



THE ALICE NEWSLETTER

LEARNING TO PROGRAM WITH ALICE

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Hello to all,

We hope that your fall term is starting off well. We hope you enjoy the current Alice e-Newsletter. Please feel free to let us know more of what types of articles you'd like to see.

Updated Version of



Don Slater lets us know about the latest version of Alice 3:

The latest update to Alice 3, Version 3.0.3.0.0, has been released and is now available at <http://www.alice.org>.

Note the following changes in this release:

- Added one-shots (ability to perform object-level procedures as part of scene setup)
- Added a clipboard
- Updated properties panel with ability to change object name, color, opacity, position, vehicle and size.
- Added camera and object markers

The latest Alice 3 Beta plugin for NetBeans,

Alice3ProjectWizard3.0.3.0.0.nbm, is also available, and for those wishing to import and work with Alice 3 Beta projects in Netbeans, you should add this plugin to Netbeans. (If you have a previous version of the plugin installed, it is probably best to uninstall that version, before installing this new release.

It should also be noted that we are experiencing significant difficulties in the interaction between Alice 3 Beta and the latest release of NetBeans version 7.

It is our recommendation for the upcoming semester that teachers who expect to be teaching with Alice 3 Beta and Netbeans that they install and use Netbeans 6.9.1 (Java SE edition).

This version of Netbeans can be found at the following URL:

<http://netbeans.org/downloads/6.9.1/>

As always, please let me know (at dslater@andrew.cmu.edu) of any problems you encounter.

Updated Version of Alice 2.2

The latest update to Alice 2.2, dated 8/5/2011, has been released and is now available at <http://www.alice.org>.

Note the following changes in this release:

- * The Mac OS X version is now a universal binary, and is compatible with the latest Mac OS 10.7 (Lion)
- * The Mac version now creates a backup folder
- * The download version with the "Learning to Program with Alice" worlds has been updated with the worlds for the Third Edition of "Learning to Program with Alice" By Dann, Cooper, and Pausch
- * Added new models and updated the gallery
- * Added the ability to create a 3D text as a parameter or variable.
- * Added the option to enable or disable tooltips.
- * Added the option to delete items in a list or array
- * Fixed an assortment of problems that had been reported over the last semester

As always, please let us know of any problems you encounter.

Updating your PC's Video Drivers to Best Run Alice

We have received reports similar to this one, mostly regarding Alice 3.0 Beta, but sometimes with Alice 2.2:

"During scene setup when you hover over certain objects such as the island or the stool, the screen turns red. When the cursor is moved to another location we can once again see the normal screen setup window."

There is a new version of Alice 3 available on line which seems to help with these problems.



Often we have found that these issues seem to be related to

- outdated video card drivers (particularly if you have switched from XP to Windows 7)
- hardware acceleration
- color depth

If at all possible, you might check to see if there are specific updates for your video cards available. Often manufacturers will have a generic, one size fits all update, but you should try to find the specific update for your card.

You can try to reduce hardware acceleration.

You can try to reduce color depth from 32 bit to 16 bit.

- Updating your PC's video drivers to best run Alice Wanda created this checklist for updating your video drivers on your PC. Thanks Wanda!

Updating Video Drivers on Windows machines

1. To identify the make and model of your adapter card, right click your Desktop, choose

Properties / Settings / Advanced / Adapter.

2. Download the latest video driver for your card online, at the manufacturer's website.

3. Save the .exe driver (or extract the zip file) to a folder in My Documents named after the driver version number.

4. Restart the computer in Safe Mode by pressing the F8 key about once every second as it's rebooting to pick Safe Mode.

5. Click Start / (settings) Control Panel / System / Hardware Device Manager / expand +Display Adapters / right click on the adapter, pick "Uninstall", and click No if asked to reboot.

6. Use Control Panel / Add-Remove programs to uninstall the previous driver (exe) software which may have been installed.

7. Restart the computer in Safe Mode by pressing the F8 key about once every second as it's rebooting to pick Safe Mode.

If the driver is a .exe program file, do steps 8 and 9. If the driver is not a .exe program file, do steps 10 and 11.

----- Driver is a .exe file, do steps 8 and 9 -----

8. When Windows prompts you to install the video adapter, click "Cancel" and Double click the driver program to begin installation. * Even if not prompted, doubleclick the driver and install it.

9. After you reboot, go to Control Panel / Display / Settings and choose 32 bit Color Quality, and 800x600 or higher

Resolution. That's it!

----- Driver is NOT a .exe file, do steps 10 and 11 -----

10. When Windows prompts you to install the video adapter, click "Install from a list or specific location", click the "Browse" button, browse to the My documents folder where you saved the driver, and finally click on one of the driver files to begin installation.

