

Getting Started Guide
Acquire 3.7



Introduction

Thank you for choosing Acquire.

Acquire and its associated plugins and services have been developed over many years to provide a fully customisable system to playback exciting, media-rich content on your players, whether for Digital Signage or Interactive Kiosks. This Getting Started guide will lead you through the steps of putting some of your content together, making some areas interactive, putting into a playlist, and finally deploying it to a remote player.

If you just want to use Acquire in as simple a way as possible and are using the PLUS! network, view the Quick Start guide to put some pages together from your content and deploy them using the Scheduler, but note that we still recommend taking a read through this guide or the Acquire User Manual when you have a few minutes to get a better understanding of some of the other features you may be missing out on.

Of course, Acquire is one of the most powerful content management solutions available, and if you want to use it for more than shown in this Getting Started Guide, we recommend having a training session or taking out a support contract through ourselves or one of our resellers.

Another method is by attending one of the regular webinars, or visiting the customer forum and asking one of the developers or another user. The forum and other interesting information is available by visiting the Acquire website (acquiredigital.com) and choosing the users login. The usernames and passwords should have been provided to you by your reseller with this disc). If you need to understand some of the features of Acquire further, there are sample projects and content available on the users' area of the website.

Finally, before we start, we welcome your feedback, both good and bad... Again, on the users' area of the website you will find a feedback form to tell us about problems, or even to suggest new features for the next version.

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Contents</i>	3
<i>Understanding Your Version</i>	4
<i>Installation</i>	5
<i>Licensing & Registration - Editor</i>	6
<i>Licensing & Registration - Player</i>	7
<i>PLUS! Network Activation</i>	8
<i>Your First Project - Introduction</i>	10
<i>Starting the Project</i>	12
<i>Making Pages</i>	14
<i>Making a page</i>	14
<i>Adding Media</i>	16
<i>Controlling Media Playback</i>	18
<i>Adding Text</i>	21
<i>Page Settings</i>	25
<i>Previewing the page</i>	26
<i>Adding Page Plugins (ACQs)</i>	28
<i>Putting It Together</i>	29
<i>Creating Playlists</i>	31
<i>Advanced Playlist Rules</i>	33
<i>How Not To Use The Page Designer</i>	35
<i>Sub-Playlists</i>	36
<i>Auto Line Entries</i>	37
<i>Scheduling Content & Deployment</i>	39
<i>Integrity Checker and Flowchart Editor.</i>	39
<i>Configuring The Player</i>	40
<i>The Sentinel</i>	41

Understanding Your Version

Acquire has different options available, depending upon the layout of your installations. The current versions are shown below. Most versions are Editor/Player versions (sometimes known as a client/server solution), whereby a single central location does the setup work, then sends the updates to the remote players. Other versions provide more simplistic levels of control, as they are either for website control of players, or in the case of Solo as a stand-alone player unit with no need for an editor.

Acquire Premier Editor Suite	Fully featured package, includes all features for kiosks and digital signage. Editor / Player system.	Includes Manual, Point2Point and PLUS! Network deployments.
Acquire Editor Suite	Same features as Premier, but includes just two plugins (RSS and Slideshow). Additional plugins can be purchased if or when needed.	Includes Manual, Point2Point and PLUS! network deployments.
Acquire SOLO	Special stand-alone version of Acquire includes a player with its own built-in web server. Accessible by another computer on the LAN, this can be used to edit playback by a web browser – no need for an editor.	No need – everything on one player.
Signage2Go	SaaS (Software as a Service) on-demand version of Acquire. Editor is web based.	Deployments are made via hosted web servers, to an installed player on the Signage2Go Network.

Note that all of the versions are interoperable i.e. one version can work side by side with another and all versions can be upgraded to add extra features, and other plug-ins can be purchased if not available to extend the functionality if required. More information is available on the Acquire website, or by pressing 'plugins' on the editor software.

This guide is designed for the Premier version of the software, but can also be used for the Lite versions. Where appropriate, the section specific to each version of Lite will be shown, as it may not be appropriate to your version.

Installation

To do everything in this guide, including deploying your updates to a player (as you would in real life), you will need to install both the Acquire Editor software on a PC you will be using to control your players from, and a copy of the Acquire Player software on another PC which will act as the player unit. It is recommended that the player PC be specific for the task (i.e. ideally, do not use a work laptop, and ensure that there are no unnecessary tasks running such as Windows Messenger, update applications or virus killers). This is because as part of Acquire Player, you also get a security application known as Sentinel. This Sentinel application is designed to secure your remote players to prevent hacking, and to automatically report any problems to you if you are using the PLUS! Network.

Hint:

If you need to temporarily unlock the secured Player PC, all you need to do is plug in a keyboard and press the keys for the password you chose whilst installing the player, and starting with the ESC key. For example, if you chose to use the default password, you would press the keys ESC S E N T I N E L. This will invoke the Sentinel interface and will temporarily restore the player PCs operating system. Note that when you press ESC, no password box will show (although the Acquire one may appear), and if you mistype or type too quickly or too slowly, just press ESC and start again.

If you just want to 'play' with the software and get used to its features, you can opt just to install the Editor software as this also includes a single copy of the player software to allow you to preview content exactly as it will be on the player unit. There is no need to separately install the editor AND player on the same machine.

To install either piece of software, run the executable file from your CD or the files you have downloaded, being careful to follow the instructions on the email which you will have received. If you have not received instructions on how to install the software then refer to the Acquire User Manual or contact your reseller or account manager. From the CD, the installation should start automatically. If it does not you may have, you may need to use Windows Explorer (press Start then programs, and find Windows Explorer) to browse the CD and run Setup.exe. The installer program has a number of steps to install the software, and includes a number of license agreements from our authorised partners for the playback routines you must accept for the installer to work correctly.

Note that you can install Acquire on either a Windows XP based PC, Windows Vista or Windows 7 based machine. However, in both cases you must ensure that your user account has the correct level of access rights to allow Acquire to write to certain system folders such as 'Program Files' (typically Administrator or Power User access). If you are not sure how to do this, please contact the person who administers your computer(s). When installing on Vista or Windows 7 machines, Acquire may recommend an installation folder for you that should work correctly without having to adjust User Access rights. Note also that if using Acquire on Vista, Acquire will automatically turn off Aero features to conserve computer resources and restore them after playback, and we would recommend that you should use Windows XP, XP Embedded or Windows 7 Embedded on your players or manually turn off Aero to save time and resources.

Licensing & Registration - Editor

After installing the Editor software, you may need to reboot the machine to allow any drivers and services to start. When the machine has rebooted, you will find a new folder in the Start menu called Acquire Editor or Acquire Premier Editor. If you have a license key then you will be asked for it when you run Acquire. If you have been supplied a security key (or 'dongle'), insert it now. After a few seconds it will glow to show it is ready. To use the Editor, choose Acquire Premier Editor (or Acquire Lite editor if this is the version you installed). If you do not have a security key, the software will ask you to insert it now or select a license file. Browse to your supplied license file to choose it and license the Editor. If you have neither a security key nor a license file, please email support@acquiredigital.com

Once the Editor has been licensed you will be asked to register your software. This allows us to provide you with software updates and also, upon registration you will be supplied with a username and password to access our user support area of the website. Complete the forms to register.

Once you have registered, and before you start using the software, make sure you install any updates that may have been released. The software should do a check for you automatically upon start-up, and you can check at any time by pressing 'update' from the main menu,

Licensing & Registration - Player

After installing the player software, the player will restart the PC. When it starts up, it will show the PLUS! Network Activ8 screen. The PLUS! Network is a distributed data transfer and monitoring system which allows you to run small, medium or large networks of players. Using it, you can send updates to all of your players at the same time, as well as receive warnings and alerts, produce play-out reports, and even securely remotely connect to the players to support them. It also includes our dongle-free licensing system that manages the licensing of the players automatically.

If you do not yet have a PLUS! Network account, you may wish to see the benefits of using the PLUS! Network to distribute your content updates and also monitor the players. Visit www.acquiredigital.com for more information.

Hint:

If you are not using the PLUS! network, the USB license dongle needs to be installed. If you are worried about these being stolen, many PCs have internal USB ports on their motherboards (sometimes you require a short cable often supplied with the motherboard) and we recommend the dongle be installed on one of these.

If you choose not to use the PLUS! Network (either for manual deployments or ones directly from your editor to players using the Point2Point feature), you will need a player license key or dongle, that you should have been supplied with for your purchase of the player. Activate the license key following the instructions sent to you via email (contact support@acquiredigital.com if not) or insert the dongle this into a spare USB port now, and reboot the player PC. Once restarted, the Acquire Player software will automatically start.

If you do have a PLUS! Network account then in order to proceed you will need the username and password for a user with rights to commission players on your network. You may also need your IT administrator to assist with configuring the IP address and other network configuration for the player to operate correctly. (see the document 'How to Configure your Network' in the member's section of our website for more information). The whole process typically takes around 1 minute to complete, but may take a little longer the first time.

