

SnagIt

Screen capture and editing software from TechSmith

Introduction

Let's face it, the computer screen and what's on it is one of the principal ways many of us communicate these days. But how do we go about capturing or recalling what we see on screen? Why would we want to do this? Typical scenarios where we might need this facility are :-

- putting together step-by-step screen-shot instructions on how to use a software application
- capturing images and screenshots to illustrate a PowerPoint presentation or interactive whiteboard lesson
- showing an error message exactly as it appears on screen
- recording a purchase confirmation screen when buying online
- attaching a screenshot to an e-mail to illustrate a point

"Screen capture might not be something you consider important, in fact you might not even have used it, but if you produce teaching materials then this is something that could easily save you hours of work, and make your life a lot less stressful!"
John Hammell, Network Manager in an Edinburgh school

Screen capture on a budget

Until recently at SSERC, we've managed to do most things with the basic screen-capture facilities on Windows via the *Prt-Scr* key (copies the whole screen to the Windows clipboard) or *Alt+PrtScr* (copies the contents of the active window to the clipboard). Thereafter the image can be pasted directly into *Word*, *PowerPoint* and *Excel* or into graphics editors such as *Paint*, *Paint Shop Pro* or *Photoshop* for further editing. This works fine but is rather limited in scope :-

- You are restricted to what is on-screen or within the chosen active window. It is infuriating when there is invariably just one wee bit of a web page which is just off screen and can't be captured. In the past we've resorted to printing bits of screens and physically Sellotaping them together!
- Further editing software is needed to select the relevant part of the screen area.
- Links are not retained, as areas captured are simply bitmapped images.

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Figure 1 - Main Menu - Options available for screen capture - basic capture profiles and settings

TechSmith's *SnagIt 8.2.0* is the latest incarnation of a software application that has evolved over the past 15 years from a basic screen capture utility into much, much more. The latest version comes with the original SnagIt capture utility and a built-in companion editor called, amazingly enough, *SnagIt Editor*. SnagIT is available either as an internet download or as fully packaged software, complete with *Getting Started Guide & disc ...* and the best bit ... the academic licences are very heavily discounted (£14 + VAT for the download or £20 + VAT for the full package)! Multi-user licences are available from :-

www.blueorange.org.uk/camtasia.htm

What can SnagIt do?

Using what are called *Capture Profiles (Inputs)* SnagIt can capture any :-

- screen as seen on the monitor active window
- user-defined rectangular portion of any screen, even on a multi-monitor setup
- scrolling window
- web page, including links window and save it as a pdf file
- drop-down or cascading menu
- single image from an MPEG-4 video stream
- screen action, including mouse movements, in standard AVI video format
- text from a window
- object including graphics

The main features of SnagIt are remarkably intuitive and very easy to use (Figure 1). It is simplicity itself to record an on-screen process (static or moving) and play it back to a number of users at a later date, either as a file from a network share, part of a PowerPoint presentation or as a link on a website/intranet. SnagIT also has a very useful text capture mode,

which lets you highlight text in on-screen windows that you normally cannot take words from by the usual copy & paste method, and save them out as editable text.

Where windows need to be scrolled in order to view all of the text, or in order to see all of an image, SnagIT can automatically scroll the windows for you. SnagIT can also scroll through a document or Web page and capture the whole thing, not just the portion that fits on your screen, so there are few limitations as to what it can grab. This is particularly useful if you intend to print, for example, a poster of a whole web page or a complete pdf.

It can even take images from *DirectX* applications, including PC games, so you are not restricted to the Windows desktop. What you capture can be further tweaked with all the tools you see in Figure 2 (over the page). The product, either from the capture and further editing, can be copied to the clipboard or directly to another program such as Word, Excel or PowerPoint.

Delving deeper, the extensive range of processing options take some figuring out. However, fairly quickly you begin to realise how much scope there is with this package and we are sure it won't be too long before you end up exploring all the available options e.g. :-

You can download other more specialised capture profiles from the SnagIT website or even create your own customized ones. SnagIT's batch processing is ideal for high-volume work; where you can set up capture profiles by specifying input setting, image processing and output settings, then point it at a folder of images and let it process them all in seconds.

