TypeDNA

From Font Manager to Adobe Creative Suite Extension

TypeDNA

Industry

Software, Fonts

Challenges

Re-invent how a font manager is used by a designer, integrating it into the Creative Suite workflow.

Solution

Create a CS extension that implements the TypeDNA font manager functions within Adobe Creative Suite.

Results

The extension saves time for designers.

The extension frees the designer from the restrictions of a traditional font manager when choosing and using fonts.

The extension brings TypeDNA to users who would not otherwise use a font manager.

The extension integrates web-fonts right into Creative Suite.

Systems at a Glance

Adobe CS Extension Builder

Adobe Flex

Adobe Flex Builder

Adobe AIR

Beyond a Font Manager

TypeDNA is on a mission to encourage the use of good typography among designers. The key to fulfilling this goal is the development of the TypeDNA Font Manager as an Adobe Creative Suite extension.

A different approach

Traditionally, a font manager simply organizes a library of fonts, providing the basic functionality of browsing, grouping, activating and deactivating.

The TypeDNA font manager does more. It is built upon algorithms that analyze font characteristics, which allows TypeDNA to provide a unique set of tools that help a designer find the right font fast.

For example, a designer can choose any font and quickly *find similar*, or can choose a headline font and *find complementary* body fonts. TypeDNA also provides *attribute filters* that help a designer quickly find fonts by weight, width, or italic angle. Each attribute is split into steps and can be combined with filters for sans serif, monospaced, and symbol detection.

TypeDNA examined how a font manager would typically fit within a designer's workflow. Darren Glenister, Development Director for TypeDNA explains: "We found that hours were being wasted on choosing fonts from a font manager, activating them, and then having to find them again in the application's font menu. We felt the traditional method of choosing and using fonts was cumbersome. This led us to the idea of placing the TypeDNA font manager directly inside the Creative Suite. This way the tools for choosing and using fonts become part of the Creative Suite and TypeDNA becomes part of a streamlined workflow."

The TypeDNA CS extension

TypeDNA's standalone font manager was developed with Adobe AIR, so creating an extension with CS Extension Builder was a natural progression. The extension provides access to the functions of the TypeDNA Font Manager from an integrated panel inside the Adobe Creative Suite applications. The panel provides Creative Suite applications

with an enhanced font menu, and gives the designer direct access to TypeDNA's unique tools while working on a design. The designer can freely move back and forth between the TypeDNA extension and the working document, making quick creative decisions. Using a panel makes TypeDNA look and feel like an integral part of the Creative Suite.

TypeDNA recently added a web-fonts content channel within the extension. This makes it easy for a designer to choose an online web-font and see what it looks like while working in Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, or Illustrator. The designer can even pick a font from the local machine and request to see similar available web-fonts.

The challenge

During the planning stages, the development team defined some important goals for the extension. It should provide:

- A consistent user interface for the extension, the same already used for the AIR Font Manager.

- A consistent experience across Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator.

- A consistent user experience in both Mac OS and Windows.

- Access to fonts from the user's local machine as well as those obtained online from the cloud.

The outcome

Adobe Flex, Adobe AIR, Flash Builder, and CS Extension Builder gave TypeDNA the tools they needed to fulfill this challenge, while keeping development time to a minimum. TypeDNA is now reaching customers who might otherwise not even realize they could use a font manager.

Feedback from TypeDNA's customers has been phenomenal. The TypeDNA Flash panel has quickly become part the daily workflow of many designers, and is helping to fulfill TypeDNA's goal of encouraging the use of good typography.