



Evaluation of Night Kitchen's TK3 Software for the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication Program at Arizona State University

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Executive Summary

The TK3 Night Writers team Sheryl Trexler and Lynn Gorton tested and evaluated Night Kitchen's TK3 software for possible use as a project and learning based platform in the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication program at Arizona State University.

This report includes the following information:

- ◆ A description of Night Kitchen's TK3 Software
- ◆ A description of the TK3 Night Writers team's experiences while testing Night Kitchen's TK3 Software
- ◆ A comparison between Night Kitchen's TK3 Software and Adobe's Acrobat Writer and Reader software the most similar software currently available for Arizona State University students in the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication program.
- ◆ The TK3 Night Writers team's conclusions and recommendations for whether or not Night Kitchen's TK3 software should be incorporated into the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication program at Arizona State University as a project and learning-based platform.

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Introduction

Night Kitchen's TK3 software is a package developed for creating and reading interactive books. The software consists of two separate applications: the TK3 Author and the TK3 Reader. According to Night Kitchen the TK3 Author enables users to create TK3 books that may combine text, images, sounds and videos resulting in complex interactive documents that have a similar appearance to physical paper-and-ink books.

To obtain additional information about Night Kitchen and the TK3 software Sheryl Trexler contacted Bob Stein CEO and founder of Night Kitchen Inc. Stein provided the following information about Night Kitchen and the TK3 software:

- ◆ Night Kitchen's TK3 software was first released in 2001.
- ◆ When the program was first designed Night Kitchen Inc. was a company that consisted of a small group of people in New York.
- ◆ The coding for the software was developed by a group of programmers in Bulgaria.
- ◆ TK3 software was the third iteration of a long-term goal to develop tools that allow average people to assemble robust, elegant, electronic documents without needing the help of programmers.

Night Kitchen's TK3 software program may be downloaded from Night Kitchen's Internet site <http://www.nightkitchen.com>.

TK3 Software Testing

The TK3 Night Writers team started the testing phase of the project during the third week of September 9/ 11/2005 – 9/18/2005. The initial testing for the TK3 software required that each team member download the TK3 software, TK3 reader and the TK3 tutorial. Sheryl was able to download all three TK3 software products without any problem. Lynn encountered significant problems downloading the TK3 Reader. The following difficulties occurred during the download:

- ◆ The TK3 Reader appeared to download correctly however it did not install onto the computer the way it should have after the download.
- ◆ After trying three times and spending several different evenings throughout the week trying to download the TK3 Reader and install it onto the computer the third time was successful.
- ◆ The difficulties encountered while trying to download the software were a setback in the software-testing phase of the project.

After the first week of the testing phase of the project when the team members spoke during their weekly conference call each team member felt like she needed to spend more time trying to learn how to use the TK3 software.

TK3 Software Testing

At the beginning of the fourth week of the project one team member withdrew from the project leaving Sheryl Trexler and Lynn Gorton to divide the project's responsibilities between themselves. Sheryl continued to make good progress with the software and completed the TK3 tutorial and a short TK3 test book that she shared with Lynn. Since Sheryl had not encountered any significant problems with downloading all three components of the TK3 software and had made the most progress Lynn and Sheryl agreed that she could assume more responsibility with the testing obligations required for the project and creating the TK3 book and Lynn would assume more responsibility for the projects writing and communications obligations while continuing to try learn about and test the TK3 software.

Creating Text in the TK3 Author

As the TK3 Night Writers team continued to move forward with the software testing responsibilities and creating files with the TK3 Author software they encountered the following:

Importing Text into the TK3 Author:

