

On the move.

Web Animations in Xara Web Designer Premium

Note: Animations can only be produced with the Premium version.

Web animations are images that move on the Internet and can be displayed in browsers in three formats. **Flash** was developed by Adobe and is a standard way of creating animations. The **animated GIF** is an older form of animation that has many limitations that Flash does not have. **AVI** is a video format.

In Xara Web Designer Premium you can create animations in all three formats, e.g. to create moving banners for your website. In this chapter we will use some examples to show you how to create animations in Xara Web Designer.

A Few Words About Flash

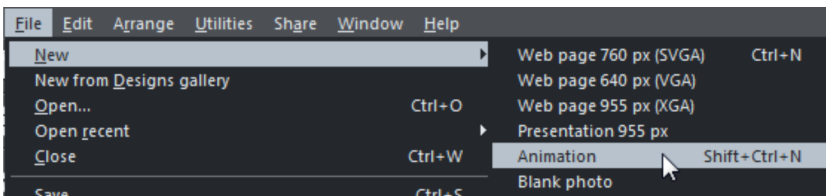
Flash animations are still the best option for creating complex moving images. However, it is no longer the undisputed choice like it was a few years ago. This is in great part due to the fact that Apple does not support Flash on its amazingly popular iPhones and iPads. Also, in November 2011 Adobe stopped further development of Flash for mobile end devices, e. g. smartphones.

For these reasons it is good to keep in mind that if you do decide to include Flash animation on your website, some visitors will not be able to view the content. Consider whether an animated GIF would suffice, or perhaps even a simple graphic without any animation.

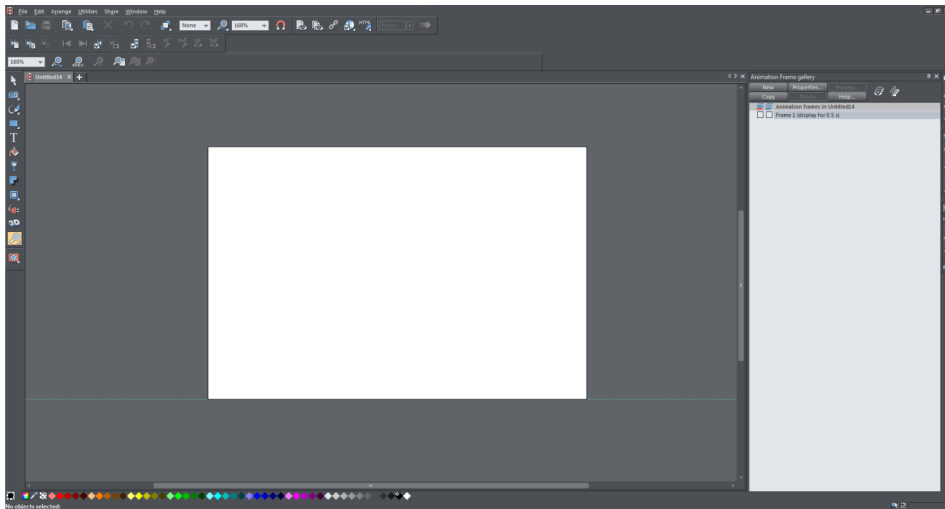
Adding an Animation Document

In Xara Web Designer Premium animation documents work differently than website documents. For this reason it is important that you determine exactly which type of document you want to create before adding it.

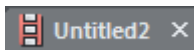
- ▶ To create an animation document go to **FILE > NEW** and select the option **ANIMATION**.



Xara Web Designer Premium will open a new document in the animation view.

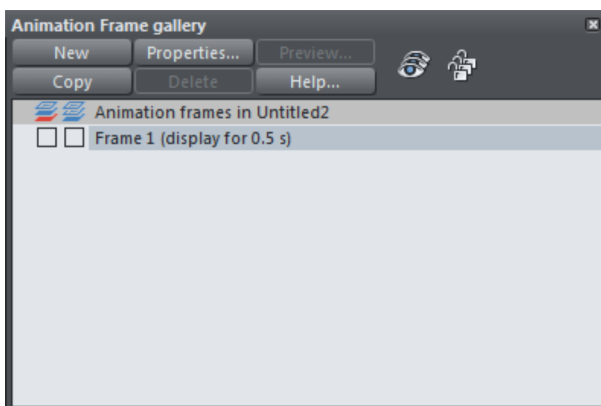


Animation documents are easily recognizable by the small filmstrip symbol in front of the name.



You will also notice the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY** on the right which is not available in a website document.

Animation Frame gallery



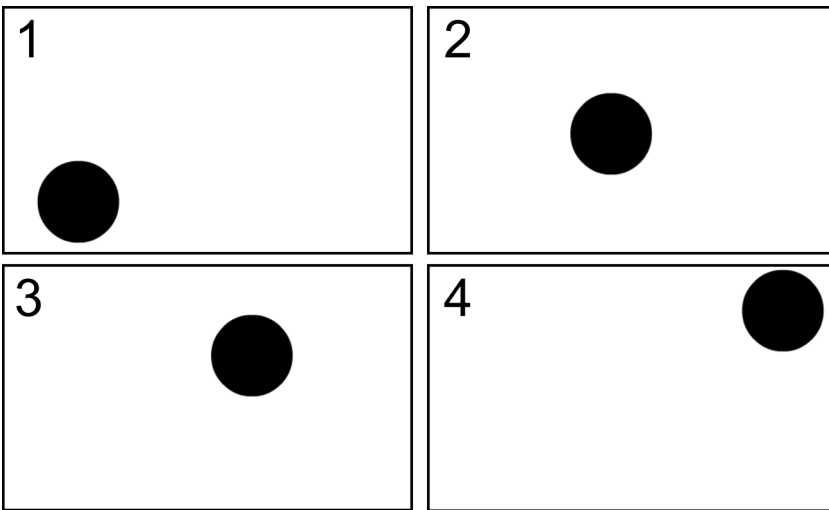
Each animation consists of several individual images which are called **FRAMES**. These frames display particular parts of the animation. They are also referred to as "keyframes". For example, if you want to make a circle move from the bottom left to

the top right of the screen, the first frame will be the circle at the bottom left and the second the circle at the top right.



Frame 1 and Frame 2 in this simple example.

When you export the animation as a Flash or open the Flash preview, Xara Web Designer Premium automatically calculates the keyframes to create a fluid movement from the bottom left to the top right.



Example of keyframes automatically calculated by Xara Web Designer Premium The number of keyframes depends on the length of the animation.

Note: Keyframes are only calculated for Flash animations. With animated GIFs only each individual frame is displayed.

In the following we'll see how this type of simple animation is created.

Creating Simple Animations

Flash offers the following options for animating objects:

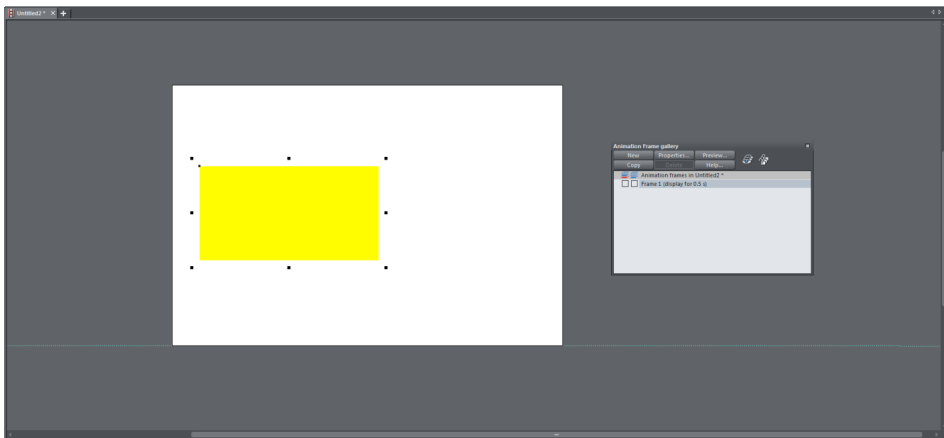
- ▶ **Movement:** You can make an object move from one position to another.
- ▶ **Scaling:** Making the object become larger or smaller.
- ▶ **Squashing or Skewing:** This option distorts the object.
- ▶ **Rotating:** Making the object spin around.
- ▶ **Transparency:** Changing the uniform transparency of the object. Transparency gradients cannot be animated.
- ▶ **Color Change** i. e. the color of the object changes.

