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Overview

Xerte 2.18 introduces a number of major new features designed to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding Xerte user community.

- A common set of files used by both Xerte and Xerte On-line Toolkits (XOT) installations.
- Individual page templates accessible within the Xerte icon based development environment.
- Support for the International use of Xerte
- Easy access to changing the default Xerte page design.
- Support for the development of non-linear projects.
- Parallel or two dimensional learning objects.

Common file set

All of the pre-built page types in Xerte consist of a model file (.rlm) and a form wizard file (.xwd). The same set of model files are now used by Xerte and XOT. XOT and the pageTemplates project template do not use individual form wizard files, but instead use one form wizard file that contains the definitions for all the pages available. This template.xwd file is now built by a php script, from the individual form wizard files. When new page types are added or changes are made to a page's form wizard file then the script is run to generate a new template.xwd file for use by XOT. This feature makes it significantly easier to maintain both Xerte and XOT, and to add new page types to XOT installations.

Individual Page Templates

With earlier versions of Xerte you could either

- A) Have access to the full icon based development environment but without any access to the pre-built page types.

or

- B) Use the Page Templates project template and have access to the range of pre-built page types in an environment similar to XOT, but without access to the icon based development environment.

With Xerte 2.18 a new “pages” project type gives you full access to the Xerte icon based development environment whilst also giving full access to all the pre-built page types. This feature

will benefit both the seasoned developer and those learning object authors who would like to grow their development skills. Every pre-built page can be opened and examined to see how it works. Small changes can be made to pages to add extra desired features. Completely new page types can be made either from scratch or based on existing page types that offer similar facilities. This makes Xerte an ideal platform for developing new pages for XOT installations. This feature improves significantly on the earlier community developed “Page Wizards” which are now deprecated with this release.

Support for the International use of Xerte

All displayed text in both the Xerte application and in individual page types has now been made accessible so that translations of Xerte can be made in languages other than English.

This is done by translating the xwd files (one of the components of a page). Because it can be quite difficult to see what items should be translated, and what items should be left alone in a xwd file (basically an xml file) a website is available to translate the xwd (<http://xertetrans.xerte.org.uk>, guest access is gues/guest)

Changing the default Xerte page design.

“pages” type Xerte projects feature a learning object form wizard that gives access to many of the features of the Xerte page design. This makes it easy to change the colour of most elements on the page, to resize the various colour bars, to reposition buttons and menus, and to set which navigation items will be displayed in a project. It also allows the addition of a corporate logo and a background image with control over the alpha setting.

Support for non-linear projects

Amongst the new and enhanced pages introduced in this release are the “Connector” pages, so called because they allow the definition from the page of one or more connections to other pages in the project. All pages now have a new “Page ID” property (usually optional). This property is used by Connector pages to identify the page. When configuring the Connector page the learning object author can define which page(s) the Learner will be taken to in the project dependent upon the selection the learner makes. This enables the Authoring of sophisticated learning objects e.g. the re-routing of the learner to the material they need to review based on their understanding of prior material; performance support materials based on decision trees; text based simulations supported by sound, graphics, flash files and video.

Parallel (2D) Learning Objects *

* For technical reasons this feature is not compatible with projects developed in XOT or the Page Templates project template.

It is now possible to define more than one set of data for a page, so a project can be thought of like a table. A simple example is shown below.

	Data 1	Data 2	Data 3
Title Page	Title page data		

Xerte 2.18 Release notes

Index Changer page (Pick a year)	Index Changer data		
Text video page	Cars in 1910 data	Cars in 1920 data	Cars in 1930 data
Text video page	Planes in 1910 data	Planes in 1920 data	Planes in 1930 data
Text video page	Buses in 1910 data	Buses in 1920 data	Buses in 1930 data

The new index changer page lets you change from looking at one column of data to another, the standard Xerte navigation will then allow you to move through the pages looking at that data column.

A similar structure to the above could deliver a project in more than one language e.g. English and French for a Canadian audience.

If the user selects a data column which does not have data defined for it the page automatically defaults to data column 1 so it is not necessary to have a data definition for every row. A possible future development could be a quiz page with a random selection from the available data definitions. The project would look something like this. The random selector built into the quiz page (This feature is not yet available) would then present the learner with one of the three quizzes.

	Data 1	Data 2	Data 3
Title page	Title page data		
Orientation page	Orientation data		
Text Video Page	Text video data		
Quiz Page	Quiz 1 data	Quiz 2 data	Quiz 3 data