FH Karlsruhe
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
HOCHSCHULE FÜR TECHNIK

Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences

Karlsruhe, Germany *http://www.hs-karlsruhe.de*

Globally Recognized University of Applied Sciences Uses MadCap Flare to Teach Online Documentation Best Practices

INDUSTRY

- Education

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Sissi Closs | **Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences**

Goals:

- Provide hands-on experience with authoring software
- Apply best practices for modern online documentation
- Support the XML standard and structured content approach to authoring

Solutions:

- MadCap Flare native XML content authoring software

Benefits:

- Students were able to apply concepts around using XML, structure, and content versus layout from their first day using Flare
- Intuitive, user friendly interface helped students get up and running quickly
- Students gained hands-on experience publishing online technical documentation

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Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (HsKA) is the largest university of applied sciences in the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg. It offers an extensive range of study programs in the engineering, computer science and business fields, which combine an academic education with the requirements of industry.

With a mandate to narrow the gap between the theoretical world of lectures and the practical world of the workplace, HsKA also conducts classes on state-of-the-art technical communications in which hands-on use of authoring tools augments lectures on best practices.

In 2009, Professor Sissi Closs sought to provide a new authoring tool that would more readily support the modern techniques of online documentation. Her research quickly led her to MadCap Flare.

"We place a priority on providing our students with the best software tools available, so they have the ability to take the concepts they learn in class and produce modern online documentation," said Professor Closs. "Because the new standard is the use of XML for structured content, Flare is a natural choice for teaching the class."

> ***Flare is a cutting edge tool because it is native XML, written using the latest technologies available, and its topic-based approach to authoring supports the concepts behind structured content."***
>
> Sissi Closs

"Flare is a cutting edge tool because it is native XML, written using the latest technologies available, and its topic-based approach to authoring supports the concepts behind structured content," she explains. "Equally important is the Flare user interface, which is intuitive and provides a very modern Web documentation experience."

The introductory online documentation class held in the Winter 2009-2010 semester was the first to use Flare. The 44 students began by learning key theories, including XML, structure, and content versus layout. They then applied the concepts to online documentation projects using Flare.

The intuitive interface meant there was only a very small learning curve, Professor Closs noted: "Flare allowed my students to begin practicing the documentation concepts they learned from day one. I only needed to show them the first few clicks of what to do, and then they quickly began using Flare on their own."

Although the introductory-level class did not include translation exercises, Professor Closs observed that Flare's support for XML and Unicode would be very important in a real business environment where translation of products is common. She added that it is useful for her students to understand that they can take advantage of Flare's flexibility and support for open standards to integrate Flare with other tools to help and streamline the translation process.

"We have been very happy with Flare, Professor Closs adds. "When I teach this course again in winter, I look forward to using Flare again."