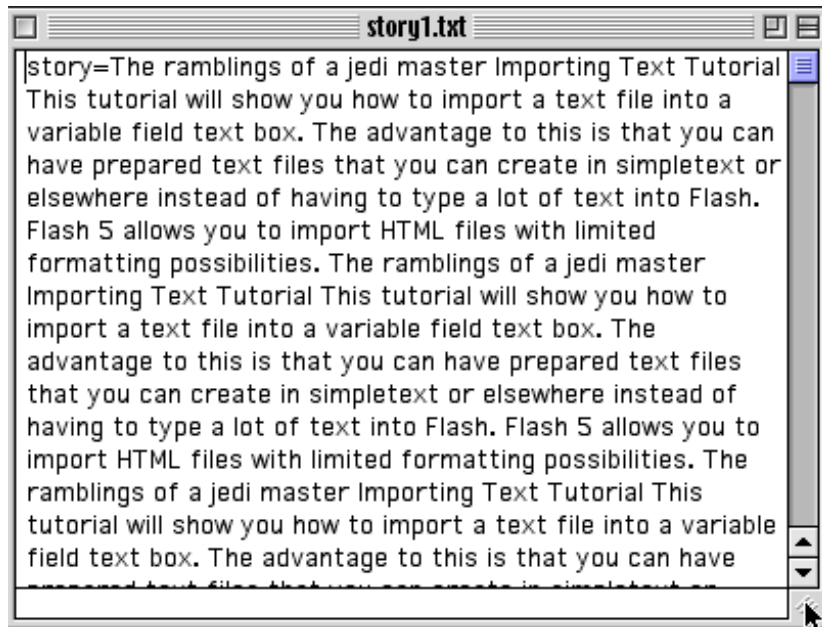
Importing Text Tutorial

This tutorial will show you how to import a text file into a variable field text box. The advantage to this is that you can have prepared text files that you can create in simpletext or elsewhere instead of having to type a lot of text into Flash. Flash allows you to import HTML files with limited formatting possibilities.

First, a word about variables. A variable is nothing more than a container. It can store information. In this case we will be loading variables (text) into a variable field (text box). It's important that the variable names match here. The name of the text box variable and the name of the text variable itself as you'll see. When they don't match, nothing works right.

Creating the Text Files

1. Open SimpleText (Mac), NotePad (Win) or a similar text editor.
2. Create 3 text files all starting with the following: `story=` You can hit the return key after this and type whatever you want. I copied stories off of the internet into these 3 documents. Save the files as `story1.txt`, `story2.txt`, and `story3.txt`. The `story1=` command is the variable name that we will use later in Flash. Essentially this reads text equals the following text.



Creating the Variable Text Field

Here we will create a text box with a variable name `story` and then create buttons that will load the individual text files when the buttons are clicked. Imagine that this is a book review site or something like that where we can click on a few buttons to read reviews on separate books, etc. The potentials are endless.

1. Create a new file. Command + N (Mac), Control + N (Win).
2. Create 2 layers naming them from top to bottom as such: Buttons and Text.
3. Select the text layer.
4. Select the Text tool and in the text options panel select Dynamic from the drop-down menu. Set the Font to Helvetica 12 pt in the Character Panel.
5. Drag out a text box starting from the top left corner of the stage down to about the middle bottom.
6. Select the Arrow tool and click on the text box.

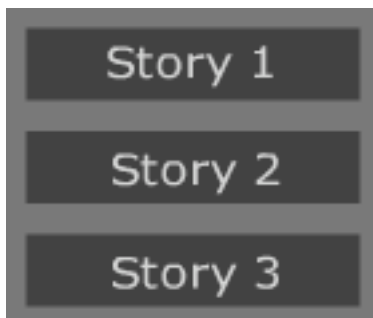
- In the Text Options Panel, set the following properties for the text box:
 Variable: story
 Options: Multiline, Word Wrap, Disable Editing, and Disable Selection. The Draw border and background is up to you.
 Outlines: Do not include font outlines.
 The Important thing here is the variable name – story. That is the same as the variable we applied to our text document.
 Finally, give the Dynamic Text Field an instance name: stories. This will be used in our ActionScript later on.



Creating the Buttons

Here we'll create really simple buttons for activating our stories.