PLUS! Network Activation

The process detailed below seems quite long and detailed, but is in fact very simple and takes less than 1 minute. Essentially, after installing the software, the machine will reboot and ask you to either Activ8 the player (a short process taking around 1 minute, and requiring both a PLUS! Network account and connection to the Internet), or to activate a license key.

The PLUS! Activ8 software is a simple to use Wizard that guides you through the initial setup of each player. Typically, all of your players will have had Acquire installed (and ideally the hard drive cloned) and be at this stage when your engineer is about to install the player on-site. This is the final step, as it activates the licensing and distribution account on the PLUS! Network, as well as starting a secure link between this player and the network.

The first step of the PLUS! Activ8 wizard requires you to setup the network settings for this PC so that it can both download content from the Internet, and if required setup a route to this player for remote support. If you have not already setup the player PC on your LAN network, press the 'Network Configuration' button now and do so (see the document 'How to Configure Your Network' for more information).

Hint:

If you have many players to install, we can provide you with a configuration file which pre-defines most of the options, and can even be setup to automate the commissioning process. It can also automatically schedule content to the players. Please contact your reseller for more information.

Once the player PC is setup and can contact the Internet, press 'Next' to view the next screen. Here, enter the Username and Password of a user on the PLUS! Network account with rights to commission a player, then press 'Next'. If an error message appears, check that this player has access to the internet, that a valid DNS server is available, and that a firewall is not blocking the outbound ports from the player, and of course check that the username and password you are typing are correct and you have the appropriate rights.

If the details are correct, the Activ8 software will connect to the PLUS! Network and may download updates to certain parts of the Acquire software (this may restart the Activ8 process if it is the Activ8 program itself being updated).

Depending whether or not the license agreements for some key parts of Acquire had been agreed upon installation, you may be asked to agree to them now. Click 'I Agree' to proceed.

Next, you will be asked whether you are commissioning a New Player, Adding Features, or Replacing an old player. If this is your first player, choose 'New Player', and agree to the terms.

Next you may be asked what you wish to commission. If so, choose both the Acquire player, and the Sentinel/Watchdog options before pressing 'Next' to continue.

The next screen is probably the most important screen. It is where you enter some information about this specific player to make it easy to find in your editor later. There are a number of required fields for you to complete (Name, Deploylistion, Location, and Notes). These are all unrestricted and you may type anything that will help you easily identify the player in the future.

The next field (Media Server to use) is only required if you are using a Media Server (typically when more than one player is installed at a site as it will collect the media over the Internet and distribute it to all of the players locally). If you have one installed, it should have been automatically selected, but if not you can manually choose it here.

The next four settings are for the inbound TCP/IP ports Sentinel should listen on for remote support requests. These should have been setup by your IT administrator, so use the details they have setup here (see the document 'How to configure Your Network' for more information). If you do not have these ports at this time, you can leave the default settings because they can be changed later in the Site Manager (although note that the connection test at the end of this wizard will fail, but it is nothing to worry about).

Once you have chosen your settings, press 'Next' to continue to the verification screen, and after checking the information on the verification screen, press 'Next' again to proceed with the commissioning of this player on the network.

You should now see a confirmation message that the player has been successfully commissioned. If you have any errors at this stage, please check the following: Firewall is opened on all required ports, Internet is working, valid username and password, enough free licenses and PLUS! Network accounts available. If you are still experiencing problems after checking these, please contact your reseller or the support contact, or visit the support forum for more information.

The final operation is optional. You can now perform a remote connection test to check that the TCP/IP ports you chose have been correctly routed by your IT administrator to this player from the Internet (remember that this will fail if this routing has not been setup – it will not matter if your Editor and Player PCs are on the same LAN network for your tests, but if this is a player on-site, it will remind you to resolve the issue before leaving site to allow for remote support to occur). After completing this part, the machine will reboot one more time

Congratulations! Your player has now been commissioned on the PLUS! Network, and licensed, and will be playing a welcome image. You can now use the Editor suite to build your project and deploy it to the player.

Your First Project - Introduction

Now you have your systems prepared for deployment, we need to develop your project.

Typically, in your project's lifecycle, there are a number of stages you need to complete to see your content playing on the remote players. To make it easy, we have put the sequence of these as quick access buttons on the Editor Suite's main menu. However, Acquire is very flexible and allows you to start at any stage, even if you just want to jump to the end of the process. If you want to simplify it even further, a simple 'scheduler only' mode is available through the settings window so that only the scheduler is presented.

Unlike many other packages, Acquire has a tiered approach to development, which is possible due to Acquire's extra items called Pages and Playlists(Playlists). These provide much more flexibility than for example digital signage applications where you choose some content, then schedule it to play. Or, with Kiosk applications where the whole content is developed as one single Flash/Director application.

Using Acquire is more like developing a Rich Media website – each component part is kept separate so that you do not have to rebuild the whole thing and resend it, saving time and money, and (as you will see later) making it more flexible.

Using a simple WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) designer you can place media and controls on the screen, but they still remain separate, so once this page layout is made, any changes to the media affect all of the pages using that media automatically. Similarly, with playlists, the playlists can contain pages or other playlists (we call these sub-playlists). If anything changes on one of the pages, or in one of the subplaylists, its change occurs in all of the places that it is used in the playlist. And, finally each player has its own special playlist called a Schedule. This can contain just a single page, or can show a number of them, or show a playlist – this means that any changes to playlists, subplaylists, pages or the media used on those pages is automatically changed in the players' schedules.

Before you start, it is important to think through how you will manage your project as it expands, using a combination of the above features, and others (such as variables, targets and more) so that you can make use of as many features as possible, and maintain a simple to manage network of players.

For this reason, we recommend that you start by making a 'test' project where you can play and try out all of the features in Acquire to see which methods and features suit you best before you actually start making your 'real' project. We have also included on the Acquire website (www.acquiredigital.com and by choosing the users login) some sample content and some example projects with details of how they have been created so that you can quickly learn how to use some of the simple features to get started.

Hint:

Although you can preview the project in Acquire before you send the files to the remote players, it is still a good idea to have a spare player in your office for you to deploy to and see the effects of your changes. Remember that different hardware (including the player and the screen), as well as Acquire's ability for the players to collect 3rd party sources means that the spare player can give you a better feel for how your content will play.

It is important to have enough time to maintain your network and keep it fresh. As your network grows, you may find that one person to maintain it may not be enough. The Acquire Editor Suite contains a number of components. Most of these are used by the Creative team (the 'Schedulers') who will maintain the content on the network, however the part used to support the players, known as Site Manager can also be purchased separately and used by the technical team to maintain the network of players. Contact your reseller for more information.

Starting the Project

To begin with, you need to create a Project. Projects in Acquire are used, to keep content separate and to allow Acquire to send all associated content for a project only to those players 'in' that project.

Start by pressing 'Add' on the main menu.



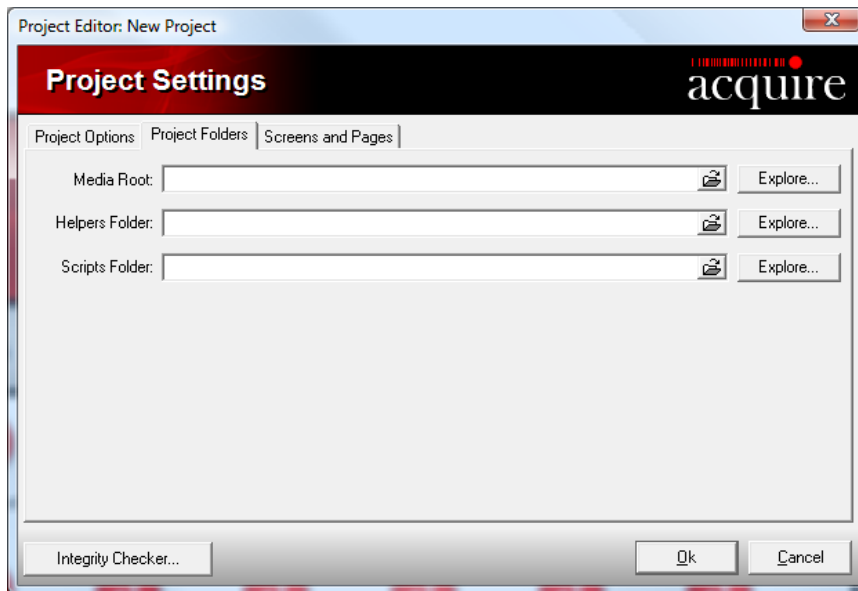
Now you can name the project and choose an image (or use the default one). Images can be a bitmap or JPEG pictures.

For this project, you can if you wish, limit its size of media in use so that Acquire warns you if you reach this limit – ideal if the players have a smaller hard drive or storage medium than the one on this editing machine. Most people do not need to use this option, but if you do, choose an appropriate size here (this should be smaller than the Drive's total capacity to allow for the Operating System, Log files and new Deployment files).