You can also combine these options on a single animation.

We'll start with a relatively easy animation - a yellow rectangle will move, change color to red and become transparent at the end.

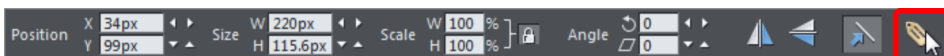
First Frame

- ▶ Draw a yellow rectangle on the white surface of the animation document.

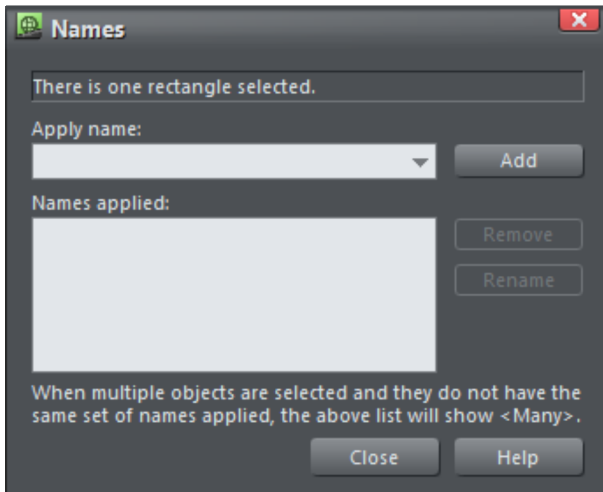


Each element that you want to animate (in this case only the yellow triangle) should be given a name.

- ▶ To name your object, select it and click on the Name Tag button in the infobar of the Selector Tool.



This will open the **NAMES** dialog.



- ▶ Enter a descriptive name for the object in the **NAMES** field.



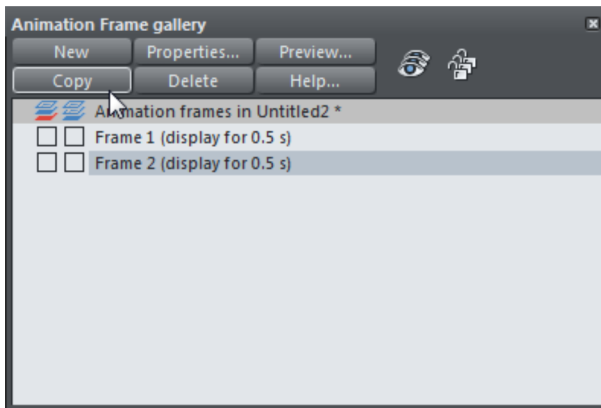
- ▶ Confirm it by clicking **ADD**.
- ▶ Click on **CLOSE** to end the dialog.

Note: You should always name the objects in the first frame so you can simply copy them for other frames. You can also open the **NAMES** dialog at any time to give the objects names.

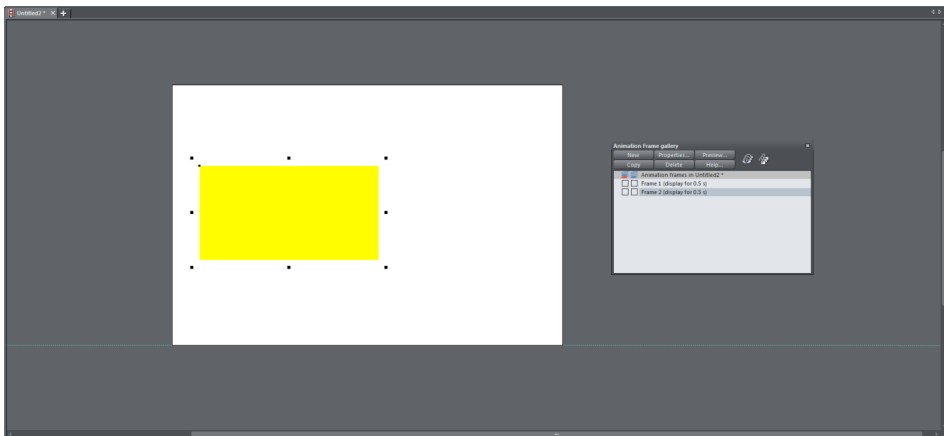
Second Frame

In the second frame we will change the color and position of the object. To do this we will copy the first frame in the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY** .

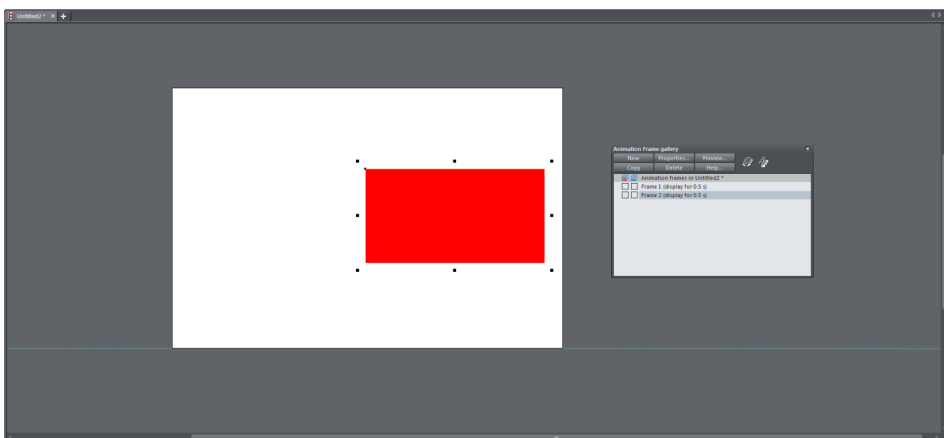
- ▶ In the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY** click on **COPY**.



The second frame now looks exactly the same as the first.



- ▶ Now you can edit the rectangle. Move the rectangle and change the fill color to red.



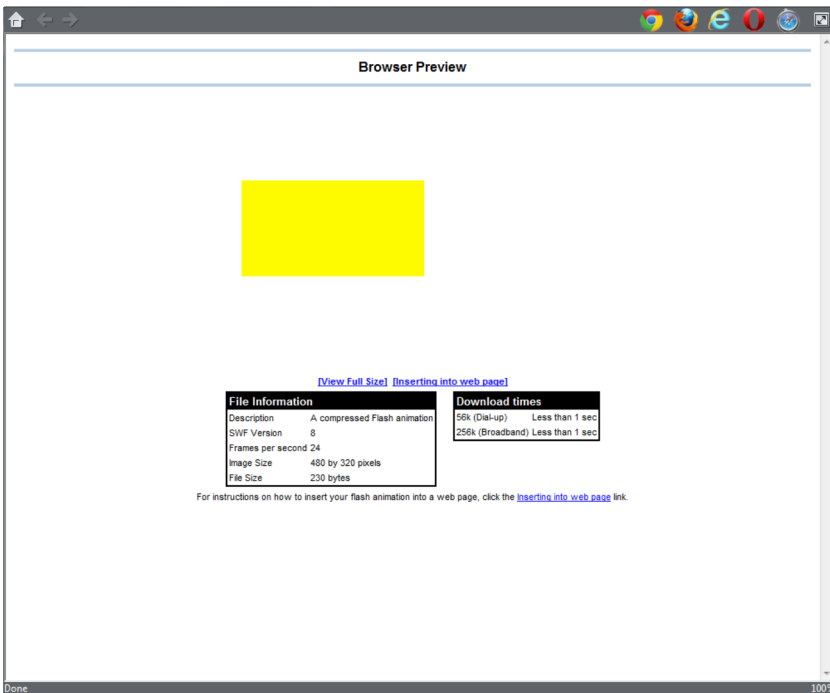
Previewing the Animation

In the upper toolbar there are two buttons for previewing your animation.