You can even link it to a scanner and a printer so that the whole start to finish process can be handled by the software,

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with no intervention whatsoever. Image-editing features let you tweak resolution, alter the scaling, add annotations and watermarks, as well as carry out colour conversions, colour substitutions, and other effects such as altering brightness, hue, and gamma correction.

Conclusions

Summing up, SnagIt can do so much more than the basic capture offered by *PrtScr* and *Alt+PrtScr* and is well worth the money, even if you just want an easy-to-use graphics editor.

Recommended.



Figure 2 - SnagIt Editor - As easy a graphics editing tool as you could wish for.

Index to SSERC Bulletins 211 to 219

Introduction

Listed below are the main articles from Bulletins 211 to 219 sorted alphabetically. A more comprehensive list may be found on the online version of SafetyNet on the SSERC website at :-

www.sserc.org.uk/members/SafetyNet/bulls/Subsections/menu1.htm

You can choose between drop-down menus sorted by subject, alphabetically and by Bulletin number or by Excel spreadsheets where the full data has been sorted alphabetically or by Bulletin number. Where articles and Bulletins are available online (onl) the menus and spreadsheets will have hypertext links.

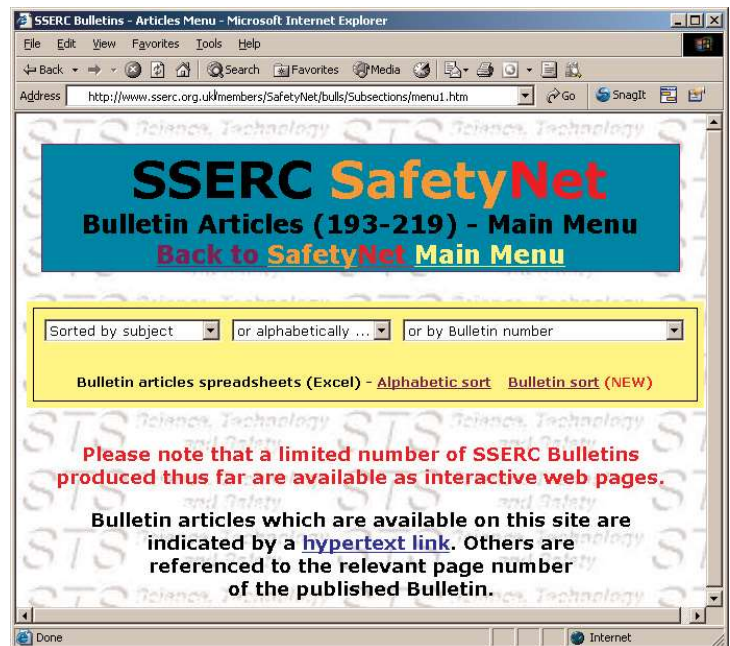


Figure 1 - Bulletin articles drop-down menus and spreadsheets on the SSERC SafetyNet

Bulletin article

- Absorption spectrum , sodium - with a white Lumiled
- Absorption spectrum , sodium - with a white Lumiled
- Accident with a pinhole camera
- Air rifles - gas cartridge
- Assessing risks
- Audacity - adopt an audacious approach to the study of sound
- Audacity - adopt an audacious approach to the study of sound
- Audacity - more experiments
- "Biuret Reagent, A safer"
- Buchanan filter - an aid to filtering protoplasts
- Cabomba - A reliable alternative to Elodea?
- Catalase - enzyme investigation using
- Chemiluminescence
- Chromatography - Griffin Paper Electrophoresis Kit
- "Compost formation, Investigating"
- "Contacts at SSERC, Core Partners & CPD Projects"
- CPD Grant awards - Editorial
- CPD News - Scottish Technicians' Consultative Conference 2006
- CPD news - Supporting Scottish Science Education
- CPD News - Update - ISE 5-14 through CPD draws to a close

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