Hint:

The Media Folder is special in Acquire and should only contain files that are 'live' and approved for use on your network (i.e. do not point it at the root folder of your C: drive). Every time you make a deployment, Acquire scans this folder for files to see if any are in use in the deployment and may be new or changed.

You can if you wish to make different projects for different uses, but let them share the same media folder if you need to.



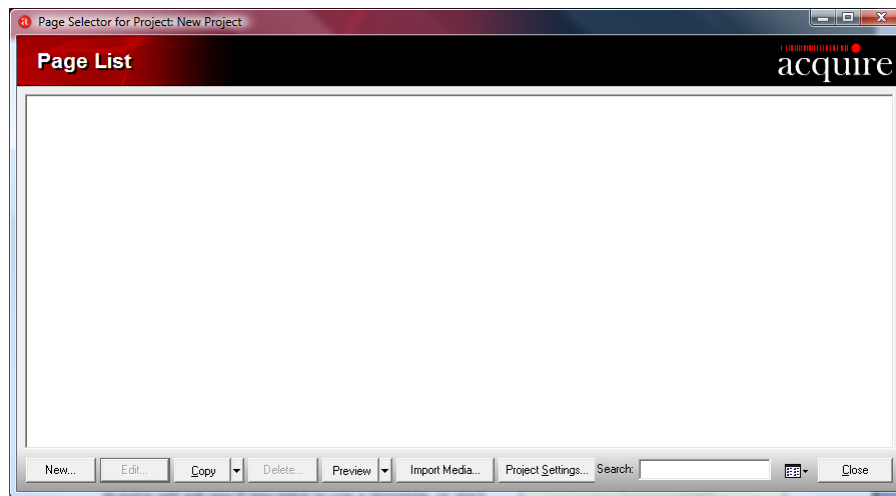
Press the 'folders' tab to select the folders where you will store the content associated with this project. Acquire will automatically create unique folders for you, but you may if you wish choose new ones. Ensure that you choose a different folder for each of the Media, Playlists and Helpers for this project.

For now, you can leave the Project Settings tab, as we will change that later. There are options there to provide 'default' settings for how the system starts up, if you have nothing to display (i.e. as Digital Signage if there is nothing scheduled, or as a kiosk you jump to a non-existent page), and also default page sizes.

Press OK to create your new project.

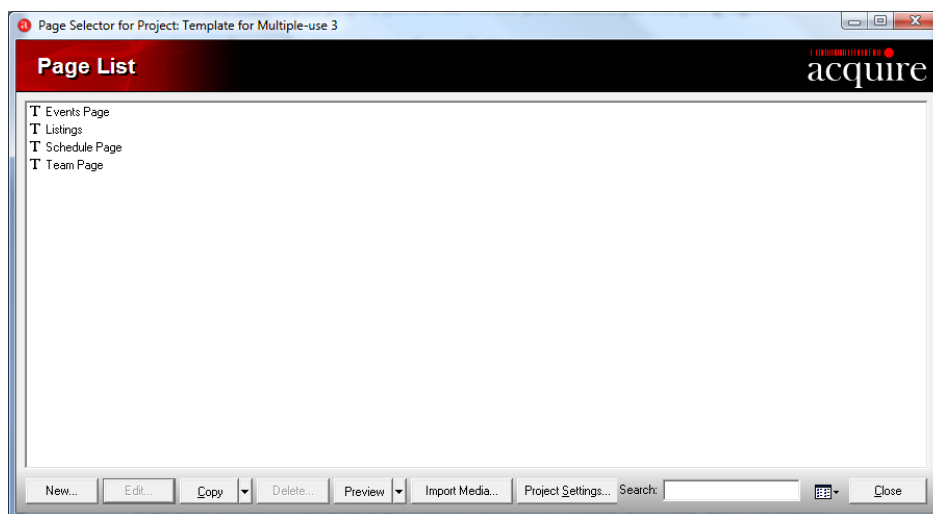
Making Pages

Now you have created your project, you can start to use your media to put everything together.

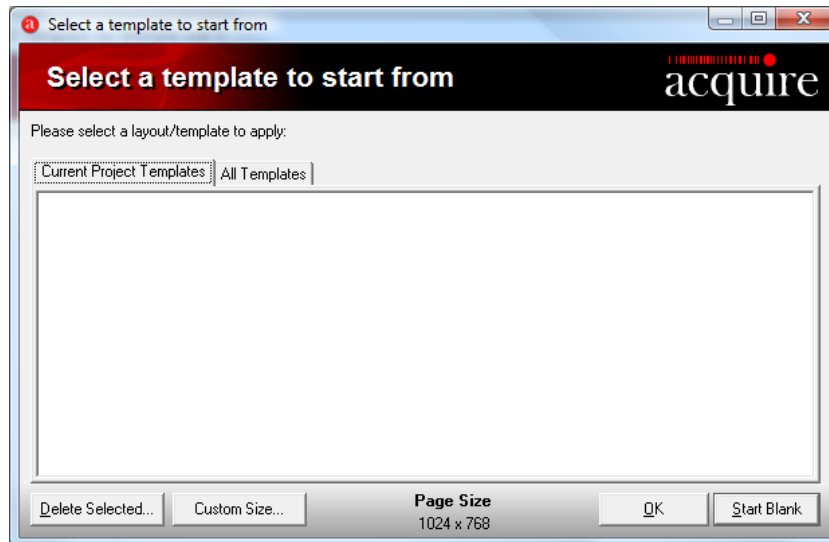


You should be back on the Main Menu, so click the icon of the project you wish to work on, then press 'Pages'. This will then start the Page Editor.

Making a page

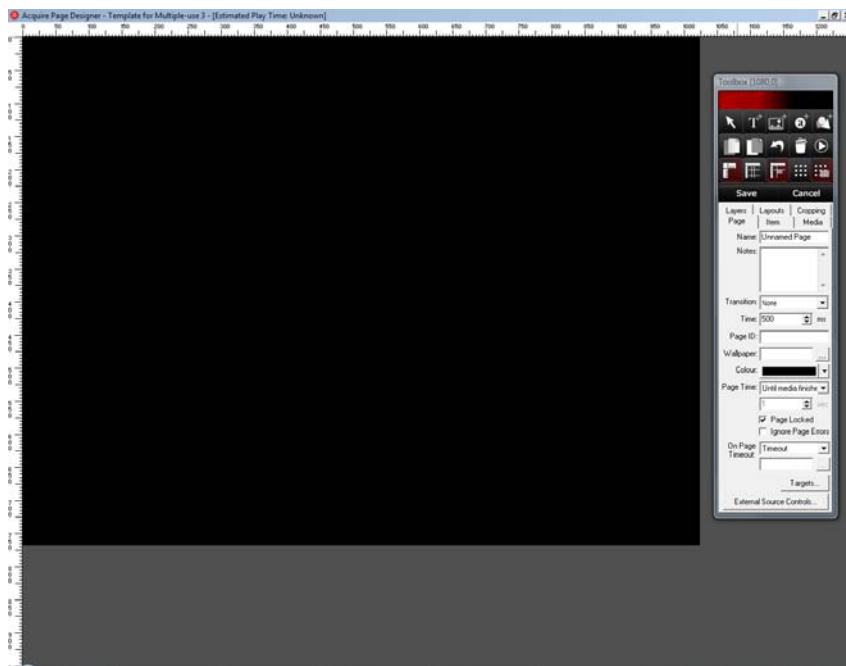


In the Page Selector is a list of all of the pages you have in your project. If you wish, there are options to view this list in a number of different ways, to filter the list to make pages easier to find, or if you are using Premier or Lite KD, you can also view the pages in the Flowchart editor.



For now, you will find that you have no pages yet in your project, so press 'New' to make a new page. At this stage, Acquire will ask you if you want to use a template, or start with a blank page. As you have not yet created any templates, just press 'Start Blank' to start with a blank page.

You will now see the Acquire Page Designer screen. Here you can place all of the items you wish to appear on this page in the correct positions and size, and even preview how it will look and act.



On the left hand side of the screen is the design area, shown initially on black (this background colour is the colour of the page and can be changed on the 'Page' tab), and to the right hand side is a movable control panel. Below the control panel are some controls for the page, items on the page, and more.

Hint:

If you 'lose' a control, by double-clicking on the acquire 'smoke' on the top of the control panel, all of the controls will be re-docked.

Adding Media

These can be left as is (docked to the control gadget), or can be dragged off to other areas of the screen as you prefer.

On the control panel there are a number of buttons that you will use during this demonstration. On the bottom row there are buttons which you may find useful in designing your page. These include; showing/hiding a grid, locking the positions of items to the grid, and showing/hiding guides (these can be dragged from the rulers onto the page for guidance when placing items on the page – they do not show on the actual player). If you would like to use these during the demonstration, you are welcome to do so.