The left button is for a preview of an animated GIF and the right button is for a Flash preview.

- ▶ Click on the Flash button to open the preview window.



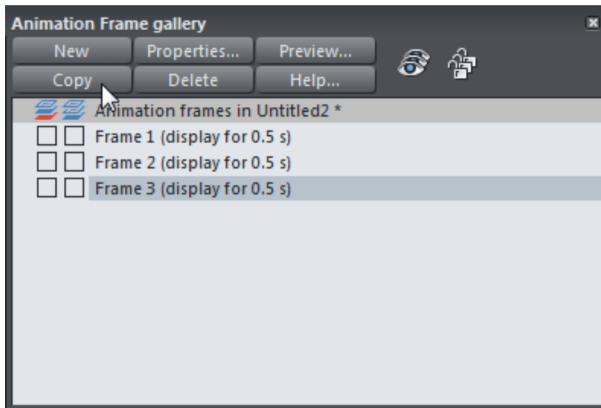
There you will see your animation continuously repeated including the graduated colors.



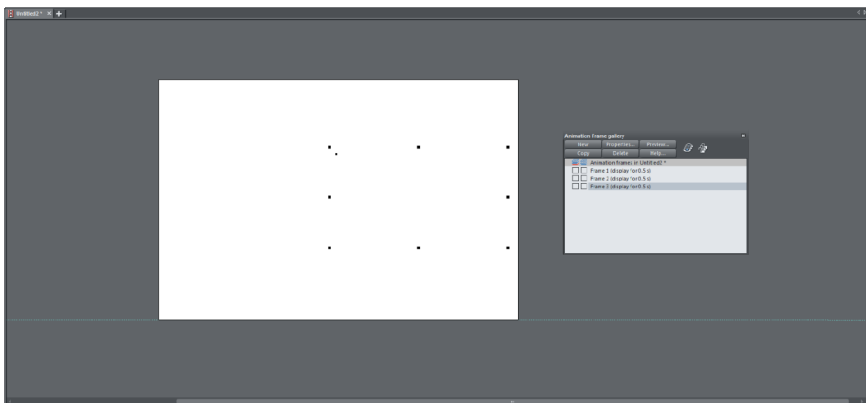
Third Frame

In the third frame the red rectangle should fade out, i.e. become completely transparent.

- ▶ To create this effect, copy the second frame in the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY**.



- ▶ In the new third frame, use the **TRANSPARENCY TOOL** to set the object transparency to 100% (at this setting you will no longer see it).



Now you can use the preview to check the results. The object should move across the screen, change color and then fade out completely.



That's how easy it is to create your first simple animation.

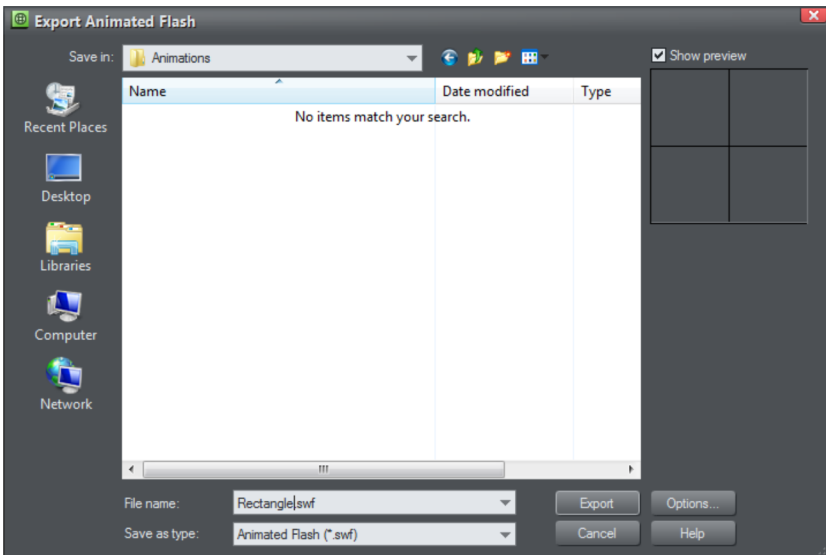
Exporting Animations

The quickest way to export your animations is to use the buttons in the upper toolbar.



The left button exports animated GIFs. With GIFs you only see each frame one after the other without any animation between the frames. The right button exports Flash animations in SWF format.

- ▶ Click on the right button.
- ▶ Enter a name for the SWF file in the dialog.



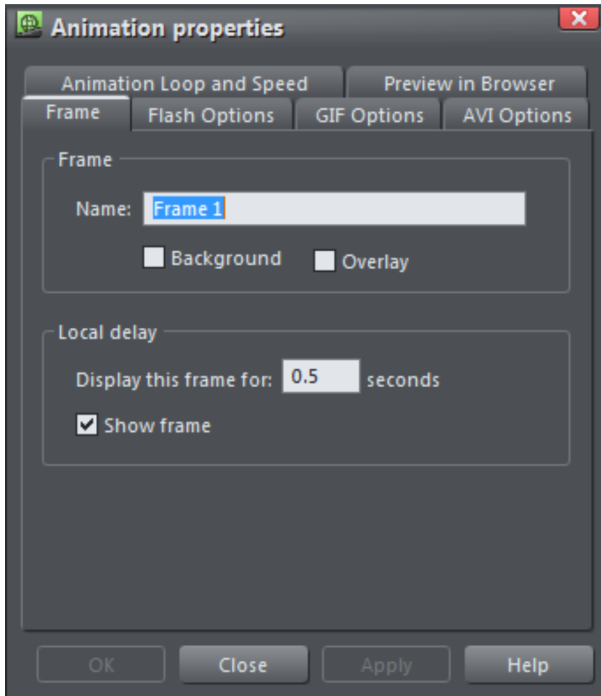
- ▶ Click the **EXPORT** button

The created file can now be used in Xara Web Designer or other website programs. We'll deal more with that later (see page 298).

Further Options in the Animation Frame Gallery

You will find more options for editing the frames by clicking the **PROPERTIES** button in the Animation Frame gallery.

- ▶ First select a frame and then click on **PROPERTIES**.



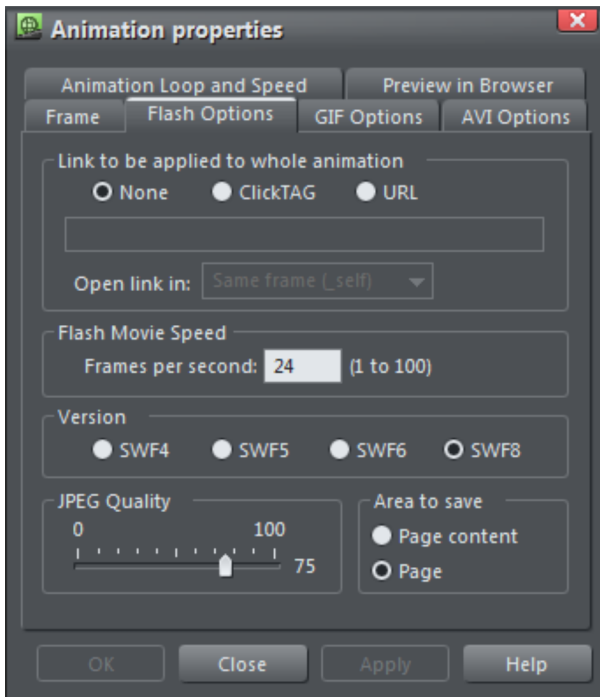
The dialog will open to the **FRAME** tab. Here you can give the frame a name and determine whether the frame should remain unchanged in the **BACKGROUND** during the entire animation sequence. The **OVERLAY** option shows the frame together with the preceding frame for the duration of its display time and then shuts it off.