- Create a new button symbol by choosing Insert > New Symbol.
- Select Button as the behavior.
- Click OK
- In the Button Symbol editing mode, select the Rectangle tool. Set the stroke to none and select a fill color. Choose the Rounded Rectangle modifier and enter 6 as the value. Draw a thin, wide rectangle on the stage.
- Select the Rectangle with the arrow tool.
- Align the rectangle to the center of the stage using the shortcut Command + K.
- If desired, add a keyframe to the Over state on the button and change the fill color.
- Return to the main movie and open the Library palette, Command + L.
- On the buttons layer, drag out 3 buttons onto the right side of the stage. Align the buttons to the left and distribute them evenly using the Align Panel.
- Select the text tool. Set the font to Helvetica 18pt. In the Text Options Panel, set the text type to Static using the drop-down menu. Set the color of the text to something that's lighter than your button (something more noticeable). Click on the upper-most button and type in "Story 1".
- Select the Arrow tool and while holding down the Option key, drag the text Story 1 to the second and third buttons.
- Select the Text tool and change the second and third instances of the buttons to read Story 2 and Story 3 respectively.



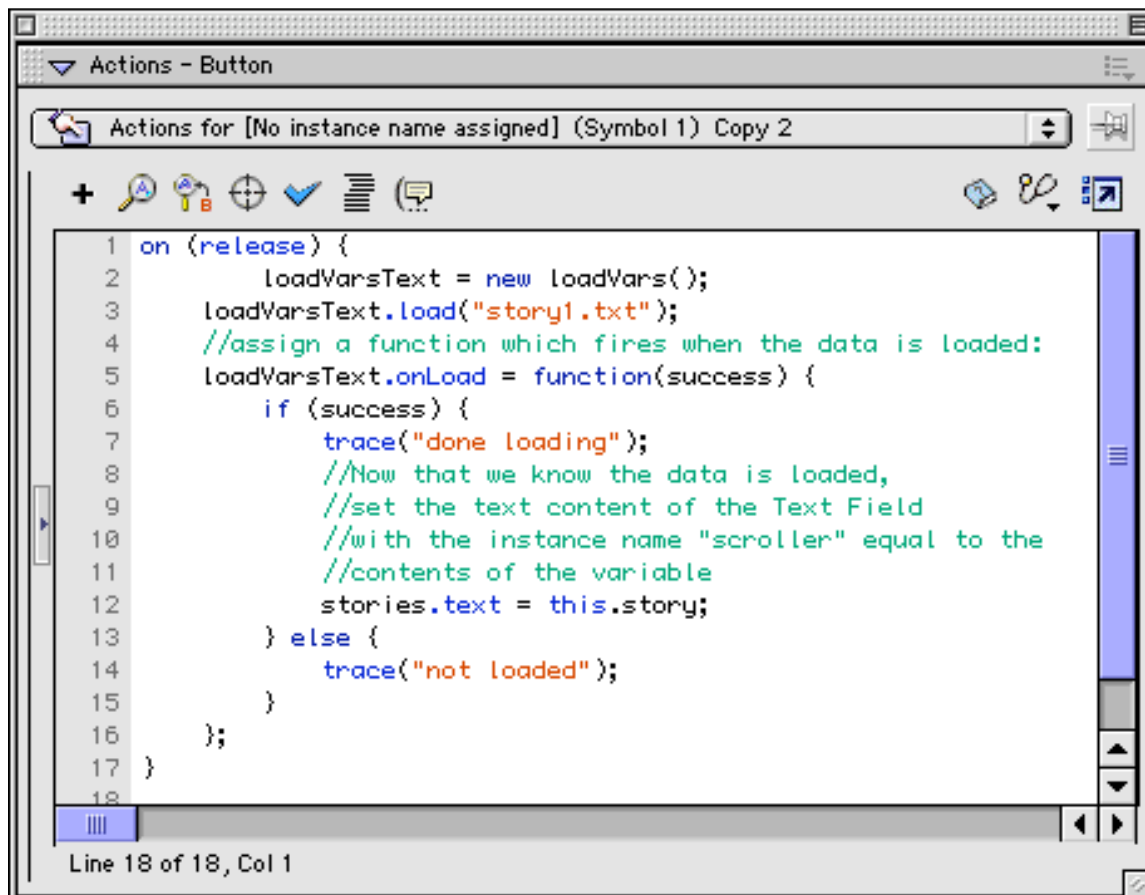
The Actions

The buttons will trigger the variable text field to deliver the appropriate text file. It will be much easier to enter the following script in Expert Mode. Click on the icon in the Upper, right-hand corner of the Actions Panel and choose Expert Mode from the drop-down menu.