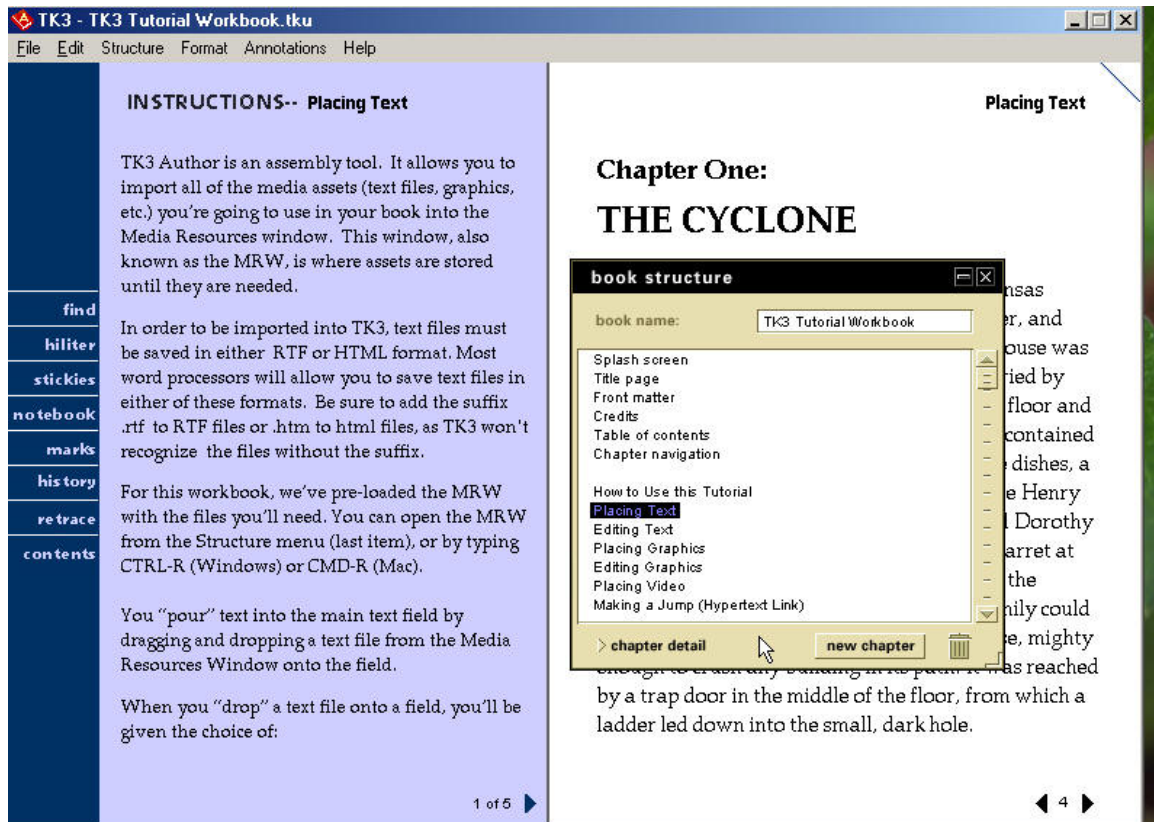
When creating a TK3 book the user may either type text directly into the program or import text files from another program. The TK3 Author software is supposed to accept text files saved as rtf files or HTML files however the team encountered the following problems when trying to import the files into the TK3 Author software:

- ◆ All text that is not directly typed into the TK3 software requires complex annotations. Complex annotations seemed to require considerable knowledge and many steps to create within the TK3 Author software.
- ◆ The TK3 Author software locked up at different times when both team members tried to import rtf files. Sheryl received the following error message "TK3 tool has exited with unhandled error see TK3 Author log." This caused the program to shutdown and Sheryl lost all the work she had done to that point and she had to do the work again.
- ◆ Sheryl discovered that if she had a document opened in Word this created a conflict with the TK3 Author program and she received error messages.
- ◆ When trying to import HTML text files into the TK3 Author the program did not recognize text files that were saved as or converted into HTML from Word. Sheryl created an HTML file in Front Page that she was able to import into the TK3 Author software.
- ◆ The team agreed that the TK3 software seemed to work better for a user that typed text directly into the program.

Creating Text in the TK3 Author

Figure 1 contains information about adding text to a TK3 book from Night Kitchen's TK3 tutorial workbook, which was also created in the TK3 Author software.