The **LOCAL DELAY** section is more important because it determines the display time for each frame and controls the actual animation effect.

Flash Options

The next tab is the **FLASH OPTIONS**. This tab is very important if you are planning to export your animation as a Flash file.

Note: The tabs GIF OPTIONS and AVI OPTIONS will be dealt with later on in this book (see page 301).



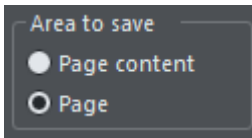
The options under **LINK TO BE APPLIED TO WHOLE ANIMATION** are particularly important for Flash banners. Here you can set a link to an Internet address that can be activated by clicking on the animation at any time during the sequence. In most cases **CLICKTAG** is the best option to select. In Xara Web Designer Premium this will allow you to set an address in your website document that is linked to the animation (see page 298). However, if the address is already permanently set, you can enter it directly using the **URL** option.

In the next section you can set the number of frames per second. In general, more frames per second means smoother movement in the animation, but because the human eye can only perceive 15-20 frames per second, the default setting of 24 frames is most often enough.

In the **VERSION** section you can choose the Flash version (SWF4 to SWF8) that your animation will be saved in. Setting this to **SWF8** normally does not lead to any compatibility problems because this version has been around since 2005 and is now supported almost everywhere.

The **JPEG QUALITY** option is only important if you include photos in your animation. The default setting of 75 normally offers the best compromise between file size and

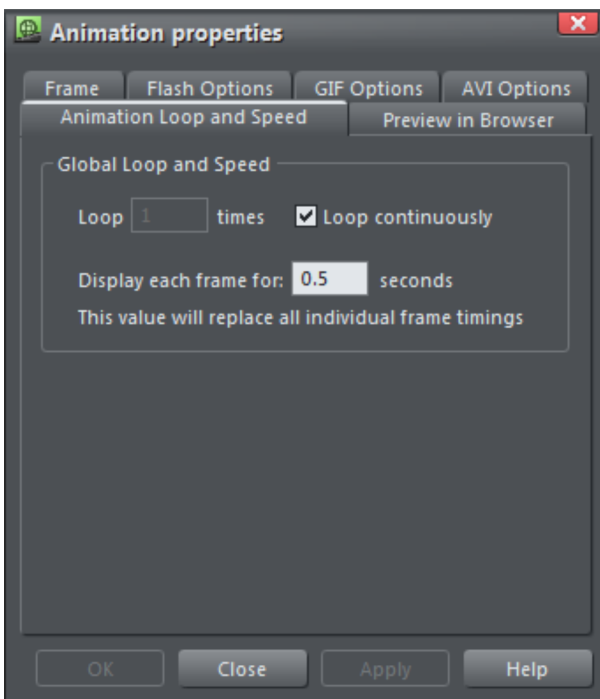
quality. However, if you are not satisfied with the quality, you can make further adjustments manually.



The options under **AREA TO SAVE** are also important. If you select **PAGE**, the entire white area will be exported. Most often this is not the best option because the Flash animation will then take up too much space. To reduce the animation to its objects, it is better to select **PAGE CONTENT**. When the animation is exported, this will remove all of the areas that do not have objects.

Animation Loop and Speed

In the **ANIMATION LOOP AND SPEED** tab you can set the number of times the animation sequence will be displayed.

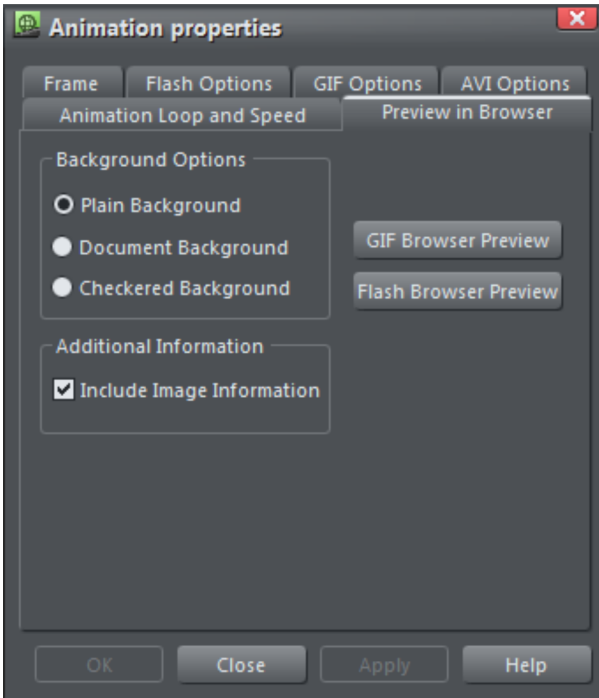


Here you can select **LOOP CONTINUOUSLY** to repeat the sequence endlessly, or you can set a specific number of times that the animation sequence will be displayed. To set a specific number of loops you first have to deactivate the option **LOOP CONTINUOUSLY**. In this tab you can also set a frame length that will be applied

universally to all frames in the animation. You should only use this option when all of the frames should be the same length.

Preview in Browser

PREVIEW IN BROWSER is the last tab that is important for Flash animations.



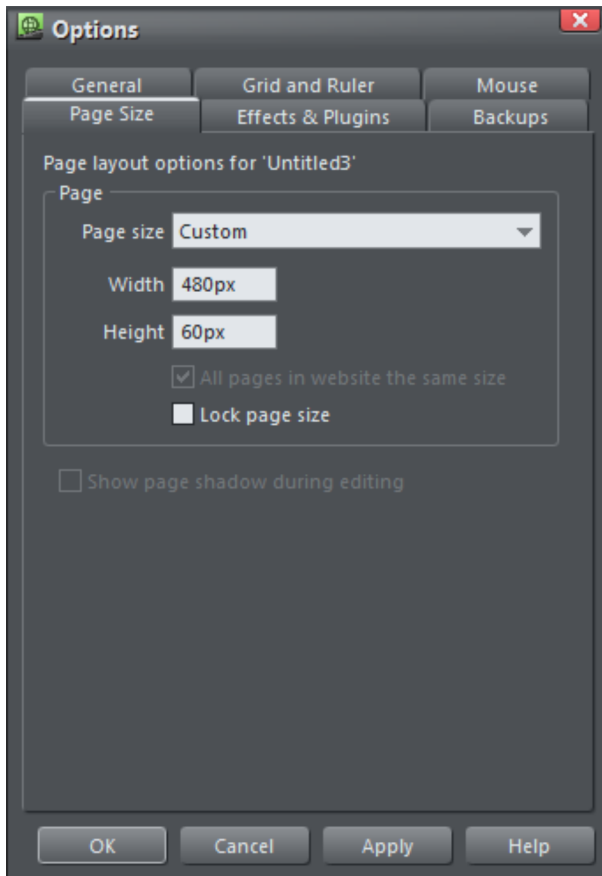
However, the options here only apply to the preview of the animation in a browser (see page 280). You can set the background for the animation and determine whether Xara Web Designer Premium will present additional information about the animation during playback, e. g. file size etc.

Creating a Flash Banner

Now we will take a look at a very practical and common application - Flash banners. Banners are most often used for advertising purposes. They can be embedded horizontally and vertically on website borders (most often at the top or on the right side). For our example we'll assume that a company wants to design a banner that will be integrated into a website.

