Welcome

This book is intended primarily as a lab work text for use in college courses on Web design, digital media, multimedia and Web graphics, though it will be of equal value to anyone wishing to learn on their own. Most courses in these subjects deal with the preparation and manipulation of individual media, as well as with the bringing of media together into Web pages or some other sort of multimedia presentation. Several quite different tools are involved in the practical side of these studies. This presents an unprecedented learning and teaching challenge to students and tutors. Students typically require a fast way in to a basic mastery of the complex tools which put their more intellectual studies into practice, and which are used in the industry. Tutors are expected to provide instruction on a collection of rapidly developing programs. Most texts, however, concentrate on a single program, typically contain far more information than is required by students who are not intending to specialize in that program, and tend to lack pedagogical features suited to learning in a college environment.

In contrast, this book brings together in one volume several of the major software tools for preparing and combining digital media, and addresses the particular needs of Web design and digital media students at an appropriate level of detail. It provides a thorough, well-guided, and clearly focused introduction to each tool, with the acquisition of essential skills made as straight-forward as possible, without unnecessary embellishments or over-refinement. Explanation of principles and underlying theory is provided throughout, in order to ensure that practice-based learning is properly supported by a genuine understanding of what is actually going on when each feature of these tools is used. Our approach is to encourage learning by doing, but not just

by slavishly copying the steps of some exercise or project that we have set up as an example to follow. Instead, throughout each chapter, we provide numerous exercises intended to systematically develop the physical and mental skills which are needed to use the tools effectively. These exercises are staged so that they only require an understanding of the features that have already been described in each chapter, and they typically focus on the particular feature which has just been discussed in the preceding section.

We should stress that we are addressing people whose primary interest is in combining media into Web pages and multimedia, not potential specialists in any single program. This book is not intended to create expert users, and it doesn't describe every single command and operation you can use in each program, but it should provide the basic skills necessary to perform everyday tasks, together with an understanding of what is actually going on when these tasks are carried out. This may serve as a springboard for later specialization, but should be adequate in itself for generalists to be able to make work using a combination of tools. The experience gained from using tools in this way should also provide an understanding of the potential of each tool, an appreciation of the skills of specialists and a basis for communicating with colleagues in professional contexts.

The book was written both to provide a practical complement to our theoretical course texts *Web Design: A Complete Introduction* and *Digital Multimedia* (published by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.), and to serve as a stand-alone text for individuals or courses with a wholly practical orientation. It has no pre-requisite in computer science, and will be of value to anyone undertaking practical work in digital media, Web design and Web graphics. We do assume that readers have some experience of using a desktop computer system and know how to use menu commands, dialogue boxes, and so on. The book has been written from experience in teaching software tools to undergraduates at all levels.

The book is arranged as follows. The Introduction expands on our view of the skills demanded by digital media tools, and the best way to acquire them. Chapter 2 provides a general description of the user interface elements that are found in all or most of the programs we cover. Chapters 3 to 7 are each devoted to a single program. Chapter 8 describes a number of features which appear in almost identical form in two or more of the programs. Unlike Chapter 2, Chapter 8 will not make much sense until you have started working with the programs. One way of reading the book would be to start with the Introduction, skim through Chapter 2 to make sure you are familiar with the standard interface elements, and then read the chapters for specific applications you are interested in, turning to Chapter 8 when you find forward references. Alternatively, you could read all of Chapters 2 and 8 before you move on to any specific application.

All the programs we describe in this book are available in both Adobe Creative Suite 3 Design Premium and Adobe Creative Suite 3 Web Premium. They are all clear leaders in their field and

are treated as industry standards, which anybody working professionally with digital media will be expected to know. Tools for video and audio editing have not been included in this volume.

We gratefully acknowledge Adobe's support and assistance with this project. The fact that this book focuses on Adobe software should not be taken as an endorsement of this text by Adobe, nor as an endorsement of Adobe's software by the authors.

There are, of course, many digital media tools in existence besides the few we have been able to accommodate in this book. Many of them have a thriving community of enthusiastic users, but do not have the status of an industry standard. For students and institutions that cannot afford the steep prices commanded by the professional tools, there are Open Source alternatives to Photoshop, Illustrator and Dreamweaver, in the form of The Gimp, Inkscape and NVu. These are not generally used in the industry, however, and we do not cover them in this book; if you wish to learn about these alternative tools you will need to look elsewhere.

Teaching and Learning Features

■ The most important aspect of learning to use digital media tools is personal practice. To assist you we have suggested numerous practice exercises throughout the book. They are presented in distinctive "Try This" boxes, at the end of each sub-section or topic in every chapter.

■ To help you memorize the most important features of each program, key points are presented in tinted "Don't Forget" boxes at appropriate points throughout the text. These key points are also available as slides which you may download from the supporting Web site.

■ Important terms, marked in ***bold italics*** on their first occurrence in each chapter, are defined in a glossary which can be found on the supporting Web site.

Supporting Web Site

Further resources to support teaching and learning can be found at the book's own Web site, www.digitalmediatools.org. Here you will find a wide range of material, including working versions of some of the examples in the book, files to download for your own practical exercises, slides of the "Don't Forget" key points, teaching notes, practical hints and tips, suggestions for projects, information about updates to the software and the interactive glossary. Any corrections to errors that are discovered after the book is printed are also posted on the support site.