** If you are not prompted, or if the driver was updated automatically: Click Start / (settings) Control Panel / System / Hardware Device Manager expand +Display Adapters / right click on the adapter, pick "Update Driver" to start the Update Wizard, choose the "Install from a list..." option: Browse to My Documents\ folder with the driver in it. Click OK and click Next to begin the update.

11. After you reboot, go to Control Panel / Display / Settings and choose 32 bit Color Quality, and 800x600 or higher Resolution.

Are you Doing Innovative Math Curriculum with Alice? We want to hear from you!

Jill Denner would like those doing cool work combining math and CS in Alice to contact her. Here is her note:

Have your students created Alice programs to help them learn math?

Have your students created Alice programs to teach others about math?

As part of a project funded by the National Science Foundation, we have taught over 300 middle school students to program games in Alice. Now we want to use Alice to teach students math. If you have done this, or are interested in trying, we want to talk to you. Please contact Jill Denner jilld@etr.org



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Alice Listserv

Don Slater reminds us about the Alice educator listserv:

We now have a mailing list for those who are teaching with Alice.

If interested, you may subscribe at:

<http://alice-teachers@lists.andrew.cmu.edu> mailing list

On this list, Alice teachers are able to ask questions, post ideas and nifty assignments, and support other members of the Alice teaching community. The list is moderated to make sure that only those posts that are of interest to the Alice educational community will be distributed.

After subscribing, and being admitted to the list, you may post to this list by sending your email to:

alice-teachers@lists.andrew.cmu.edu

General information about the mailing list is at:

<https://lists.andrew.cmu.edu/mailman/listinfo/alice-teachers>

Are FBI Alice Competition Notes

Last year, the FBI announced a competition among middle and high school students to promote Safe Online Surfing. The winners are: Zachary Lamperski from Springdale Jr Sr High, Springdale, PA, (8th grade) as the middle school winner, and Alec Fortine from Canyon High School, Anaheim Hills, CA (11th grade) as the high school winner.

Stay tuned for a new competition this upcoming year.



Information about Alice Summer Programs

Joyce Tang contacted us about want to find information about Alice summer camps in the San Francisco Bay area for summer 2012. If you'd like to let the rest of the community know about a program you'll be running, please send us information, and we'll include it in a future Alice e-Newsletter.

I am writing to ask if you know of any programs or classes in the south bay area (or, any of bay area) that teaches more complicated Alice programming/Java. There are several summer camps that target online gaming/programming but the summer is over! Do you know of any Saturdays/after schools/online websites that can help enrich this student? Should he get started learning Java? C++? :)

I feel inadequate and also incompetent to continue teaching this (entering) 5th grader--a neighborhood kid--beyond the basics. I've even worked on those "tutorials" and "example worlds" backwards in addition to reading the textbook numerous times to be more prepared, but he excelled so quickly that....I feel I am slowing him down. Stuff that I would spend one week (~4hr) in a regular 8th grade classroom took less than an hour for him to catch on. Speechless!

Please help forward this message to any higher power that can provide me with an answer, and please feel free to send this email to anyone who would like to be this student's teacher/tutor.

Appreciate any advice, connections, websites, or support.

Sincerely,
Joyce Tang
tangscience@gmail.com
2008 Alice Workshop Santa Clara University

A Repository of Alice Information

Eileen Peluso Pelusoem@lycoming.edu reports about a collection of Alice materials:

An excellent collection of resources put together by Sumant Muruges and Tim Bell at the University of Canterbury:

<http://nzacditt.org.nz/resource/level-1-programming-alice>

More Repositories

One source of materials for teaching with Alice:
<http://www.aliceprogramming.net>



There is a set of instructor materials there, including sample syllabi, projects and solutions, quizzes, assignments, test banks and solutions, some student example worlds... These materials are designed for use with the "Learning to Program with Alice" textbook by Dann, Cooper and Pausch, but they are freely available to school instructors to be used with any textbook, as their

PLEASE NOTE:

All correspondence should be sent to the email address:

TeachingWithAlice@gmail.com



Links

aliceprogramming.net
Helpful information on Teaching with Alice (course calendars, lectures, labs, assignments, exams, solutions, etc.)

alice.org
Download Alice, Alice community

Past issues of newsletters are available by emailing TeachingWithAlice@gmail.com

development was supported by NSF funding.

They are password protected to preserve the integrity of the solutions so that teachers may use the exercises and exams, with some confidence that students will not have access to these answers and solutions. You may apply for the login and password by contacting me <coopers@stanford.edu>.

Another site that you may wish to check out that would be helpful would be

<http://www.cs.duke.edu/csed/alice/aliceInSchools/>

Maintained by Professor Susan Rogers at Duke University, this site has many great resources in the use of Alice in K-12... You will find a lot of examples, tutorials and projects here that you may find helpful.