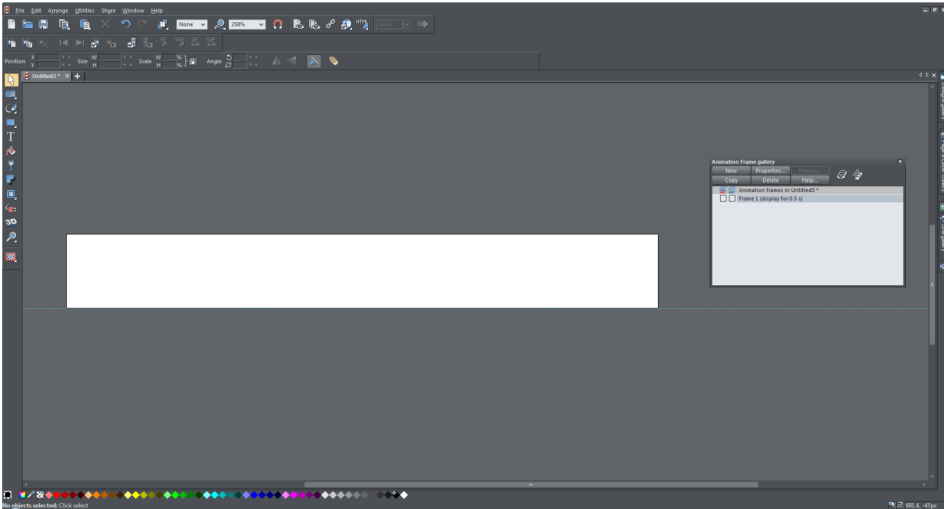
Adding a Document

- ▶ First open a new animation document by going to **FILE > NEW > ANIMATION**.
- ▶ Now open the **PAGE OPTIONS...** in the **FILE** menu.



- ▶ In the Page size option select **CUSTOM** and set the **WIDTH** and **HEIGHT** that the banner should have. For our example we'll set the size to 480 x 60 pixels.

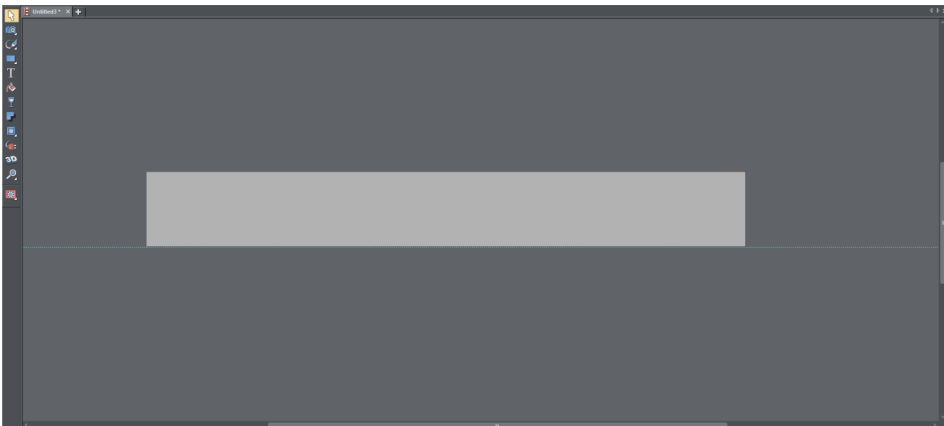
Note: An exact page size is not necessary because we want to have objects flying in from the outside of the image.



Empty banner document in the first frame

Creating the Background

The first step when creating a banner is to set the background frame. Next you should decide whether the animation will be displayed on a transparent background or a specific color. If you want a colored background, you should now draw a colored rectangle that covers the entire area of the document.



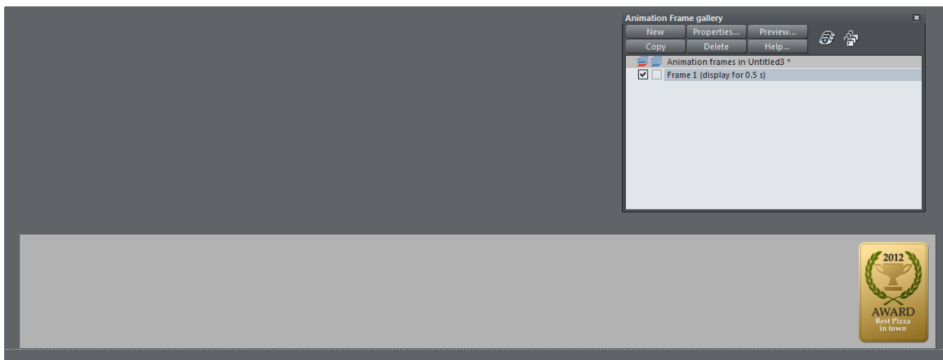
Grey rectangle as background

The background will often also consist of objects. To keep things simple here we'll use this "Award" graphic from the **DESIGNS GALLERY** and place it on the right side of our banner.

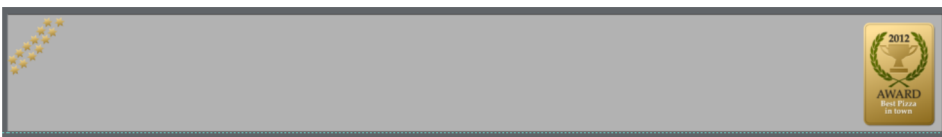


Feel free to use any graphic or photo you like.

- ▶ Reduce the size of the graphic and position it on the banner background.

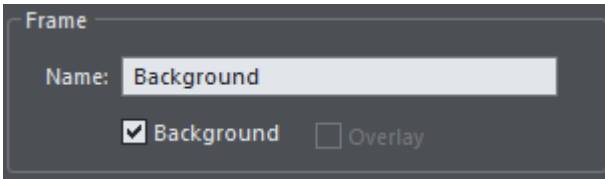


You can add other elements in the same way if you want.



Finished banner background

- ▶ In the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY** click on **PROPERTIES**.
- ▶ In the **NAME** field enter the name "background" and activate the **BACKGROUND** option.



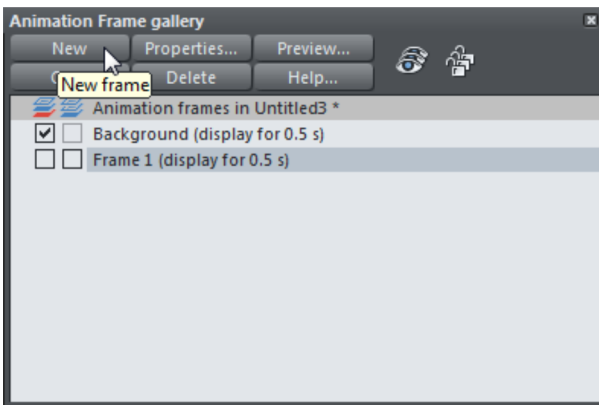
- ▶ Click **OK** to close the **ANIMATION PROPERTIES** dialog.

The background will automatically appear in each frame.