Let's start by adding some content to the Page. Click on the 'Add Media' button and drag an area on the design area. A box will be drawn where you have dragged the mouse and the media tab will be selected. Also the mouse will have become a control tool again so that if you want to move the box around, you can simply click on the media and drag it around, or to resize it you can click on one of the controls around the corners and edges of the media box and drag it to size.

At the moment, you have chosen to place a media item on the page but have not yet chosen what will show. Acquire will automatically determine how to play any of a number of file types (including graphics, video, Flash and sound files) in this space, so you can simply choose the media you wish to play.

Hint:

If you need to have exact positioning or size of any item on the page, click on the 'item' control and type in the X and Y positions and the Width and Height, or simply choose full screen or the media's original size



To do this, make sure that the media control is selected and press the '...' button next to the 'Media:' option. This will show the media selector control, which shows all of the media in your Media folder.

On the top of the media selector are any subfolders you may have created (you can press 'New Folder' to add a new sub-folder if you require), and below this is any media in the chosen folder. Initially there will not be any content in your media folder, so press 'Import Media' to select some. Browse to a location with one of your media files, and select some. Acquire will then copy those files into your chosen folder.

Choose one of the files and press OK. The file is placed into the media item that you made earlier.

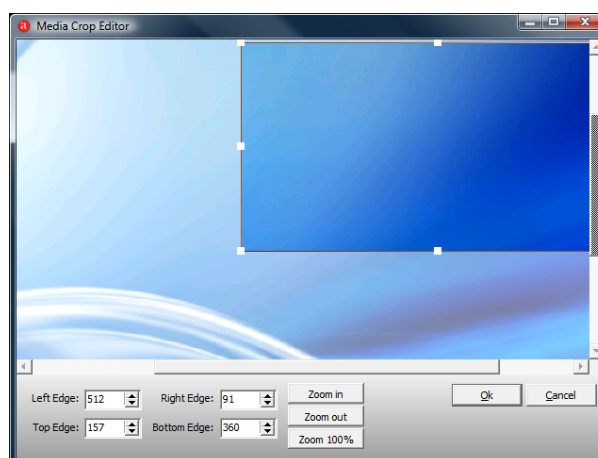
You can do the same thing with up to 1024 items if you wish, but for now, let us finish off making the page.

Controlling Media Playback

Sometimes, media is supplied to you in the wrong format (especially videos that may have a black edge to them known as 'over-scan', or may be in widescreen format when you wanted them to be 4:3 ratio). If the media you chose has one of these problems, you do not usually need to use another application to re-render it (unless it has been supplied in too high a bitrate, making the file size very large).



Firstly, ensure that the arrow is selected in the control panel, then click on the media to select it. Now click on the 'Cropping' control, then press the 'Crop Editor' Button.



Here you can choose the area of the media you wish to display. Note that the size and position of the media item on the page is unaffected, so this effectively acts as a flexible zoom control too.

If the media you chose was a video or audio file, you may also find that the media starts or ends at the wrong position and there is extra content you do not wish to show. Again, Acquire provides you with a tool to edit out these areas.

With the media you wish to edit selected, choose the Media Control, and press the 'Media Options' button.



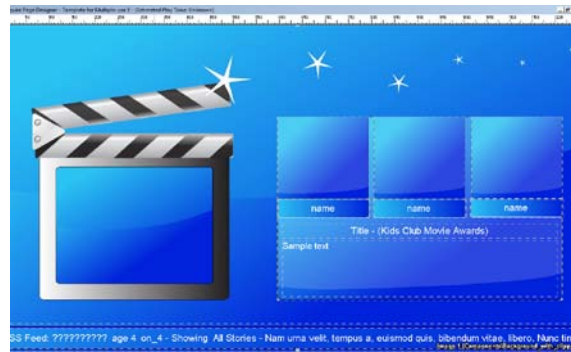
Using the advanced features in the Media Control, you are able to choose Cue Points for the media to play between (note, this does not actually edit the video so the rest of it can still be shown on other pages). If the edit point means that the sound cuts at a bad moment, you can also adjust the volume of the audio to fade in or out, and even change the overall volume of the media to standardise it or cut it out altogether.

You may also choose to not maintain a standard 'square box' look to your media, and instead you may wish to play the media in a shape of your choosing.

By using either a .PNG (with transparency) or .BMP graphic, you can choose a shape for your media to be masked to.

Using a graphics package, make a 2-colour image of the same size and resolution your media item will be (although it can be scaled, it looks better if the same resolution is used). If you do not have a graphics package, some sample masks are provided on the website.

Screenshot with masked media



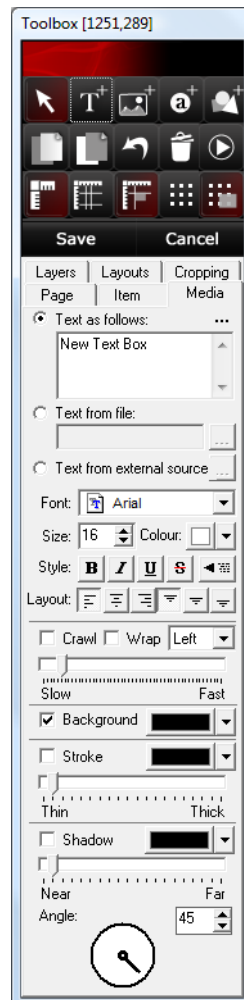
Click on the Media Control, and in the 'Mask Media From Image' section, press the '...' button next to 'File:', use the media selector to import the graphic you have made if necessary and select it.

If you are using a .BMP format image, you may need to choose the colour you wish to be the transparent one by pressing the 'Pick' button.

If you are using a video or audio file, you may choose to repeat the playback of this file on this single page. If you wish to do this, choose the number of times you wish the media to loop in the 'Video Loop Count' at the bottom of the Media Control.

Adding Text

Now let us add some text. Click the 'Add Text' button and drag an area for this item as you did with the media.



You will see now that the media control has automatically been replaced with the options to control text (as Acquire will automatically select the correct control depending upon which type of media items you have selected). There are many choices with respect to how the text is shown, and towards the top of the control you have three options as to where the text comes from.

For now, leave this as is, and click in the box below 'Text as follows:'. Type a short message in.

Also, type in 'The Time is now \$\$_time'. In Acquire, text and media filenames can be exchanged for variables, signified by the \$\$ prefix. These variables can be set in many locations including Flash animations, Helpers, ACQs, within pages, within playlists, within the Scheduler, and even on each player. This is a very powerful way of designing a single page, but using local controls, triggers and events to modify the page to be specific to the local player.

There are also some system-generated variables signified by the \$\$_ prefix (a full list is shown in the appendices of the manual). The \$\$_time variable will (yes you guessed it!) show the time.

Rather like the variables mentioned above, we can also exchange content 'on-the-fly' in another way.

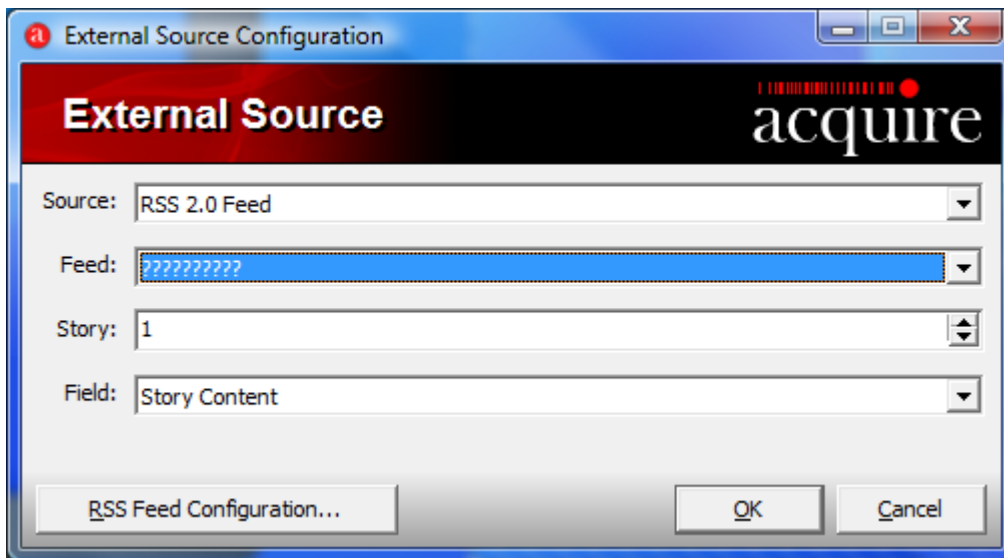
Choose the Add Text tool and draw another text item on the page.

This time on the Media tab, press the '...' button next to the 'Text from external source'.