Some Suggestions for Teaching Alice Online

Eileen Wrigley <ewrigley@ccac.edu> created an amazing post to the Alice listserv about her experiences in teaching Alice online. For those of you that missed it, here's her post:



I've taught Alice online for a few years. I have taught a CS0 type class called Fundamentals of Programming (for non-CIT majors and weak CIT majors) which uses Alice 2.2 for the full semester and a CS1 type class called Java Programming (first course in programming for CIT majors) which uses Alice 3 Beta to introduce various Java programming concepts. I have enjoyed teaching both classes online. Here are some ideas for you:

1. For the CS0 type class, we use the Wanda Dann text "Learning to Program with Alice <http://www.amazon.com/Learning-Program-Alice-ROM-3rd/dp/0132122472/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1310683921&sr=8-1> ". I highly recommend this text because it is excellent and students seem to understand the chapters. For the CS1 class, I use my own handouts/chapters which integrate Alice into Java chapters. For both courses, I use lots of supplements.
2. Online students may have a variety of issues with installation of Alice software. I have a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) discussion board for some known installation problems. Since online students will have various computer systems with a variety of operating systems, memory, and graphics capabilities, this will become their first stop in searching for a solution to their installation problem. Be prepared during first week for emails from students with installation problems with either Alice 2.2 or Alice 3 Beta.



Contact Us !

- To recommend a colleague to the Alice Newsletter
- To share your success stories with other users
- To announce your upcoming events / plans using Alice
- To give us your comments, corrections or alerts us of omissions

CONTACT:
Steve Cooper
coopers@stanford.edu

facebook

FACEBOOK GROUP:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups.php?ref=fb#/group.php?gid=106038903458>

Join in discussions to share Alice thoughts with other instructors!

3. I use a "Hall of Fame" board on my course site. Each week, I post the best 2-3 programming assignments that students submitted. It helps students develop a sense of pride for their work and also challenges some of them to do "extra" work to earn a place on the board. Even the students who never make the Hall of Fame board enjoy seeing other students' work.

4. I have a discussion board thread for each assignment where I post extra explanations of assignments, hints, and common mistakes along with explanations. Students can also post their questions to this board. Although students can email me directly with any questions that they have about assignments, this gives them a place to check first and decreases the number of emails that I receive regarding assignments.

5. Recently, I have begun requiring that students submit the actual programs completed in the chapters. Online students sometimes skim chapters or don't even buy the text if they feel they can get by without it. Requiring them to submit the work from inside the chapters, forces them to read the book and do the programs. After requiring online students do all the hands-on assignments from inside chapters (in addition to the programs assigned at end of chapters), I saw improvement in grades, improvement in students understanding programming concepts, and improvement in retention. The downside of this is the overwhelming amount of work for the teacher in "checking" all of these programs.

6. I give lots of assignments for each chapter instead of just one. The practice seems to help students understand the material. Again, the downside is the extra work for the teacher.

7. Throughout the semester, I give several "creative" projects where they choose their own scenes, storyboards, programs, etc. The guidelines are very broad so that students must show their creative side. To complete their projects, many students will read ahead and do extra work so that they can complete their game or greeting card project.

8. You may want to develop some short videos of concepts that have confused your students. For instance, functions are always a difficult concept for my CS0 students. Another possibility is to record all your Alice face-to-face class lectures/demonstrations and post them for your online students.

9. Since online students will probably have some installation problems, you may want to give online students a little extra time in first week for this problem. This way, face-to-face students will always be a little ahead of the online students and that way you can test all your lectures, demos, and assignments with a controlled face-to-face environment and then "tweak" them for the online students.

Hope this helps!

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Would Your Students Like to Try Out Some Alice Stencil Tutorials?

If you click of the tutorial tab (when opening an Alice world), there are four tutorials that show the mechanics of doing animation in Alice. These tutorials have always been a part of Alice 2. As part of an NSF grant on building an intelligent tutoring system, we have created several additional stencil tutorials on teaching programming. The approach we take is to actually walk the student through making several errors and then observing the results of those errors, before finally producing a correct solution. Our tutorials tend to be somewhat shorter than the existing tutorials, and are more focused on individual programming concepts. For those of you teaching online or hybrid courses, or for those of you teaching where the students have to do some Alice programming outside of a laboratory setting (where you or a TA would be available to help students when they get stuck), we would be happy to make the tutorials available to you. Please note that we are not making a complete intelligent tutoring system available at this time -- its only the stencil tutorials. But, if you'd like them, please send me an e-mail (coopers@stanford.edu), and I'll send them to you along with instructions about where to place the files.

Two caveats:

- 1) For those of you who request access, I may follow up with a brief survey detailing how you have used them, and what you have thought about them. I'd also like to know where your students gets confused.
- 2) You should be using the latest version of Alice 2.2, dated 8/5/2011.

Also, if you'd like a document describing how to create your own stencil tutorials, just let me know. They're not too hard to create, but it takes a bit of time to get them "just right".

We hope that you have a fabulous fall with teaching Alice!!!
Wanda and Steve