Figure 1



Creating Graphics, Web Links and Jumps in the TK3 Author

Importing Graphics and Creating Web links and Jumps in the TK3 Author:

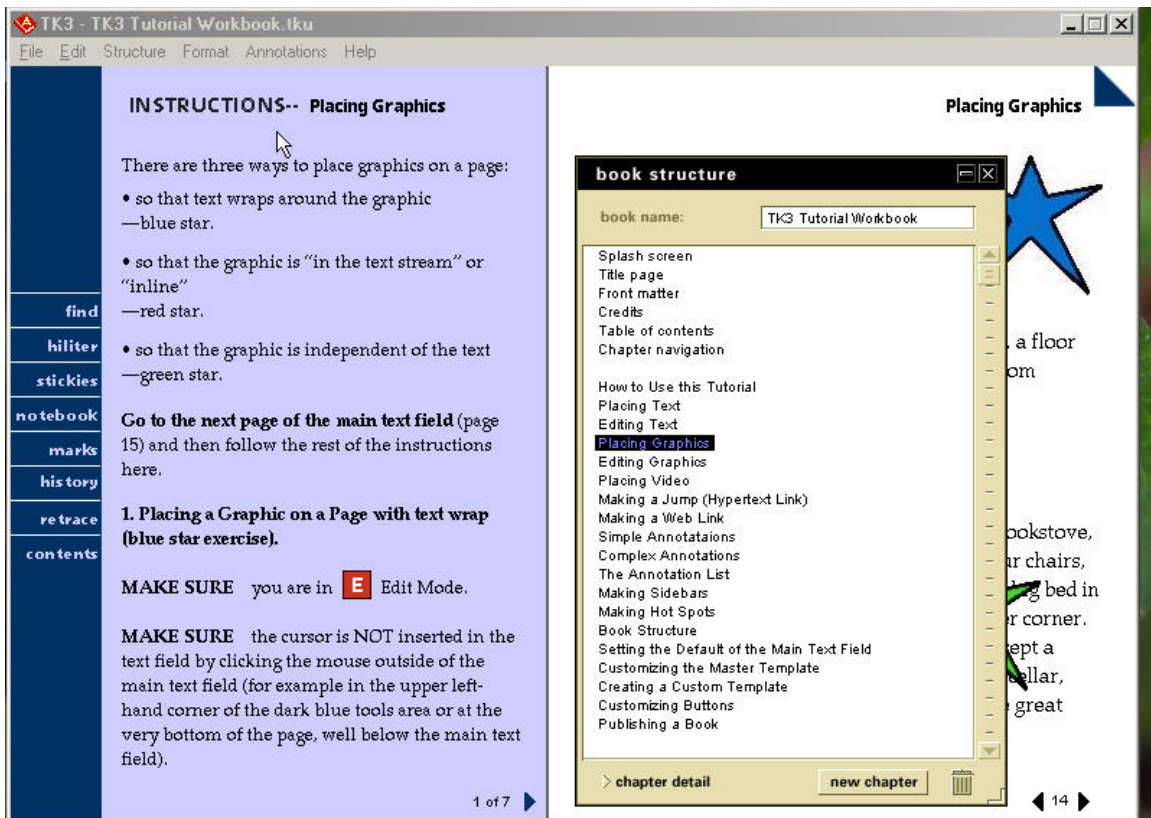
When creating a TK3 book the user may import graphics files and create web links and/or jumps in the book. The TK3 team encountered the following when trying to import or edit graphics files, create web links and/or jumps in the TK3 Author software:

- ◆ The team was able to import jpeg graphic files without encountering any problems.
- ◆ If a user wants to manipulate or edit a graphic after it is in the TK3 Author the options are limited one example is that the TK3 Author doesn't allow the user to undo a cropped graphic after a graphic has been cropped. If the user isn't satisfied with how a graphic is cropped in the TK3 Author program he/she must start over with the original graphic.
- ◆ When trying to create web links Sheryl encountered problems with the annotation "create web link" feature in the TK3 Author.
- ◆ The team agreed that the procedures to create a jump between pages within a book in the TK3 Author seemed to take a lot of steps and be unnecessarily complex.

Creating Graphics, Web Links and Jumps in the TK3 Author

Figure 2 contains information about adding graphics into the TK3 software from Night Kitchen's TK3 tutorial.

Figure 2



Creating Graphics, Jumps and Web Links in the TK3 Author

Figures 3 and 4 contain information about adding jumps and web links in the TK3 software from Night Kitchen's TK3 tutorial.