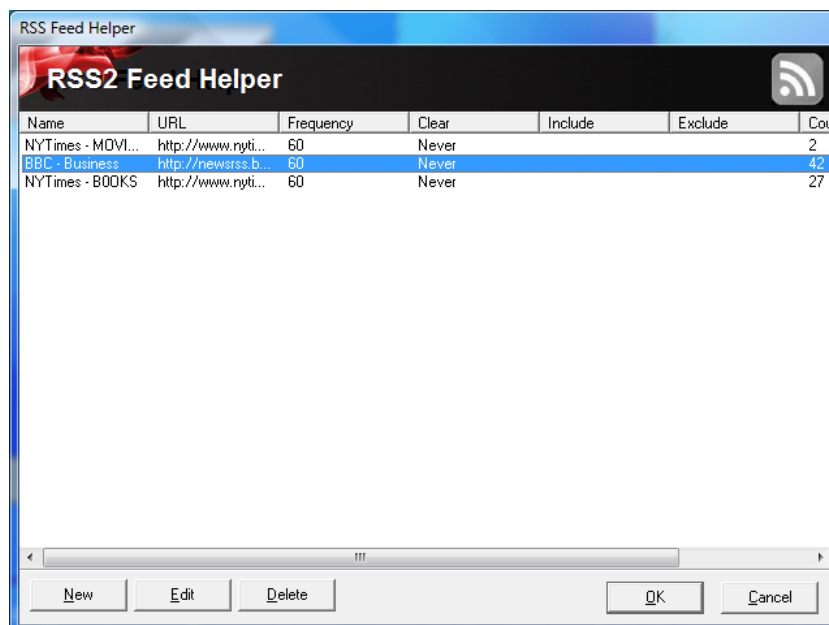
As we have not added any helpers (project plugins) to this project yet (normally this is done through the Project Settings control), you will be asked if you wish to add the RSS helper to this project. Press 'Yes' to install it. All projects have their own copy of helpers installed if you need to use them.

Hint:

Acquire only previews the RSS helper during editing. If you are using any other helpers in your project, you will need to run the Acquire Player to preview your project to see the effect of any helpers you are using.



You can now see the external source control tab. For now, just press the RSS Feed Configuration button.



The RSS Feed helper for each player can be configured using this screen to regularly download RSS feeds from up to 255 locations and store a cached version on each player.

Press 'New' to add a new feed to the list



Hint:

RSS feeds are a great way to make your content look like it is being regularly updated and it makes viewers look at the content more often. You can even make up your own feeds – such as via the MyMessage feature, to allow each site owner to put up their own messages on the pages you choose. Visit the website for more information on the MyMessage facility.

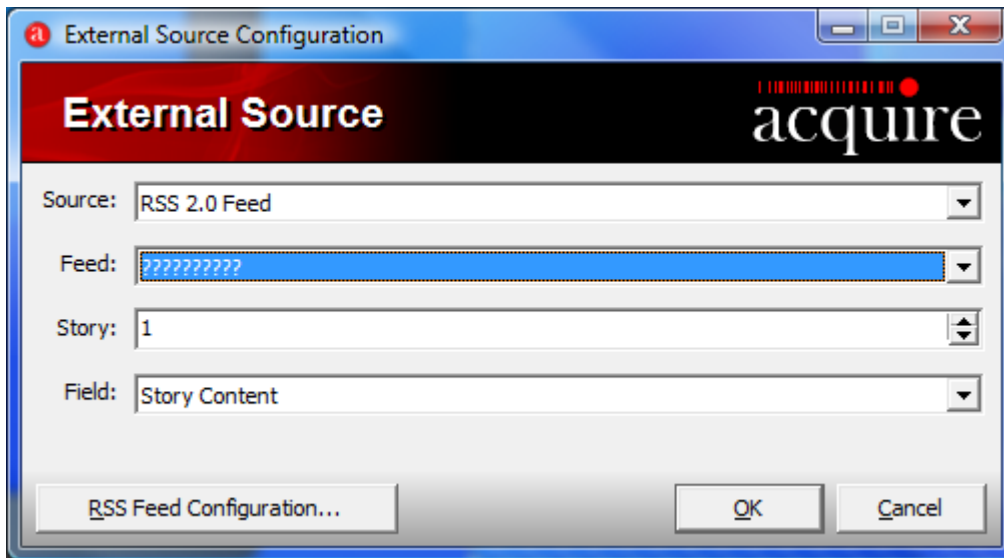
Complete the form to setup the feed. Type a memorable name for the feed, then type in the URL from where the helper can download the feed.

Choose how often the helper should collect the feed – note that many sites do not like to be 'hammered' too often and usually do not actually update their content very often anyway, so every hour or so is usually a good time.

If the feed may contain news items that are not required, you can put a list of words in the exclude and include boxes so that any news items containing those words can either be excluded or included in the subsequently downloaded feed. For instance, if you are subscribing to a general sports feed, but wish to only show the tennis news, you may type in a number of tennis-related words in the 'include' box.

To help you get started, there are a number of preset feeds available to choose from, and you can even add your own here to remember them (note that many RSS feed providers require you to purchase a subplaylistion to them).

Once you have configured this feed, press OK to complete it, and if the feed URL is correct and in a compatible format, on the RSS Helper configuration screen you should then see the count for this feed change to the number of items in the feed. Press OK to return to the External Source controls.



Now that a feed has been setup, you can choose what you wish to display out of the feed. Most RSS feeds provide a Title and Content for each news item, and if media is also provided (typically photos, which you can choose by choosing 'External Source' when choosing a media item), a Displaylistion of the media is usually also provided.

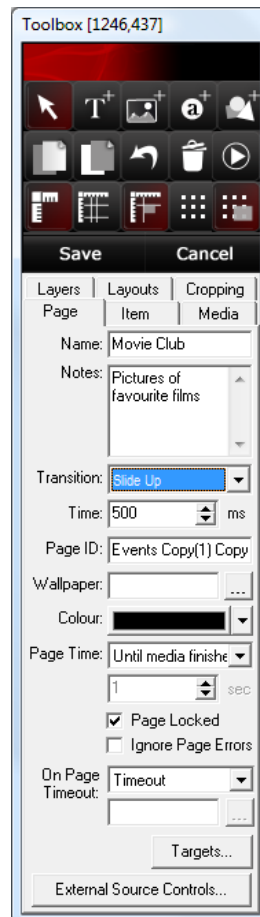
Using the External Source controls, you can choose what part of the feed you wish to show in the text box. For now, choose Story 1, and the Story Title from the feed you configured.

Hint:

If you choose to scroll the text box, you do not need to choose the story or field as Acquire will automatically scroll through the Title and Displaylistion of all of the stories for you.

Page Settings

Now is a good time to preview what you have done so far. Before we do though, we have one final thing to do – tell the page how to behave.



Firstly, select the Page Controls, and we can give the page a name. The Page name can be anything you like to make it easy to remember.

If you need to write yourself a note about the page, do this in the Notes area. If you are using Acquire with multiple users, the user specified for page signoffs may choose not to signoff a page, and if so they will often write notes that you can read here.

You can also choose a transition (and the speed it happens) for this page to appear, and also a coloured background or image to use as a wallpaper (these cannot be changed in the template designer so are a good way to lock these into the templates).

Now the important parts:

The Page needs an ID. This is like the name you gave the page (in fact it can be the same if you prefer), but it has to be unique. Again, this can be any combination of letters and numbers (and some symbols). The reason it has to be unique

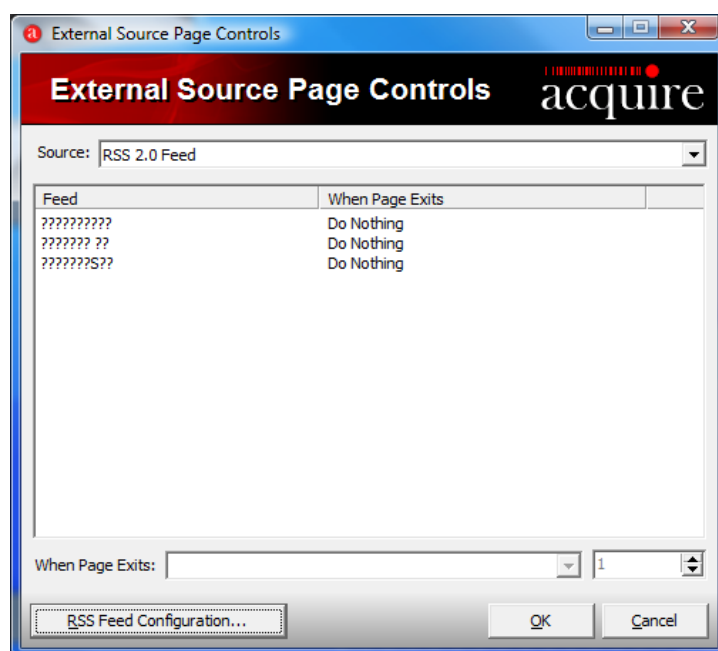
Hint:

If you wish to use it, Acquire has a special link to Flash animations and provides an interface where the Flash can communicate to Acquire and tell it when it has finished, amongst other things. See the Appendix in the manual or the 'How to use Flash in Acquire' documents and sample on the website for more information.

is that you may choose to jump to this page using trigger events, barcode scanners, Helpers or ACQs.

