

Herff Jones Inc.

Herff Jones provides breakthrough desktop and online yearbook publishing solutions using Adobe® Creative Suite® software and the Adobe Flash® Platform

Herff Jones Inc.

www.yearbooks.biz



In Partnership With

EffectiveUI

www.effectiveui.com



Industry

Education

Challenges

- Expand yearbook creation options
- Deliver a breakthrough online yearbook design application with a compelling user experience

Solution

- Yearbook design and production
To address customer needs, Herff Jones provides desktop-based tools built around Adobe InDesign software to create professional-quality yearbooks, as well as a dynamic online service called eDesign that leverages the Adobe Flash Platform and components of Adobe Creative Suite.

Results

- Increased online customer base more than 500% in one year
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Delivered a solution that stands out among competitors
- Improved collaboration among yearbook staff
- Increased efficiency for yearbook advisers

Options tailored to customer needs

With more than 85 years of experience in providing solutions for designing and producing yearbooks, Herff Jones understands the challenges and commitment that go into capturing and communicating student memories. Constant deadlines, technical issues, personal sacrifices by busy advisers, and of course, the need to produce yearbooks prized by students and parents alike are just some of the challenges. To provide schools with the tools they need to create professional-quality yearbooks, Herff Jones relies heavily on Adobe solutions.

As part of its traditional yearbook creation services, Herff Jones leverages the flexibility and power of Adobe InDesign® software and has incorporated specialized plug-ins to further simplify yearbook production. “Our desktop tools give students real-world experience in design and layout,” explains Karen Stanovich, Region III sales manager at Herff Jones. “With Adobe InDesign and our integrated plug-ins, students can create yearbooks with total design control and full coverage, while gaining skills that will serve them long after graduation.”

An intuitive online service

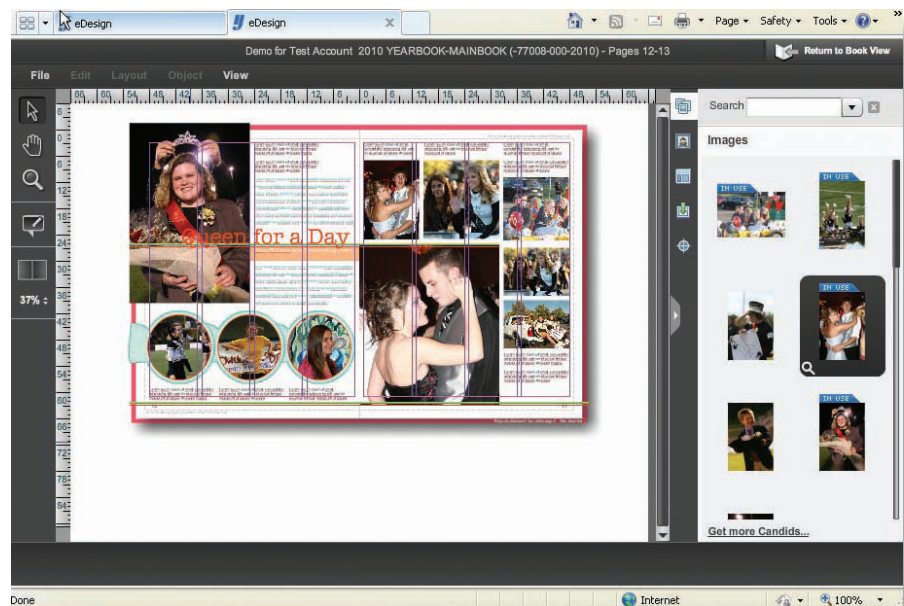
Building on the company’s existing yearbook service, Herff Jones introduced an innovative online service called eDesign. Developed as a rich Internet application (RIA), the dynamic service provides users with a highly graphical, intuitive interface for creating high-quality yearbook layouts. Even students and advisers with more limited technology skills can begin using eDesign with little training and generate outstanding designs.

“We wanted to offer complementary services that give customers flexibility in meeting their yearbook needs,” says Vicky Wolfe, director of marketing for Herff Jones. “One school might prefer the more advanced editing and richer skills development supported by our desktop application, while another might want to use the dynamic online tools in eDesign. It really depends on each customer’s goals.”

With its eDesign service, Herff Jones set out to raise the standard and interactivity of online yearbook offerings. Instead of creating a run-of-the-mill online solution, Herff Jones worked with user experience design and development agency EffectiveUI. Together, the two companies launched eDesign, the successful system that increased Herff Jones’ online customer base by more than 500% in just one year.

Anthony Franco, president of EffectiveUI, attributes the success of eDesign in large part to extensive user testing focused on customer needs. eDesign provides an unmatched design and collaboration experience for students and teachers working on yearbooks and enables students to create yearbook pages outside the confines of the classroom or computer lab.

The Herff Jones eDesign service provides users with a highly graphical, intuitive interface for creating high-quality yearbook layouts. Built using the Adobe Creative Suite and Adobe Flex Builder, the online service provides students and advisers an easy-to-use combination of tools to achieve the desired look of their yearbooks.



“No matter which approach a school takes, our plug-ins and support for Adobe InDesign and online eDesign services provide rich learning and design environments for students and advisers involved in creating yearbooks.”

Vicky Wolfe,
Director of marketing,
Herff Jones

An integrated messaging center and role-based structure let advisers administer and assign pages to students, who have complete control over their assigned pages. “Collaboration in eDesign is exceptional,” says Stanovich. “After a student works on a page, an adviser can log in and leave a comment on the page saying ‘Great work,’ or, ‘this section needs copy-editing.’ It’s a leap in terms of communication and interaction, resulting in improved efficiency for time-strapped teachers and students.”