Figure 3

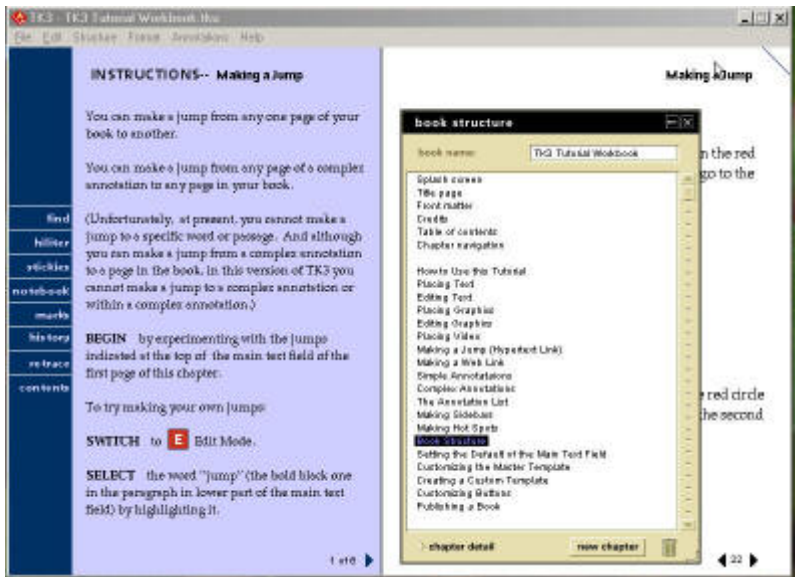
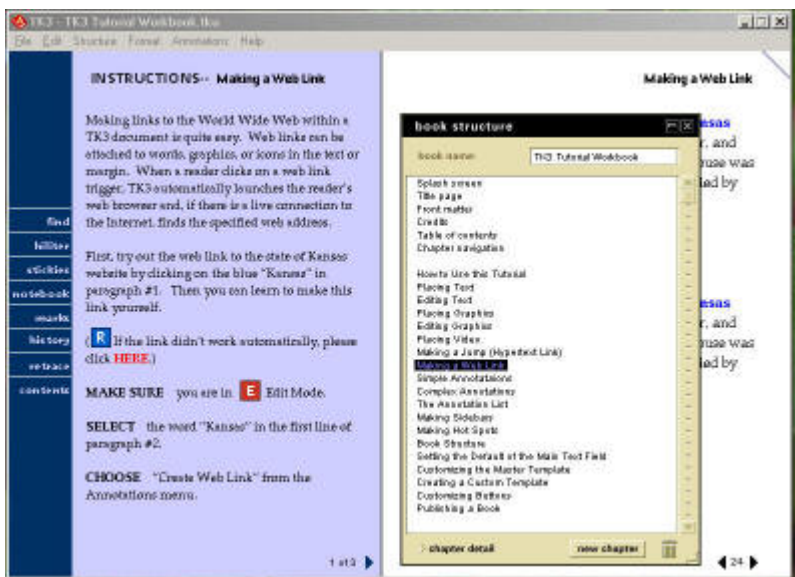


Figure 4



Importing Video and Sound into the TK3 Author

Importing Video and Sound into the TK3 Author:

