# MEDIA REVIEWS

Reviewed by Jason Lewis for *Training Media Review*

Authorware is one of the most powerful authoring software tools for computer- and Web-based training. Macromedia continues a tradition of excellence by making Authorware 6 more efficient and easier to learn than its predecessors. It can help you make far more advanced courses than less expensive software tools such as MS PowerPoint. But it will cost you.

## Capabilities

Authorware excels at building large, complex multimedia projects and is not the tool of choice for authoring small, media-starved projects.

Authorware 6 incorporates precise video control, rich-text management, MP3 file management, and video and animation integration. Authorware 6 also supports reusable elements. The built-in knowledge objects wizard allows users to create complex tests quickly—for example, a 10-question exam with feedback in 10 minutes.

Advanced course developers with an understanding of database architecture and Structured Query Language can use Authorware 6 to make courses that integrate with databases to track learner performance and manage course data.

Authorware 6 has done an excellent job of simplifying the development process. Once you have selected the settings for Web, CD-ROM, or intranet delivery, creating the playable course is as simple as clicking a button. You can publish prototype courses, see how they work, make changes, and then republish.

Keep in mind that Authorware courses delivered by Internet or intranet require the Authorware Web Player, a need which can be a barrier for some learners. The Player is critical because it enables video and audio streaming, processes designed to mitigate bandwidth limitations. Authorware also provides numerous media file-shrinking features.

Authorware 6 complies with the AICC, SCORM, and IMS industry specifications.

## Learning Authorware 6

Authorware 6 includes straightforward tutorials that display in your Web browser. There are also dozens of helpful mini-tutorials on a variety of subjects.

In making a purchasing decision, consider the time it will take users to learn the program and the type of courseware required. A subject matter expert with average computer skills will need at least two weeks of practice to start taking advantage of Authorware's features. Developers will also need to work with the software regularly or risk the use-it-or-lose-it effect.

### Authorware 6

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| ★★★ | Ease of installation |
| ★★★ | Presentation |
| ★★ | Ease of use |
| ★★★1/2 | Value of purpose |
| ★★★1/2 | Value for the money |
| ★★★1/2 | Documentation |
| ★★★1/2 | Overall rating |

If you can answer yes to the following questions, Authorware is an appropriate purchase candidate:

● Do we need advanced capabilities (rich media, high interactivity) for the content we want to author?
● Will we be authoring a large amount of content over a long period of time?
● Are we willing to provide the training time necessary for new users?
● Is the required plug-in for Web- or intranet-delivered content acceptable?

## Recommendation

Authorware 6 is a powerful and flexible authoring tool. I highly recommend it to organizations with a large development need and a serious commitment to in-house authoring. Once mastered, Authorware 6 is capable of creating fully interactive and effective training quickly. The cost, including purchase and training time, is at the high end of the market, commensurate with capability. The required plug-in for Web playback may rule out this development tool for some organizations.

## Software Details

Authorware 6, software, 2001, Macromedia: 800.326.2128, www.macromedia.com. Purchase US$2699.

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