Flying Text into the Image

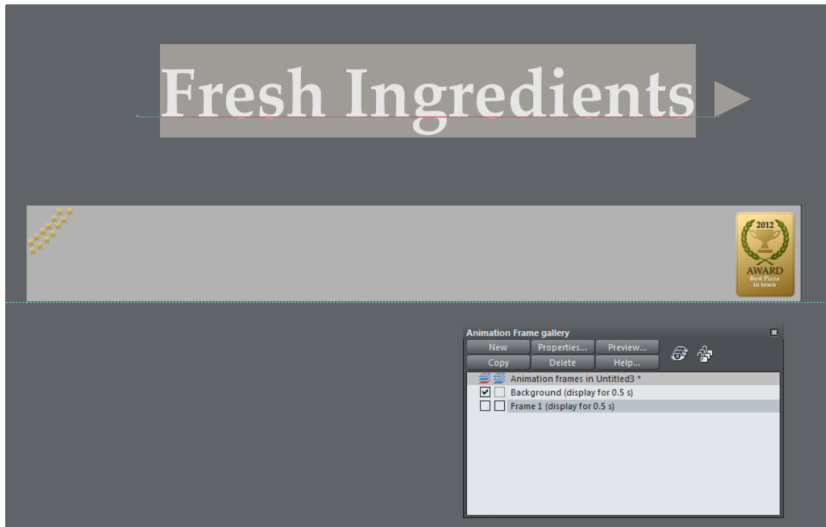
A typical kind of animation for banners is text that flies in from one side, remains in the middle for a short time and then flies out the other side. Now we want to create this type of animation for our example.

- ▶ Go to the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY** and click on **NEW** to create the first frame.

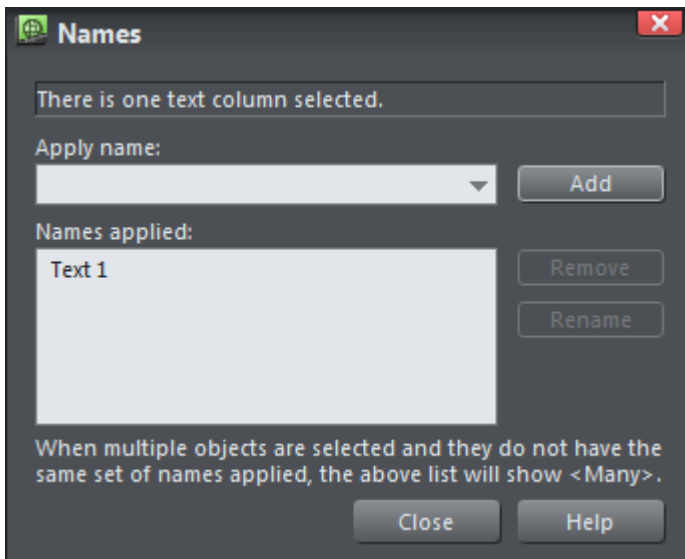


- ▶ If the frame is not named automatically, click on the **PROPERTIES** button to enter the name "Frame 1".

- ▶ Now use the Text Tool (see page 33) to create the text that will fly into the image and position it outside the background area. Make sure it is the right size, color and font.



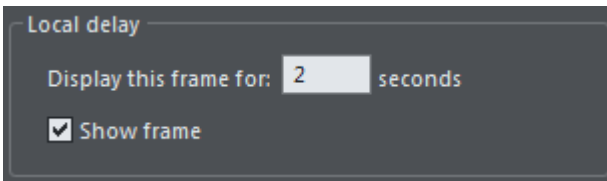
- ▶ Switch to the Selector Tool and select the text object.
- ▶ Now click on the name tag button in the info bar and give the text object a descriptive name in the NAMES dialog. Then click on ADD to confirm it



- ▶ and close the NAMES dialog.
- ▶ Copy the frame in the ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY.
- ▶ Move the text so it is positioned on the banner.



- ▶ Go to PROPERTIES and open the options for the second frame. Enter a display time of at least 2 seconds so that the text remains in place.



- ▶ To make the text remain in position for 2 seconds you have to copy the frame without changing the position of the text. Frame 3 looks exactly the same as Frame 2.
- ▶ The display time for Frame 3 should be reduced, e. g. to 0.5 seconds.



- ▶ Copy the frame again and move the text to the outside of the image for the fourth frame.



If you activate the preview you will see how the text flies into the banner, remains there for a few seconds and then flies out again.



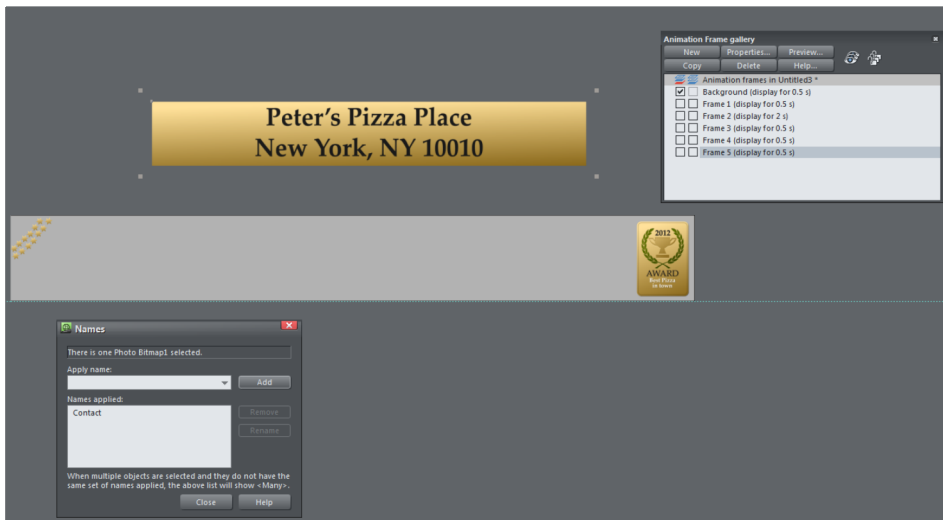
You can repeat these steps as many times as you want for each text that will appear on the banner.

Closing Animation

To close the animation it is a good idea to use an effect that is quite different than the preceding images. In our example a business card should fly into the banner and then slowly fade out.

- ▶ First, create the object that will be the closing image for the animation in a new frame and name it.

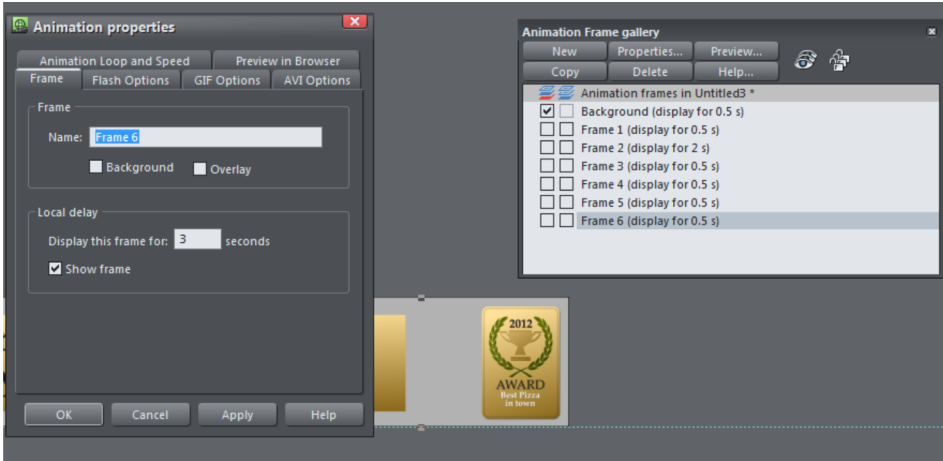
Note: For the transparency effect to work, the image used here must be a bitmap. If you create the object at this point, you can export it (e. g. as a JPEG or PNG) import it back into the document.



- ▶ Copy the frame and move the object onto the background in the new frame.



- ▶ In **PROPERTIES** set the display time to a few seconds and then copy the frame.



- ▶ Copy the last frame again so you can create the closing animation.
- ▶ Set the transparency for the closing object to 100%.