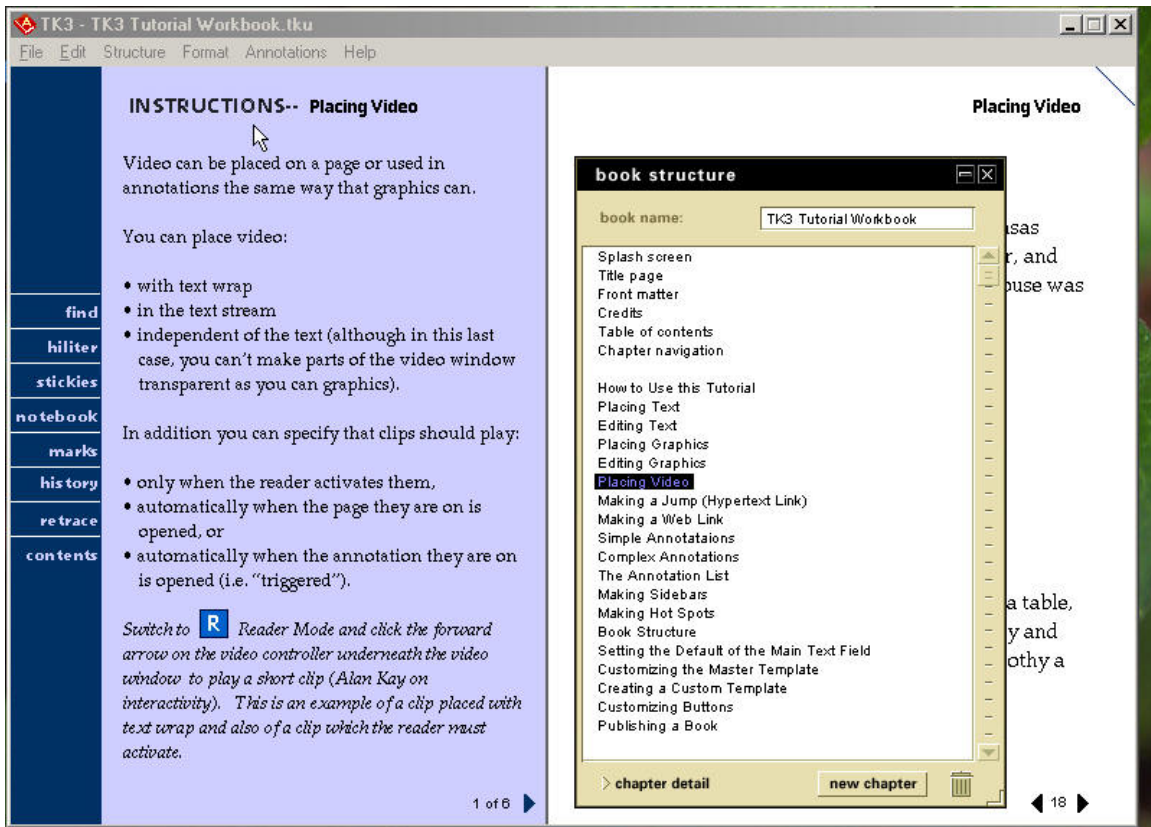
When creating a TK3 book the user is supposed to be able to incorporate video and sound into a book. The team decided to try to incorporate video into the TK3 book about hurricane Katrina however they decided against using sound. Sheryl worked a great deal on the video portion of the book and she encountered the following difficulties when trying to import or add video files into the TK3 Author software:

- ◆ It took Sheryl several attempts before she was able to successfully import video that she had edited using Roxio Media Creator into the team's book.
- ◆ After spending a lot of time on trying to import the video into the book and succeeding the TK3 Author froze up and would not close. Sheryl rebooted her computer and lost the entire book fortunately Sheryl had saved an older version of the book on another computer so she did not need to start over completely.
- ◆ Sheryl continued to work on the book about hurricane Katrina and spent many hours trying to successfully incorporate the video into the book however she never completely succeeded. Eventually Sheryl published the video in a separate file that she included with the book.

Importing Video and Sound into the TK3 Author

Screen shot of the information about adding video into the TK3 software from the TK3 tutorial.

Figure 5



User Assistance and Troubleshooting for TK3 Software

The TK3 Night Writers team encountered a variety of problems with the TK3 software while testing the software and creating the TK3 book about hurricane Katrina. When trying to resolve some of the problems using the software's built in help and the online help provided they did not always find the necessary answers. The team encountered the following problems while trying to obtain user assistance for the software:

- ◆ The TK3 Author Help did not work well; it is located in a separate file from the TK3 Author software and needs to be opened independently.
- ◆ When Sheryl wanted to delete a chapter from the TK3 book about hurricane Katrina it took her a significant amount of time to find the answer in the user manual.
- ◆ Sheryl printed the user manual and thought it was easier to look up help items in the manual after it was printed.
- ◆ Night Kitchen's website includes a FAQ's section that is intended to help users. The FAQ's are categorized which is helpful however there is a lot of information making it difficult and time consuming to find the correct information needed to solve problems.
- ◆ Night Kitchen's website also includes online technical support for reporting bugs in the software however it does not include Windows XP as an operating system for reporting problems.
<http://www.nightkitchen.com/support/author/techsupport.phtml>
- ◆ The user support or help provided on Night Kitchen's website also requires a registered user log in and a password to submit a problem.