The dynamic service gives students and advisers greater flexibility in designing and delivering yearbooks, enabling users to work from anywhere, whenever they have time. eDesign can also accelerate getting yearbook programs up and running. The online service does not require schools to purchase and install software because everything is available online.

While eDesign simulates the award-winning Adobe InDesign capabilities and a host of plug-ins created by Herff Jones, the online service provides students and advisers an easy-to-use combination of tools to achieve the desired look of their yearbooks. At the same time, the design and layout skills developed using eDesign transfer readily to Herff Jones desktop yearbook application.

Intensely intuitive

The eDesign solution is built on the Adobe Flash Platform and components of Adobe Creative Suite. During development, EffectiveUI used Adobe Photoshop® CS4 Extended, Fireworks® CS4, and Illustrator® CS4 software to design the application interface. The final user interface was built on the Adobe Flash Platform using Adobe Flex® Builder™.

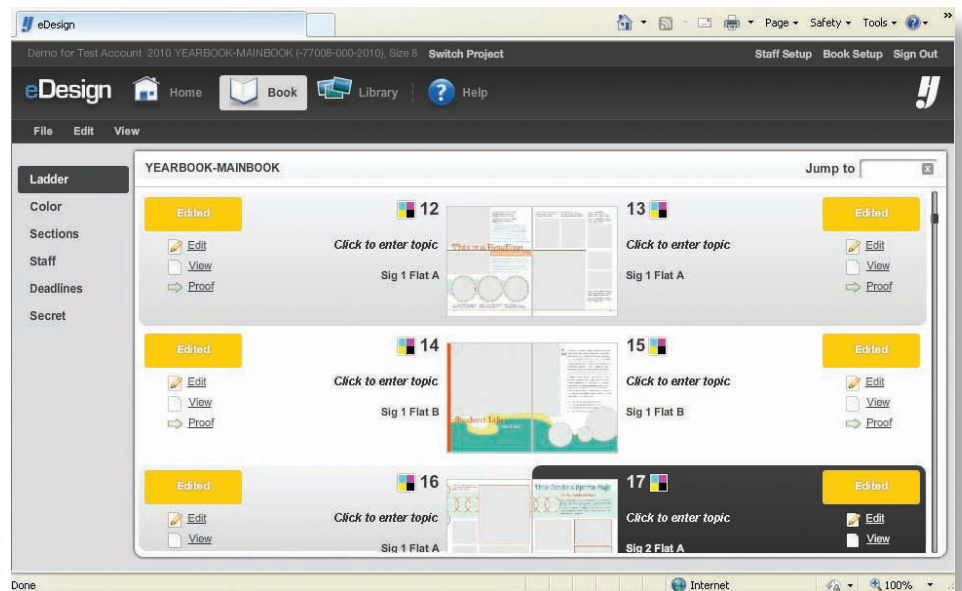
“Flex Builder accelerates application development by as much as 85%,” says Franco. “The coding capabilities are excellent, and debugging is more streamlined than ever. We can quickly develop a visually rich, intuitive interface that we can preview and refine as needed. Because the final interface runs reliably in the free Adobe Flash Player in any computing environment, we see further efficiencies by not having to continually develop and test our interface to support different browsers.”

The EffectiveUI team also used BlazeDS, a server-based Java remoting and web messaging technology from Adobe, to connect to back-end systems and push data in real-time to end users.

Herff Jones' eDesign system lets students quickly and easily design yearbook pages.

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Anthony Franco,
President,
EffectiveUI



Students tap into predesigned eDesign templates, which are created in Adobe InDesign, as a starting point for each page. Students can quickly import images they may have edited in Adobe Photoshop software or use tools within eDesign to edit and place photos on yearbook pages. Because proofing is conducted online, eDesign also helps Herff Jones customers promote sustainability initiatives by reducing paper used throughout proofing processes.

Streamlining yearbook production

According to Franco, EffectiveUI used Adobe solutions for eDesign because of the breadth of the toolset and ability to deliver a dynamic and intuitive client interface that runs reliably across computing environments. The Adobe solutions also provided backward compatibility to support both older and newer machines—a must for schools.

"Adobe made our lives a lot easier because we could go to one company for all the solutions we needed for our RIA service," says Franco. "From Adobe Creative Suite to the Adobe Flash Platform, everything came together seamlessly to create an intensively intuitive and efficient online design and publishing application."

For Herff Jones, the addition of eDesign to its product portfolio supports a key mission: meeting each customer's unique needs and providing a learning path for students to advance their skills.

"Customers often say that eDesign provides a solid introduction to Adobe InDesign," says Wolfe. "eDesign functions much like InDesign, enabling students to transition to more powerful design and layout tools if they wish or stay within the eDesign online environment. No matter which approach a school takes, our plug-ins and support for Adobe InDesign and online eDesign services provide rich learning and design environments for students and advisers involved in creating yearbooks."

Systems At A Glance

- Flex 3
- Adobe Flex Builder 3
- Adobe Creative Suite CS4.
Components used include:
 - Adobe Fireworks CS4
 - Adobe Illustrator CS4
 - Adobe InDesign CS4
 - Adobe Photoshop CS4 Extended
- BlazeDS, an Adobe open source project

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/flex/
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