You also need to tell Acquire how long this page should show for. By default the Page Time is for as long as all of the media on the page plays for (if there is more than one piece of media on the page, or media is set to loop, this is the time of the longest one – any media set to loop infinitely will not be counted). Of course, if you are using a video or audio file (both of which have a fixed playtime), this will work fine, although you could still choose to override the play time with a fixed length here. However, if you are using an Adobe Flash animation or an untimed piece of media such as a graphic or HTML page, you will need to choose how long to show the page for otherwise it will quickly show and disappear. Choose 'Time in Seconds' and an appropriate time to show the page for.

Normally Acquire will pre-load all of the media before displaying it. The default setting is to not show the page if any item cannot be loaded (such as a corrupted file or an RSS feed which is not downloaded). If you prefer to still show the page, you can choose to by ticking the 'ignore page errors' control.



Finally, we will change the way that the RSS feed you chose previously behaves. Press the 'External Source Controls' button. Here you can see all of the RSS feeds you may have setup. Rather than making a separate page to show each story in each feed, you can choose to make Acquire automatically move through the stories in each feed.

Choose the feed you setup earlier and then change the option 'when page exits' to your choice of what to do this feed.

Next time this page shows, it will change the order of the stories in the local cached copy of the feed and show a different story.

Previewing the page

Now let us see what you have created. Press the Preview page button.

After a few seconds, the Acquire Player will load and show the page.

In the top corner of the screen is a Toolbox. Whenever you preview in Acquire, this toolbox will provide a number of controls, as well as show to you the logs of everything that happens on the page as it plays.

Note that as you are previewing the page, when the page finishes you will see a 'Page stopped' entry in the log when the page will have finished. All of the media items on the page may continue at this stage but when playing as a project, the page will have quit and the next page will be in view.

Hopefully your page looked as you expected. If not, you can simply click on any of the items on your page and adjust them as necessary.

Adding Page Plugins (ACQs)

All of the items on the page so far have been content which is visual and/or already created, and demonstrates for most people all they need to use Acquire for.

Acquire provides a number of types of plugins, one of which you have already encountered as a helper (such as the RSS helper). Whereas Helpers are project plugins and run in the background all of the time that the Acquire Player is running, there may be times that you wish to do something special when a page shows. In this case, you need to use a page plugin on the page.

Your version of Acquire will be supplied with at least two plugins.

Hint:

Additional plug-ins and features can be purchased at any time via the online upgrade facility. From the Editor main menu, choose 'Extras' then press 'Purchase Features' and follow the online purchase link

As when you were adding some media or text, this time choose 'Add Page Plugin (ACQ Tool)' from the control panel and draw on the page designer where you want the plugin to appear.

Again, the Media Control will have changed to match what you are changing and will show you an option from which you can choose the ACQ you wish to use. Some of the ACQs may be invisible, whereas most of them will display in the item you have drawn on the page.

Each plugin has its own configuration specific to itself, and manuals for all of the plugins can be accessed from within the Acquire Editor software. Page Plugins can be used as triggers either to act upon an external event (such as a button or key-press), to capture data from an external source (such as from a database), to change an external event (like sending data on a serial port), or just to show or control playback of media in a specific way (such as a slideshow, animated text or video)

To demonstrate how you may wish to use a Page Plugin, let us choose the Slideshow ACQ, which is present in both versions of Acquire.

The Slideshow ACQ allows you to display on a single page a series of pieces of media. This can be used as a simple scheduling device if required (although note that Acquire's playlisting capability is much more advanced and should be used for playback of scheduled content).

Choose the Slideshow ACQ, then press the 'Configure Acquire Media' button to modify the ACQ settings.

The Slideshow ACQ has many options (see the Slideshow ACQ manual for more information), but for now, press the Slideshow Editor tab. Add three slides by pressing the 'Add Slide' button. You will see them appear in the list above.

Choose each slide by clicking on it in the list, and then specify the media you will use by pressing '...' next to the Media File option. If the media does not have a time (such as a graphic), set how long it will display for in the 'Display Time' option, otherwise if the media is a video, press the 'wait for media to finish' option to let it play completely.

When you have chosen media for all of the 3 slides, press 'OK' to return to the page editor. Press 'Preview' to see the results.

Putting It Together

Once you have finished editing the page settings, press 'Save' on the control panel to save the page.

You will return to the Page Selector where you can see all of the pages in this project.

Of course, you can have a project with one page in, but you may wish to make many others. Create a few more pages, and especially, we recommend that you create some content and special pages for each project:

- Page Not Found : A page which shows if there is nothing to show – i.e. this is used as a default page to show if you have not scheduled something to play at a certain time, or if you are using Acquire interactively and jump to a page which does not exist. Of course, this could be your logo or a message to an interactive user that something has happened and the system will restart shortly.
- Are You Still There? : If you are using Acquire interactively and one of the interactive pages runs to its allotted time, usually the page will 'timeout'. If this occurs, the 'Are You Still There?' page you define will show, allowing the user to touch the screen or click a mouse /trackball to return to the page and continue using the system., If there is no-one there to touch the screen after a short while Acquire will return to what you have told it to start with.
- Out Of Order : Don't worry - this doesn't mean that Acquire is unstable! However, problems will always occur, from you forgetting to schedule something to play and disabling the Page Not Found feature, to only having one piece of content to play which is incompatible and cannot be played, to a hard drive or memory corruption. In all these cases, rather than a system generated message, Acquire will capture the event and display a graphic of your choice for 10 seconds before automatically restarting to attempt to clear the problem (If this does not work, Sentinel will restart the PC and also send an alert via the PLUS! Network to warn you).

These pages are typically used whether you are using Acquire for Digital Signage or Kiosk use, and you configure these in the project settings. To allow you to preview the project as a whole, either by pressing 'Preview' from the main menu, or by running the player software, these settings will be used rather than the ones from Point2Point or the Scheduler, so let us do this now so you can preview your project correctly.

Choose Project Settings from the Page List, or choose a project in the Main Menu and press Edit.

Choose the Screens and Pages tab in the Project Settings window to see the different options available.

On Startup lets you tell Acquire what to play by default when the Acquire starts. If you are using manual deployments, Acquire will use this setting when it starts (it can be changed in each player's Engineer Screen), whereas when using Point2Point or the PLUS! Network to transfer your content, this setting is used as a default setting if you do not choose any other thing to play for that player.

Hint:

Any Acquire page can be stored as a template to use in this or any other project. Templates allow you to create pages with alternative media but in the same positions, and with all of the same settings. It is a good idea to give meaningful names to all of the items on the page (use the Item control), then use the Layouts Control and press Save Layout as Template.

There are choices to show just a graphic or Adobe Flash file, or a page you have created, or a playlist (a playlist is a series of pages that you will create in the next part of this manual). For now, choose one of the pages you created – if you make a playlist in a moment, you can choose this instead afterwards.

Next, you can choose what happens if a ‘Page Not Found’ event occurs. Again, you can choose a graphic or Adobe Flash file, or you can choose a page you have already created. You can also choose to disable this feature. If you have chosen a page or graphic, next to this option is a setting for how long your choice is displayed before Acquire restarts.

With the similar settings options to the ‘Page Not Found’, you can also choose the settings for the ‘Are You Still There?’ option.

The next two settings are defaults for when you create pages for both the transition time between pages and the default page size. You can change these at any time to suit your needs and the settings you have set the player PCs to run best at subject to their power.

‘On Out Of Order’ requires you to choose a graphic file only (a JPEG or a BMP file). Videos and other media are not allowed here, as the cause of the event may actually be a problem with a renderer used to playback that content. Note that if you do not choose anything here, the default is to show a blank red screen.

The last setting is the ‘Barcode Scan’ sound. Originally, Acquire was developed to allow any user with a keyboard or serial/USB connected barcode scanner to simply scan a product, and the page with the matching Page ID would show. This can still be used today, and as long as you choose your preferred external trigger device (typically keyboard) in the Player Engineer’s Screen, you can simply type in a Page ID and press enter to immediately jump to that page.

This option effectively makes a sound play as an audio feedback when an external trigger is used. If you tick the ‘Always Play Scan Sound’ option, the sound will also be played when any interactive page change occurs (such as via a touch-screen or mouse/trackball press).

When you have chosen your options, press OK to return to where you were.

Creating Playlists

If you are using Acquire for Digital Signage, you will typically want to create Playlists of content and schedule them to play at appropriate times of the day on appropriate players. Acquire provides an advanced way of doing this by combining playlists created in the Playlist Editor, and scheduling them to play on specific players in the Scheduler.

From the Main Menu, choose the project you are working on by clicking on it, then press the Playlists button. This will load the Playlist Editor.

Initially you are presented with the Playlist Selector. Here you can choose the playlist you want to work with, and if you have many playlist, you can group them together to make them easy to find. All of the Playlists are shown on the right-hand side of the screen, whereas all the groups you have are shown on the left. If you want to make groups you can do so by pressing the right mouse button and adding groups, then dragging playlists from the right-hand window into those groups (note that 'Ungrouped Playlists' cannot be deleted or renamed).