Software Comparison and Cost Analysis

The TK3 Author is similar to other software programs used for desktop publishing because the software allows the user to incorporate materials created in different applications and arrange them in a different format and/or context. The team members thought the TK3 software was the most similar to Adobe's Acrobat Writer and Reader software for the following reasons:

- ◆ Acrobat and TK3 are both packaged software programs in which a file is created with one software program and viewed in a separate reader program that may be downloaded from the company's website at no cost.
- ◆ Both programs offer users a variety of ways to import text and graphics.
- ◆ Both programs include multimedia options and editing options for users that are either creating documents or reading documents.

The TK3 Author is different from most other software programs used for desktop publishing including Adobe Acrobat because it can be used to create books that appear very similar to printed books when they are displayed on a computer screen through the TK3 Reader. The TK3 Reader also provides users with the ability to do the following:

- ◆ Mark passages with a highlighting pen or a turned-down corner.
- ◆ Create scribble notes on electronic notes that stay on a page.
- ◆ Copy text or other materials and write notes into a personal electronic notebook.

Software Comparison and Cost Analysis

The TK3 Night Writer's team preferred the following features in Adobe's Acrobat Writer and Reader software:

- ◆ Acrobat Reader allows users to maximize or minimize the viewing window, adjust the size of the viewing window and adjust the size of the document displayed in the viewing window.
- ◆ Adobe Acrobat offers better user assistance and/or help for the software and has been upgraded or updated to include Microsoft's most recent operating systems for reporting problems.
- ◆ Acrobat Writer seems easier to learn, use and create documents in then Night Kitchen's TK3 Author.
- ◆ Acrobat files are smaller then TK3 files which makes them easier to share with other people for viewing or editing.

When the team compared the cost between educational licenses for Night Kitchen's TK3 Software and Adobe Acrobat software they discovered the following:

- ◆ Night Kitchen's TK3 software costs \$79.00 per user license.
- ◆ Adobe's Acrobat Writer software costs \$99.00 per user license.

Conclusions

After spending ten weeks testing and evaluating Night Kitchen's TK3 software the TK3 Night Writers team concluded that Night Kitchen's TK3 software has some unique features especially the format of a completed TK3 book when viewed through the TK3 Reader however overall after comparing Night Kitchen's TK3 software to Adobe's Acrobat Writer and Reader software which are currently available for all Arizona State University students in the computer labs they preferred Adobe's Acrobat Writer and Reader software because they believe it is easier to learn and more user friendly. Both team members have encountered fewer problems when creating and publishing documents with Acrobat Writer and when there have been problems it has been easier to obtain user assistance to resolve the problems. When comparing the cost of Night Kitchen's TK3 software to the cost of Adobe's Acrobat Writer and Reader software the cost of Adobe's educational license is \$20.00 higher than the TK3 Author software however this seems negligible when considering the benefits for users of Adobe's Acrobat products. After considering whether or not Night Kitchen's TK3 software would be useful for Arizona State University's Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication program students as a project and learning based platform both TK3 Team members thought it could be useful for students that wanted to create a multimedia book that looked like an actual book when viewed on a computer screen however students that wanted to use Night Kitchen's TK3 software should be warned about the potential problems or difficulties they might encounter.

Recommendations

The TK3 Night Writers team is not in favor of recommending that Night Kitchen's TK3 software be widely used or implemented into the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication program as a project and learning based platform because of the many problems they encountered while trying to learn and use the software. They agreed that the software may be useful to students or implemented on a limited basis for more testing or if certain students are particularly interested in a product that creates an electronic book that will more closely resemble an actual book when viewed on a computer screen. Night Kitchen is currently in the process of developing a new program called Sophie that is scheduled to replace Night Kitchen's TK3 software. After Sophie is released the TK3 software is scheduled to be phased out. The TK3 team also recommends that the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication department have students test Sophie after it is released to see if that software may be better suited to the program and Arizona State University students.

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