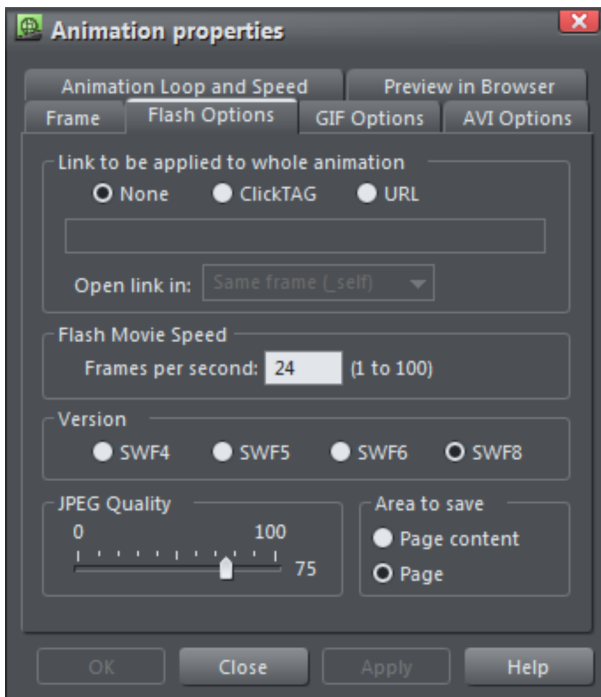


The animation is now complete.



Preparing the Link

Normally a banner is meant to make visitors aware of a special offer that is available somewhere else on the website. For this reason it only makes sense that the visitor should be able to click on the banner to go to the page with the special offer. To create this link we need to go to the **FLASH OPTIONS** tab in the **ANIMATION PROPERTIES** dialog.



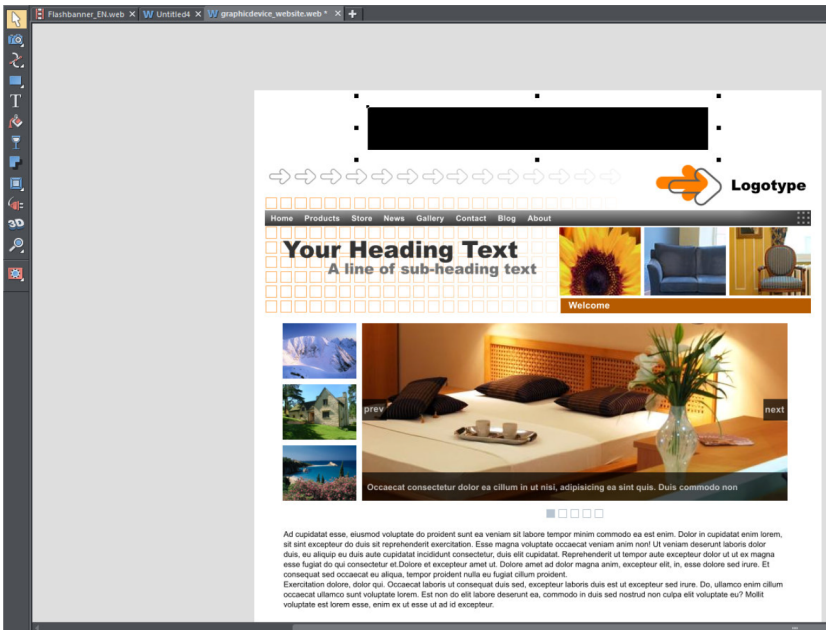
If you already know the exact address for the banner, click on **URL** and enter it in the field. In all other cases select the option **CLICKTAG**. This allows you to enter the URL retroactively in your website document.

- ▶ When you are finished, export (see page 282) the animation.

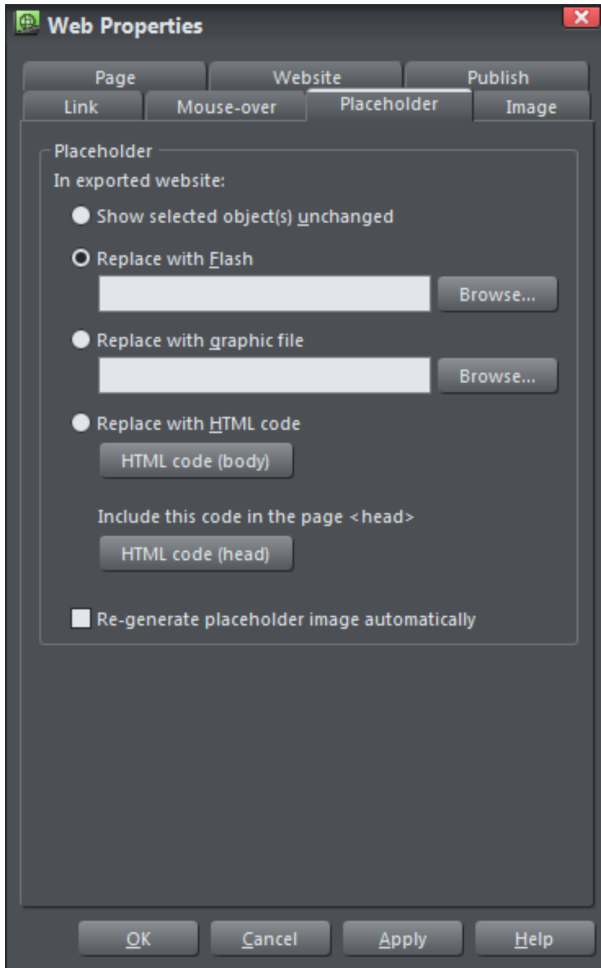
Using Flash Banners in Xara Web Designer Premium

In Xara Web Designer Premium Flash banners can be embedded using the placeholder function (see page 261). This means that you must first create a placeholder which will later be replaced in the finished website by the banner.

- ▶ Create a rectangle on your website with the dimensions of your banner.

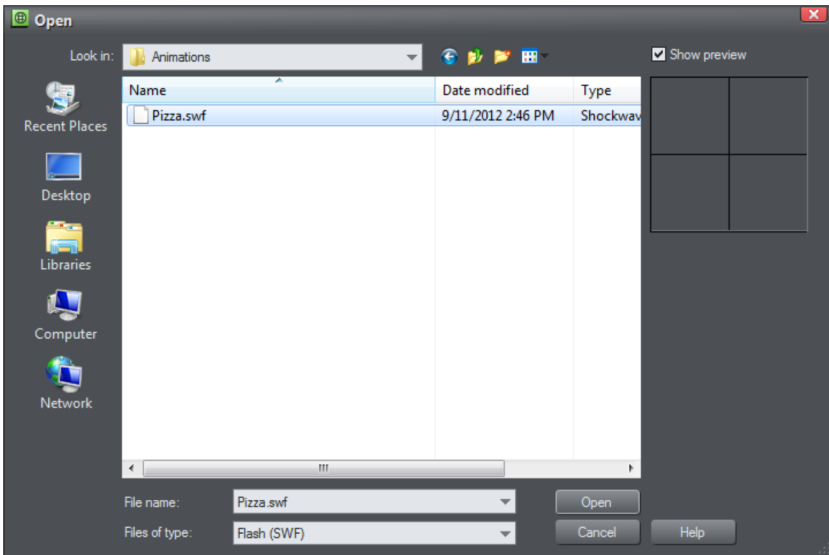


- ▶ Now go to **UTILITIES > WEB PROPERTIES** to open the **WEB PROPERTIES** dialog and then open the **PLACEHOLDER** tab.