Loading data from an external source in Flash 5 involved use of the `loadVariables` command. However, in Flash MX, text is its own ActionScript object, so a text field can have both a variable name and an instance name. Flash MX also introduces a more sophisticated action for loading external data called `loadVars()`. These two methods are combined to load external text to a scrolling text field created using the ScrollBar Component.

1. Select the Story 1 button. Be careful to select the button and not its text label.
2. Enter the following Action in the Actions Panel:

```
on (release) {  
    loadVarsText = new loadVars();  
    loadVarsText.load("story1.txt");  
    //assign a function which fires when the data is loaded:  
    loadVarsText.onLoad = function(success) {  
        if (success) {  
            trace("done loading");  
            stories.text = this.story;  
        } else {  
            trace("not loaded");  
        }  
    };  
}
```



First, we declare the loadVarsText as our new text object and then assign it to the related story. Next, we create a function with an onLoad event handler that will test to see if the text file has been loaded. If it has (success), the stories text field will be assigned to retrieve all the variables given in the story1.txt file. Story 1 only has one variable declared: story= If the load doesn't happen properly, a trace action gives us a warning in the Output dialog box.

3. Repeat the above steps for next 2 buttons replacing the text file name to story2.txt and story3.txt respectively.
4. Save the movie into the same location as the text files. This is extremely important. If the text .swf file and the text files are in different locations then the variables won't be loaded correctly.

Testing the Movie

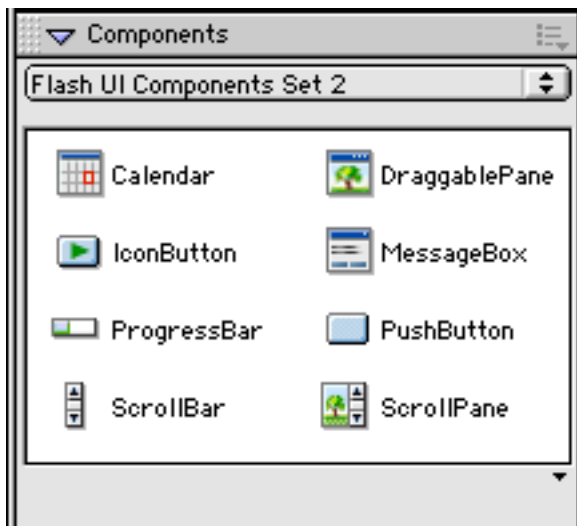
Our buttons point to the text files we created earlier. All we need to do now is test to make sure they are loading properly.

1. Choose Control > Test Movie or use the shortcut Command + Enter.
2. Test each button to make sure it is loading the correct text files.

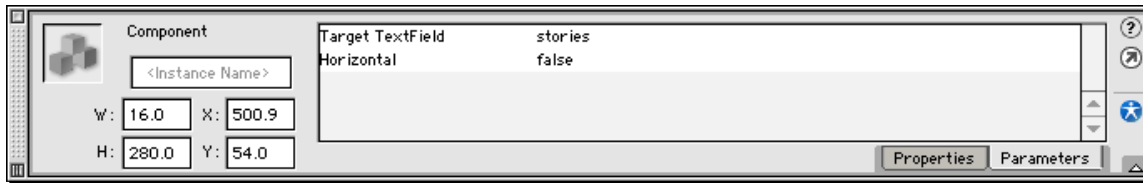
Using the Scrollbar Component

Now that we have our text files imported, some of them don't fit, so we'll need to add a scrollbar to the dynamic text field. In Flash 5, we would have to code all of this by hand. In Flash MX, all we have to do is plop a ScrollBar Component onto the text box and Voila!

1. From the Window Menu choose Components.
2. Drag a ScrollBar Component onto the stage.



3. Drag the ScrollBar Component onto the right side of the Dynamic Text Field.
4. In the Properties Panel, you'll notice that the ScrollBar Component has 2 Parameters: Horizontal Scrolling and Target Text Field. You should also notice that the Target Text Field was automatically assigned when you dragged the ScrollBar Component on top of the Dynamic Text Field. All of the scripts inside the ScrollBar are predicated on the Target Text Fields' name.



5. Choose Control > Text Movie and check your Scrollbars for functionality.

Summary

Using this technique makes editing a site a lot easier. Editing Flash files is not that simple. Editing a text file is. If your site is text heavy, then using this method would allow you to have more control over the editing process. For example, if you open and change any of the text files and change them in some way, the next time you play the Flash movie, the text files will be updated.