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# LECTORA INSPIRE

# REVIEWED BY RICHARD KAREL

**TRAINING MEDIA REVIEW** publishes practitioner reviews and ratings of training content (online, software, video, print) and selected training technologies such as authoring tools.

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**LECTORA INSPIRE**

Trivantis

877-929-0188

[www.trivantis.com](http://www.trivantis.com)

List price: \$2,495

Total cost of ownership: \$2,790

Reviewed by Richard Karel

Lectora Inspire “lunch box” arrived today in packaging that looks like a lunch box. It didn’t contain the standard peanut butter and jelly with chips. This lunch box had the e-learning authoring tool equivalents of prime rib, baked potato, and crème brulee.

Aside from the most creative product packaging in e-learning today, I found a tool that goes beyond even high standards by integrating some of the best development applications on the market today into a single publishing suite.

### DESCRIPTION

Lectora Inspire comes bundled with these applications:

- SnagIt: a screen capture tool that gives quintessential control to the e-learning developer
- Camtasia: a combination video capture-editor-audio recorder
- Flypaper: A Flash animation tool that allows easy-to-create learning objects for your course

You can buy all three of these applications from their respective vendors (TechSmith and Flypaper Studio, Inc.) so what you are purchasing is the tight integration and round-tripping capabilities with Lectora.

It should be noted that about a year ago, Lectora Professional Publishing Suite was the same price as Lectora Inspire today, so in effect you’re getting Camtasia, SnagIt, and Flypaper for free. This is called bundling at its best.

But what about the seamless integration? I will tell you what I found later in this review.

### INTERFACE

Unlike some authoring applications, you do not need to be proficient in PowerPoint to take full advantage of Lectora’s rich feature-set. (An optional component that integrates Lectora with PowerPoint 2007 can be purchased for \$395.)

In fact, you should expect to do all of your work in Lectora. If you’d like to learn more about the Lectora interface, please check out my previous review on Lectora by clicking [here](#). In this review, I’m going to focus on what sets Lectora Inspire apart from the competition—its integration with SnagIt, Flypaper, and Camtasia.

With four high-powered development applications, you should expect a moderate-to-steep learning curve. Each of the applications does have its own website and plenty of tutorials and support online.

However, as premium software applications, you will have to invest some time in learning the interface of each and how to get the most out of them. One thing I can say with 100% accuracy: it will be well worth your time to learn these four applications—and the rewards will be self-evident in your online learning creations.



## EASE OF USE

In my first “project” with Lectora Inspire, I decided to use one of the built-in templates to create a simple course with three “chapters” of two “pages” each. I docked the “Properties” toolbar to the bottom of the screen (highly recommended).

The first thing I noticed are the Launch tool buttons for Camtasia, SnagIt, and Flypaper on the “Tools” toolbar. To be able to launch these apps from within Lectora was a good start. But what about inserting, editing, and updating the output of these three applications in Lectora? How easy would it be to do these operations?

I started with adding an image and SnagIt opened as the image editor! Wait a minute—SnagIt is a screen capture tool. Well, remember what I said about each of the three being premium applications? SnagIt has its own image editor built in, so you can easily add markers, special effects, re-sizing, and so on--all of the normal functions found in an image editor--and much more.

When I clicked the Edit button in the Image Properties toolbar in Lectora, the round-trip editing feature provided seamless integration between SnagIt and Lectora.

Curiously absent from any Lectora toolbar or menu are commands to insert a SnagIt screen capture, Camtasia screen recording, or Flypaper flash object. This is a little disappointing but no big deal because round-trip editing functionality is not absent.

All you have to do is make sure you launch each of the bundled applications from within Lectora Inspire. So once you click “Edit” from within Inspire, the corresponding application opens, and you’re able to edit your SnagIt screen capture, Camtasia screen recording, or Flypaper animation within its own software application.



What took some getting used to was viewing the updated objects within Lectora Inspire’s edit mode. Often, it would take viewing the page in “Run” mode before I could see the updated version of the objects.

Also, setting up development folders on your computer (and telling Lectora, Camtasia, SnagIt, and Flypaper where these are) is mandatory for the seamless integration to work properly. However, once this is done, all of these applications came through and make development fast and productive.

Since the last review, Trivantis resolved the issue of Flash player security settings allowing blocked content from your development folder when you preview your new course--no more missing objects! And for those hardcore Lectora end users, the native image editor and audio editor are still a part of the application.

## THE PATH TO ADVANCED FUNCTIONALITY

What about projects that require intense instructional design, engaging learning activities, interactive quiz elements, and advanced programming techniques?

The Media Library in Lectora is a central location for all media files that can include keywords and metadata for easy searches. This media library can be made accessible to multiple users.

In the media library, there is a clip-art gallery with over 6,000 images and a Flash and Games Library with several animations, Flash characters, and Flash games. You can add your own media to this library.

You will need to think through many of the aesthetic qualities of your Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs). You can save these as library objects to be re-used once you have done this initial design. Think of the “Resource Manager” and “Media Library” as excellent Reusable Learning Object repositories in Lectora



If you create a button or import Flash and image objects, save these as library objects for use in other parts of your course.

The advanced scripting functions in Lectora are actually easy to pick up after a few attempts. These are mainly if/else conditionals and similar functions. If you have already learned an ECMA-based, object-oriented programming language (like Actionscript in Adobe Flash), learning these tools in Lectora will be very easy.

Lectora also provides a Variable Manager to keep up with your most common programming units. Adding external HTML objects is no problem at all in Lectora.

While I found a user forum on the Trivantis website, I did not see any library of pre-built interactions, but you can purchase any number of these from third-party developer sites. An SDK developer discussion exists online as well.

Trivantis publishes a Knowledge Base, FAQ's, and a Tips and Tricks section on their website. Also included are in-context video tutorials--very nice.

Reporting is made easy by Lectora's internal SCORM- and AICC-publishing components. You can also publish your course as a single-file executable, to CD-ROM, or as a packaged HTML lesson.

I published the demo to our Moodle LMS and it worked just great within the Moodle course shell. More integration with mobile platforms is also present, such as the iPad and Blackberry.

This program is RAM- and CPU-intensive, requiring 100 MG of RAM. I tested it on a Vista 64-bit laptop with 2GB of RAM. Performance was fine. There were never any system crashes, but I don't recommend using this application on any PC with only 512 MG of RAM.

### RECOMMENDATION

If you have already purchased support programs for screen capture and recording, video and image editing, Flash animation, and audio editing, I still recommend purchasing Lectora Inspire.

You gain advanced functionality in all of these multimedia development areas, and you have the power of some of the better-known products on the market, all for Lectora's normal application suite price tag!

You may also want to check out periodic free training offers with purchase at the Trivantis website.

Lectora Inspire's flexibility, ease of use, and seamless integration are a hard combination to beat. Integration with the three support apps has made Lectora an even more versatile authoring tool—quite an achievement.

Aside from the most creative product packaging in e-learning today, I found a tool that goes beyond the standards by integrating some of the best development applications on the market today into a single publishing suite.

I have to give the folks at Trivantis credit for being the first to endow their e-learning publishing suite with the strengths of other third-party tools. It is this type of “best of both worlds” thinking that makes e-learning development a truly creative process.

**Richard Karel** has been involved with issue management and development of online learning for the past eight years. He has a keen interest in online tools for collaboration and management of e-learning projects. He is an e-learning specialist at the University of Tennessee.