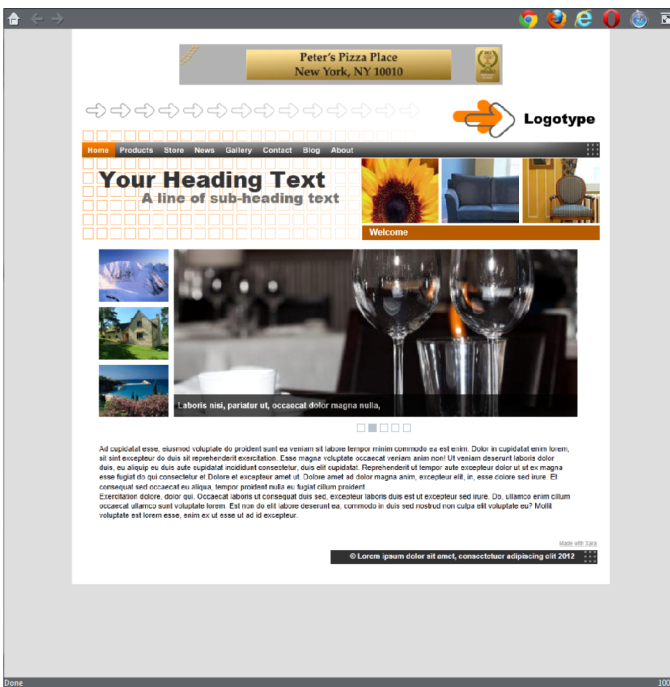


► Under REPLACE WITH FLASH click on BROWSE.

- ▶ Select your Flash file in the dialog.



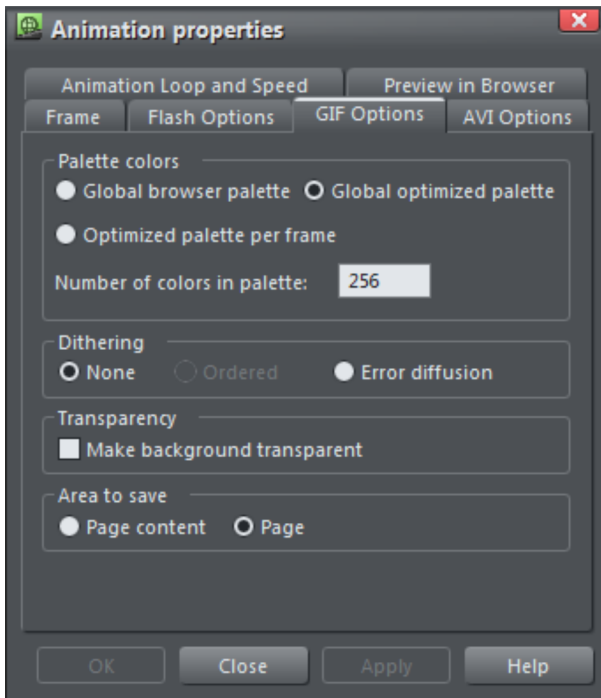
- ▶ If necessary, switch to the LINKS tab and enter the address of the page that the animation should link to. (This step is only necessary if you selected the CLICKTAG option.)
- ▶ Close the Web Properties dialog and check the results in the browser preview.



Animated GIFs

Animated GIFs are basically graphic files in GIF format which consist of several images that are displayed one after the other. Despite what the name implies, objects in animated GIFs cannot be automatically animated. For banners this is not really a disadvantage. You only have to be sure when creating them that each frame is displayed exactly the way it looks in Xara Web Designer Premium. This means that frames without any content should only have a very short display time.

There are special settings options available for GIFs in the **PROPERTIES** dialog in the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY**. You will find these in the **GIF OPTIONS** tab.



In the **PALETTE COLORS** section you can determine which colors will be used and how many. If you select the option **GLOBAL BROWSER PALETTE**, only standard colors will be used. The GIFs will appear less natural but the file size can be kept relatively low. A good compromise is the **GLOBAL OPTIMIZED PALETTE** option. Xara Web Designer will then save the colors that are most often used together with the GIF. If you select the **OPTIMIZED PALETTE PER FRAME**, the GIF file size can get very large but the advantage is that these GIFs look the best.

DITHERING ensures that the color transitions are smoother. This is particularly important for color gradients. Feel free to try out the various options to find out which one produces the best results when exported.

TRANSPARENCY can be activated to create a transparent background. As with Flash, you can also choose whether the entire **PAGE** or only the **PAGE CONTENT** will be saved during export.

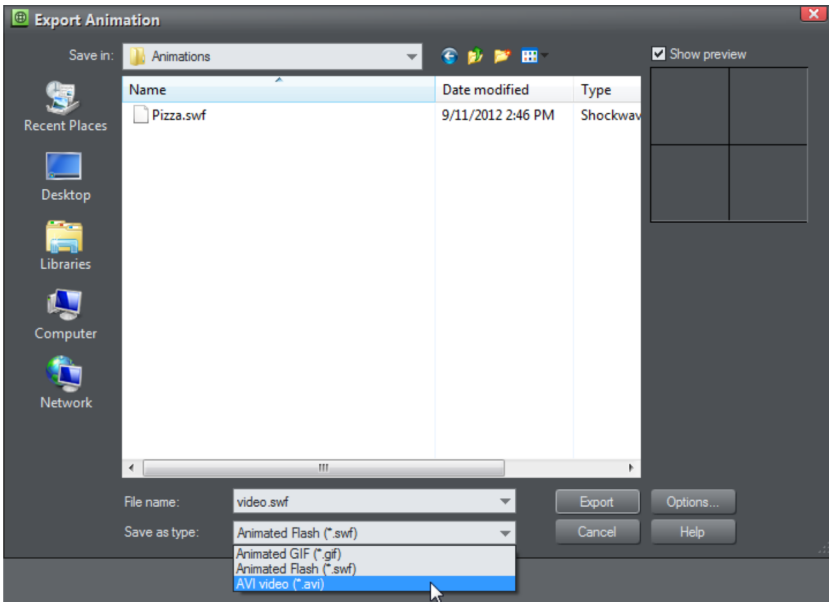


To export an animated GIF you can use the button in the upper toolbar or go to **FILE > EXPORT ANIMATION...**

AVI Export

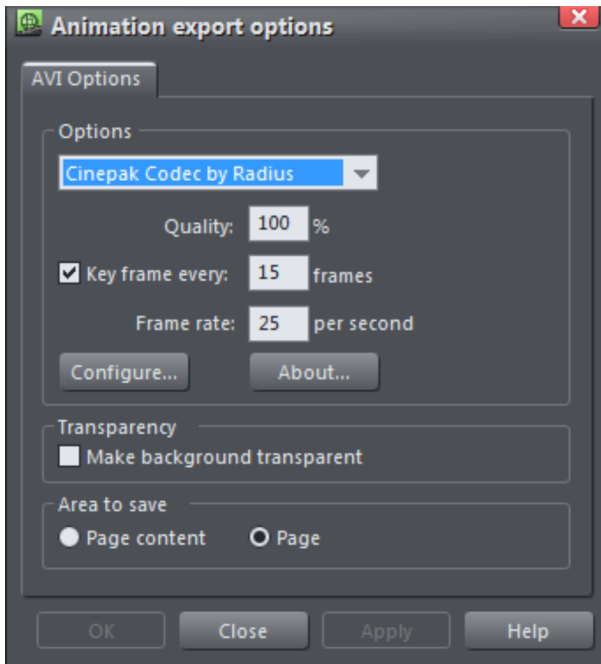
You can also export animations as AVI video files. However, you should keep in mind that Xara Web Designer Premium is not a video program. In other words, if you want to produce an impressive video, you should use real video software such as **MAGIX Movie Edit Pro**.

AVI files can be exported through **FILE > EXPORT ANIMATION...**



In the **EXPORT ANIMATION** dialog select the format **AVI VIDEO** as the **SAVE AS TYPE**.

There are other settings available under **OPTIONS** which you will also find in the **AVI OPTIONS** tab in the **ANIMATION FRAME GALLERY**.



Here you can set the video codec (the default is **CINEPAK CODEC BY RADIUS**), determine whether the animation background should be transparent, and choose the area to save, i.e. **Page content** or **Page**.

The exported video can be viewed in any video player, e. g. **Windows Media Player**.