Initially you will not have any playlists, so create one by pressing the Add Playlist button. Type in a meaningful name for your playlist and press OK to create it.

You can then see your Playlist in the Playlist Editor. Before you start, we recommend that you press the Playlist Settings tab to give the playlist a more detailed name and any notes that will help you find the playlist in the future.

Whilst in the Playlist Settings tab, you will also see settings for how this playlist will play. There will be more of this later when we go through Subplaylists.

For now, click on the 'Playlist Entries' tab again to see the playlist.

To add one (or more) of the pages you have already created in the Page Editor, press the arrow next to the 'Add' button. This will show a short menu of options to add. Press on the 'Pages' option.

You will now see a list of all of the pages in your project. If you want, you can use the filter box so that only pages with certain names are shown.

You can now choose one or more pages to add to your playlist. For now, just choose one page and press OK.

For this entry, you can now choose the rules as to how it is allowed to play at this point in the playlist (you can use this page again somewhere else in the playlist or other playlists with different rules).

Press the Advanced button to show all of the available settings.

Normally, this entry in the playlist will always play. We can change this so that it will play when we want it to play.

Hint:

If you have accidentally left any pages with infinite page time and then use that page in this playlist, the playlist would stall at that page. To prevent this, the default setting for all playlists is to automatically override the infinite page length with a preset time that can be set on the Playlist Settings tab.

Hint:

If you notice that a page needs to be changed, you do not need to exit the Playlist Editor and go back into the Page editor. Instead, choose the playlist line entry and press the 'Edit' button to go straight to the Page editor for that page. You can also use this to edit subplaylists or auto-line entries (see later)

Start by overriding the page play length. Normally you may have fixed a time for the page to play in the Page Editor. However, if this is an advert with a fixed paid-for time or you are trying to alter your playlist to be a certain length and want to foreshorten an entry, you can change the setting in 'Display Time' and provide a new time this page will show for. This is especially useful if you have made a page to play until the media finishes, but then you are provided with a different piece of media – if this is longer and you do not notice it, the supplier may have their content showing for much longer than you realised. By fixing the length here, you can force the content to show for only a fixed amount of time.

'Display Limit' is often not used, but can be very useful if you are using paid-for advertising slots. If the advertiser is paying for a certain number of impressions, this often depends upon many factors including the length of your playlists, other content, opening times of stores etc. The 'Display Limit' feature can help ensure that the content is only shown for a fixed number of times and no more. If enabled, each player will keep a tally of how many times that entry has been shown. Once the tally reaches the number you set here, the player will no longer show this entry (note that other entries in the playlist can still show the page separately if desired).

Even if you deploy updates to the players, the tally is maintained unless you press the 'Reset' button.

Advanced Playlist Rules

The following settings are useful to allow you to specify the best time(s) for pages to show, or when an advertiser is paying for a campaign to run over a period of time. Note that if you are using the PLUS! Network and want to schedule content at specific times on specific players, use the Scheduler (details below) to setup a playlist per player of playlists which play during specific times. This way you can easily change the times the playlists show per player rather than forcing them all to run at the same times.

The first of these settings are the 'Display Start' and 'Display End' settings. These can be used to control the overall playback of the entry for a set period of time. This is ideal when a page contains an advert for a campaign, or maybe for a run up to a special event.

Simply enable one or both of the controls, and choose the date and time you wish to allow the entry to start and end showing as appropriate.

You can also choose specific times when this line entry is allowed to show, using the next features. Each of the controls works like a time switch you may use at home to turn on and off your lights at specific times. If the player is at that entry in the playlist, it will check these options to see if the page is allowed to play.

Simply by clicking on each of the ticks, you can choose the days of week, times of day, and weeks of the year that the content is allowed to play. Note that the smallest amount of time you can specify is within a 15 minute interval, but as the playlist loops for as long as the pages play for, this could effectively be controlled down to just a few seconds.

Once you have chosen your preferred times to show this entry, press OK to store your choices.

You will now see your entry in the playlist with a small preview of the page, and a chart showing when the entry is allowed to play. If you have chosen the content to play for part of the day, you may need to change the scale to show the day, if you want to see what times of day otherwise it will be shown as a partly green entry.

Using the same process, add some more pages. If you need to adjust the settings for any of the entries, just double-click the line to see the 'Playlist Line Editor' for that entry again.

If you want to, you can copy entries in the playlist, or move them up and down the playlist by clicking and dragging them into position.

At the top of the screen, you will see an estimate of how long the playlist will play for, to allow you to calculate how many times each page will play (see 'Advanced Techniques' for more information).

Hint:

Each Playlist Entry has its own rule set. If you want to make the page play more than once, at a point in the playlist but with different conflicting rules (say on the weekends to play it between 9AM-5PM but during the week to play it between 12PM-5PM), simply set the rules for one showing, and add a second entry or copy the first one and set the alternate rules there.

Hint:

Remember that you will need to have something scheduled to play all of the time the player is turned on. If you have accidentally left nothing playing, Acquire will default to using the page you chose in the 'On Page Not Found' setting for this project. If this is disabled, the player will go 'Out of Order' as there is nothing for it to play.

When you have built your playlist, you can choose to preview it to see how it will play back. You can choose to show just a section of the playlist (highlight some of the entries and press the arrow next to 'Preview' and choose 'Selection'), or the whole playlist.

When you are previewing the playlist, the toolbox in the corner will show you details of what is playing. If you want to, you can skip past a page to avoid having to watch it completely, and you can even change the date and/or time to see what happens to the playback at this time (obviously entries you have not scheduled to play should not play).

Hint:

If any of your pages rely upon items that are presented from other sources, such as Helpers, the pages may not play and will be skipped, as the Helpers will not be started during preview mode. To preview projects using helpers in this way, run the player software directly from your Windows Start menu. (use ALT-F4 to exit the player)

How Not To Use The Page Designer

At the start of this manual, we explained that there are many ways to use Acquire. Up until now, we showed you one route of creating pages in the Page Designer, then putting them into Playlists in the Playlist editor.

If you want, you can actually leave out the first step and create pages directly from within the Playlist Editor.

To do this, simply press the arrow next to the 'Add' button, and choose the 'Media' option.

You can then choose a template if you have one saved, or if you want a single piece of media to fill the screen, choose 'From media'.

If you chose a template, you are shown the details of all the items on the template and can choose text, plugin settings and media for the appropriate parts (note you cannot change the background intentionally).

If you chose to use a single item of media, you will be presented with the File Selector, and you can choose one or more files and a page will be automatically created for you for each of the files.

In either case, you can also choose the page details such as page name, duration and any transition you may want.

As you are actually making pages (so if you were to copy this entry to later in the playlist and any changes to the page would be reflected in both places), you can still edit the page using the Page Designer.

Sub-Playlists

Sometimes you may want to have lots of entries in a playlist to fill a whole day or week of content playback. Or, you may want to have sections of your playlists repeating. This is where sub playlists are useful.

Basically, any Acquire Playlist can contain another Acquire Playlist as one of the entries. By doing this, the playlist can be cut into more manageable sections, and if these sections are of similar content (e.g. all the advertising together, or sections of content for morning, afternoon, etc), then it makes management of your playlists much simpler.

As well, each of the sub playlists can be controlled as to how the entries play out. Rather than playing all of the entries in the playlist, the playlist can be configured to show just a few, or even skip playing anything every so often.

Adding a sub-playlist is just like adding an existing page, simple choose a place in the playlist where you want to insert the sub-playlist and click on the arrow by the 'Add' button. Then choose 'Playlist'.

Again, this entry in the 'main' playlist still has controls to affect the playback rules, and these override any that are in the sub-playlist (so if halfway through playing the sub-playlist the 'main' playlist rule says the sub-playlist can no longer be played, then playback continues with the next item in the 'main' playlist).

Normally each sub-playlist will playback in it's entirety before playback returns to the main playlist. If you want to 'mix it up' a little to make your content less repetitive, Acquire has controls for that.

You need to edit the sub-playlist's settings to control this. Rather than exiting this playlist, press the Edit button on this line entry. The sub-playlist will be shown in its own Playlist editor.

In the section titled 'Playlist Usage' you will find a number of settings which control how the playlist plays back.

The normal setting is to play all of the items (sequentially in order). The options allow you to just play one or more items from the playlist each time the sub-playlist is called (either sequentially or randomised) or you could choose to skip this sub-playlist altogether every so many times the sub-playlist is called.

Each time the sub-playlist is called, a new instance of it is remembered in the player. So if you have two entries in your 'main' playlist containing this sub-playlist (set to playback 1 line from the sub-playlist per loop), when played back each one will show the first line, then the next loop of the main playlist, both entries will play back the second item in the list. This works the same if the Playlist usage is to playback random lines – all of the pages from the playlist are shown randomly at least once per instance.

If however you want to have the position remembered for all instances, choose the 'Maintain Playlist position between Instances of this Playlist' option.

