

## Apprehension Greets Adobe's CS2 Activation Scheme

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By Robyn Weisman

Starting with its Creative Suite 2, Adobe Systems Inc. has implemented a feature that has met with some controversy: **an activation requirement** for individual license holders, both on the Mac and Windows side.

Once installed, users must register their copies of CS2 either over the Internet or by telephone within 30 days or the software will no longer be usable. CS2 is scheduled to ship in May.

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"Adobe's product license agreement permits the licensee to install and use the software on a primary computer, and another computer for home [or] portable use, provided these are not used simultaneously by the licensee," said Mihir Nanavati, senior product manager of license management technologies at Adobe.

"Activation does not collect, transmit or use any personally identifiable information or hinder licensed users' ability to use the software the way they always have under the Adobe product license agreement," Nanavati said, adding that the process is identical for both U.S. and international customers.

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Activation schemes are not new in the software space. Microsoft Corp. has required users to **activate Windows versions** of Microsoft Office since Office XP was released in 2001. Apple Computer Inc.'s Logic Pro requires licensees to plug in a USB hardware dongle to use the program, while Final Draft's screenwriting software has had an activation scheme in place since its inaugural version came out in 1991.

Before the release of CS2, however, Adobe had not adopted, except in isolated cases, widespread piracy prevention technology across its product line. According to Nanavati, the original version of Adobe's Creative Suite and Photoshop CS had an activation setup for Windows users in five of the 18 languages in which the software is available.

User response has ranged from resigned to enraged. On the **The Unofficial Apple Weblog**, a reader named "nezromatron" wrote: "Great! Another system that will be a pain to everyone but the true pirates who will find a way around it. Thanks Adobe, for making paying customers feel like criminals."

**Next Page:** Activation has its perils.

For his part, Richard Romano, an analyst for TrendWatch Graphics Arts, has mixed feelings about Adobe's decision to require activation. Believing that the reality of this change will be somewhere in between Adobe's contention that activation will not burden legitimate users and those who feel like "nezromatron," Romano said Adobe's licensing and activation scheme fails to take into account that graphics professionals make use of multiple CPUs—often simultaneously—to do their work.

"If I scan [a file] on one computer and use Photoshop to clean up and edit images for an InDesign layout on another, and maybe [use] a third to process images for GoLive, is that piracy or efficiency? If [Adobe] disallow[s] that ability,

then basically [Adobe has] taken away a useful feature of [its] software," Romano said.

By limiting the number of computers an individual licensee is allowed to install, Adobe threatens to cause serious economic ramifications for these individual designers and small graphics firms. "I'm not sure the solution to piracy is to bankrupt customers," Romano said.

Can Adobe redefine creative workflow? [Click here](#) to read Andreas Pfeiffer's column.

Steve Caplin, a London-based graphic designer and Photoshop CS2 beta tester, also expressed concerns about Adobe's activation scheme, pointing out that activation may put a dent in Adobe's CS2 sales.

"The people who are going to upgrade are those in large organizations, not freelancers who generally resent shelling out. But the impetus for upgrading comes from designers on magazines who see the work the freelancers are sending them, and who want the same tools [the freelancers] use," Caplin said.

"If the freelancers can't afford to upgrade, then there's no way employees within a large company are going to get to see the new features, so they won't know what they're missing," and will not upgrade their site licenses, Caplin said.

Meanwhile, activation setups have burned plenty of software users in the past, Romano noted. He recalled a situation in which one of his computers was, unbeknownst to him, failing, which required him to install his operating system and his applications every few days. When the computer finally died and he had set up a new working system, he was unable to reinstall the software because he had exceeded the number of installations the application allowed.

"It was a program I could live without, and so rather than call customer service and beg for mercy—which is what the documentation recommended, I think in those exact words—I decided to live without it," Romano said.

Unlike other companies with activation schemes, however, Adobe has a simple means of deactivating installations within an individual CS2 license should users want to move one of their installations to another computer.

According to Jupiter Research senior analyst Joe Wilcox, the ability to deactivate computers as needed provides the sort of flexibility that is acceptable.

"Adobe addressed that crucial step so that it is reasonably palatable," Wilcox said. "In contrast, Microsoft does not offer a deactivation mechanism. You must contact the company directly and explain your situation. I'm sure a lot of people are in trouble" because Microsoft's setup is not forgiving.

At the same time, Romano pointed out that rumors and paranoia abound whenever something new is involved.

"We won't know what [Adobe's] Activation is really going to involve until the first few pioneers try it out—and we see if they come back with arrows in their hats or not," Romano said.