Auto Line Entries

The features in the playlist demonstrated above allow you to create playlists with pages and sub-playlists that you choose. Using an 'Auto Line' entry in the playlist allows Acquire to choose which pages to put at that point in the playlist for you. It can also be used to change the way features work, or to change information in pages using Variables.

As when you added a page, media or sub playlist, choose the position in the playlist, then press the arrow next to the Add button, and choose 'Auto Line' to add an auto line.

The 'Auto Line' settings have a number of options, similar to the 'Playlist Settings', which allow you to set the rules that will apply when Acquire chooses the page. You can choose a random page from anywhere in the project, or from a playlist.

However, when choosing the page, you can also choose to make Acquire choose a page that matches a Target or Category (See Using Targets document for more information). In this way, you can ensure that Acquire chooses a page that is appropriate for this entry. By combining this with the other entry rules for time of day and day of week, etc. you are able to create playlists containing solely Auto Line entries and simply by adding pages to the project and targeting them, you do not need to alter the playlists again.

The 'Auto Line' entry can also be used to alter variables too. As we mentioned before, Variables can be set and used throughout Acquire, including as part of URLs used in Project Plugins and Page Plugins, as 'containers' for text so that messages can change on-screen, or as filenames for media shown on-screen, and can also be read and used by Adobe Flash animations.

To show how this can be used, firstly press OK or cancel from the 'Auto Line' Entry screen, and save your playlist and then return to the Main Menu. Choose the project you are working on and edit the pages. Create or Edit an existing page.

Choose the Add Media control and draw the area on the page where you want the media to appear. But, this time do not choose a media file. Instead, in the filename box, type \$\$MediaFilename (the '\$\$' bit signifies to Acquire that this is not actually a filename but a variable called MediaFilename – it could be called anything but for this demo MediaFilename sounds more appropriate).

For now, set the page length to 3 seconds (after you have seen how this works, you can change this).

Save this page, and return to the Playlist Editor. To demonstrate how this can work, create a new playlist and add an Auto Line entry to the playlist.

Choose not to display anything at this point, but instead choose to change a variable, and the option to choose the next item from the list.

Now press 'Edit List' and you will see a blank list. You can load into the edit a pre-defined list here, but as we do not have one of those, let us type in some things we want the variable to change as this playlist auto line entry is called. As we are using the variable in this case to be used to signify a filename, type here some filenames of some files you have in your media folder, pressing 'Enter'

after each one (note if you have media in a subfolder within the media folder, simply type the complete filename and path such as mysubfolder/myfilename.JPG).

When you have typed in a few lines, press OK to save the list, then press OK to save the auto line settings. For now, press OK on the Playlist Line settings (i.e. do not choose time of day or day of week rules).

Now, add a page to the playlist and choose the page you just created.

To summarise at this point: You have created two entries in the playlist, one of which will change the variable to the next text in the list, and the second, which will display a page with nothing else on it but an 'empty' item.

Press 'Preview', and you should now see the screen show a page containing a piece of media, followed by the same page, but this time showing another piece of media, and so on.

If you are not seeing anything, (and the page is showing for just a split second – maybe you get an 'out of order' message appear) check that you have typed the same variable name on the page and the playlist auto line entry, and that the list of things to change the variable to are complete filenames (including the path from the media folder, the name of the file and the extension – e.g. Myfolder/MyPicture.JPG).

This is a simple demonstration of how powerful variables are and how you can choose to set variables at key points in your playlists.

If you would like to play with this functionality later, then save this playlist.

Scheduling Content & Deployment

Now that you have built your Pages and Playlists, you can preview how this will operate on your remote players. You can preview the project directly from the Main Menu by pressing 'Preview'. The preview will show exactly how your project will play out on the remote players, using the default project settings for this project. Check that this is working correctly, and if not, adjust your Pages, Playlists or project settings (especially the 'On Startup...' option) to ensure that this works as you expect it to.

It is good practise to preview your changes before you send them to the remote players, as it dramatically reduces the number of errors that happen due to faulty content files (damaged files or incorrect Codec), mis-scheduling, and broken 'Jump to' links.

Integrity Checker and Flowchart Editor.

When you have tested your content, it is also good practise to do some housekeeping on your project to remove media that is no longer in use, and check for any broken links and missing pages.

Start by using the 'Integrity Checker'. To access this, on the 'Main Menu', choose the Project you wish to work on, then press 'Edit' to edit the project settings. Press the 'Integrity Checker' button at the bottom of this screen (it can also be accessed from Point2Point and the PLUS! network Scheduler).

When you start the 'Integrity Checker', it scans the pages, media and playlists used in your project for any problems.

If there are any files in your Media folder that are not being used, these will be shown to you on the first tab. If you have never used these files (i.e. put the media on a page and deployed the project), you do not need to worry about them – although if you are never going to use them in the project, why are you keeping them there?

However, if the files are in this list, they are no longer used in pages in your project, as you have probably deleted the pages. It is good practise to keep the media folder tidy, and also any files in here which have been used will remain on the players too. If you are sure you will no longer use these files, either move them to another folder (such as a folder called 'Old Content' or 'Archive' or similar), or just delete them. Either way, if the pages no longer exist and the files have been moved or deleted, the files on the remote players will also be deleted.

Now press the Page with Missing Media tab. As the name suggests, here you can see any pages for which you have either not yet chosen media or accidentally deleted it.

Hopefully there will not be any pages here, but note that if any of the pages are using Helpers to choose/download media or variables to define media, these may be displayed here.

If you need to check or adjust the pages to resolve problems, simply select the page and press Edit to start the Page Designer.

Configuring The Player

Depending upon the capabilities and configuration of your hardware, Acquire includes a number of settings which allow you to customise the settings and features of the software to best match the capabilities of the hardware and the uses you will put the player to. If you have purchased the player pre-installed on the hardware device, the settings will have been configured for you.

Please view the Acquire User Manual for details of the player settings available and their functions.

To access the settings screen (often called the 'engineers screen'), all you need to do is press the ESC key on a keyboard connected to the player. By default, this will immediately stop playback and show the settings screen. Note that this is on the computer you are using as a player unit - the editor does not have the Sentinel program installed, and the player settings are instead accessed by pressing the Settings button on the Editor's main menu, then pressing 'Configure Player'

If you wish to protect the settings screen, you can choose to password protect it by selecting this option and providing a password.

Normally you will not need to change any settings on these screens as Acquire will have chosen the optimal settings when the player software was installed, and other settings (such as project settings) will have been configured in the deployment or via the PLUS! Network. If you still wish to reduce the playback settings, there are a number of options, which can reduce the processor overhead during page transitions and playback to allow for optimal playback. Please try different combinations until you find settings which best match your content and player hardware for best playback.

If you are using external trigger devices, (keypad, switches, network links, etc) you may wish to configure this here. The External Trigger allows a series of characters followed by the Enter key (such as from a barcode scanner, RFID device, or even a keyboard) to be used to jump immediately to a page with that ID.

If you have deployed more than one project onto this player and wish to switch between them, or you wish to change any of the default project settings you configured whilst in the editor, you can do this via the 'Screens and Pages' tab.

Acquire also has the ability to synchronise players, either across different player PCs in a location, or even on the same PC if you have a dual output graphics card. View the manual for more information, or contact your reseller or visit the Users area of the website for details and examples of how you can use this to create exciting multiple screen displays.

If you wish to view what has been recently happening on the player, you can view the latest log file here too by pressing the 'Recent Log Entries' tab.

If you require more detailed settings, you may need to access the Microsoft Windows operating system. This is protected by the use of the Sentinel program that is always monitoring and securing the system on the player (depending upon the chosen options).

To access the Sentinel, you need to type in a sequence of keys on the keyboard. All you need to do is plug in a keyboard and press the keys for the password you chose whilst installing the player, and starting with the ESC key. For example, if you chose to use the default password, you would press the keys ESC S E N T I N E L. This will invoke the Sentinel interface and will temporarily restore the player PC's operating system. Note that when you press ESC, no password box will show (although Acquire's Settings one may appear), and if you mistype or type too quickly or slowly, just press ESC and start again.

Sentinel has a number of settings available so you can configure how secure you want to make the player's Operating System, and triggers that are specific to the player hardware. These can be configured from the Sentinel configuration screens.

Note that the Sentinel interface remains on top of other programs. If you wish to 'minimise' the interface, just double-click the Sentinel logo.

Once you have finished using the Windows Operating System to configure the machine, and/or the Sentinel settings, press the 'Engineer Visited' button. This will ask you to enter the changes you made and your name so that you can remember later the changes you did. The Acquire software will then restart.

Note that if you leave the player unlocked for more than 5 minutes, the Sentinel will automatically lock the player again. This is useful if you are remotely connected and lose the connection for instance, although, you will get a warning scrolling in the taskbar for 30 seconds beforehand, if you wish to reset the 5 minute timer, just double-click on the Sentinel interface or use any of the controls in Sentinel.