

**Flare 2.5**  
**And**  
**RoboHelp 6 (version 14)**

**A Comparison**

	Flare version 2.5	RoboHelp 6 (version 14)
Architecture	Flare stores all content AND project level files as XML files making Flare projects completely open, transparent, and accessible.	RoboHelp stores project files in a hidden database and/or in proprietary/binary file formats creating a completely closed architecture.
Source Control Compatibility	Flare stores all content and project level files as XML files making Flare projects compatible with all source control systems.	RoboHelp includes a proprietary/home made source control system that is not compatible with the majority of systems in the industry. RoboHelp will not work with CVS, ClearCase, Subversion, Perforce, StarTeam, Vault, etc.
Network Storage of Projects	Flare projects can be stored on a network share drive without any problem at all. Flare is a fully network aware application. Multiple authors can even access the same project at the same time without any network software installation. No need to get your IT department involved. Flare works with files as all applications should, within the designs of network protocols.	RoboHelp is not a “network aware” application. Placing a RoboHelp project on a network share drive and attempting to work on it from that location almost guarantees project corruption. To do this the RoboHelp source control system must be used (weather you want it or not) and this means that you will have to get your IT department involved to do server/network software installs, set up a maintenance plan, etc. This is a lot of work to simply compensate for the fact that RoboHelp itself is incompatible with a network environment.
Quality of code generated	All Flare content files conform to the requirements of the W3C XHTML Schema. This makes Flare content files compatible with all other editors and provides for easy content transfer to other tools and/or work flows.	RoboHelp code is a proprietary mix of non-standard RoboHelp markup (the infamous Kadov tags) and poorly-formed HTML. This hybrid approach is outside the rules of the W3C specifications and makes the sharing of RoboHelp content with other tools and/or work flows extremely difficult.
Compatibility with external editors	Since Flare content conforms to industry standard W3C Schema requirements Flare content can be edited in the Flare editor, or external editors, or transferred back and forth between the two at will.	While RoboHelp is advertised as working with external editors, it is an either/or proposition. You have to choose to work exclusively with the RoboHelp editor or exclusively with the external editor. If you try to create a file in RoboHelp, then use an external editor to make 3 changes and then bring the file back in to RoboHelp then the code will be completely re-written by RoboHelp and in most cases the code gets broken. This is due to the proprietary/non-standard code that is created and required by the RoboHelp editor.

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Microsoft Word	<p>Flare tightly integrates with Microsoft Word (including the new MS Word 2007) using modern XML data flow techniques leveraging the Microsoft XML Schema for Office Documents. This allows for superior content fidelity during import. Flare also supports both the single import model like RoboHelp, or a tracking mode (called Easy-Synch) where Flare can automatically re-import MS Word documents if changes are made to the source Word document ensuring your deliverables always contain the latest information possible. Flare also allows for inclusion of hyperlink data or even the conversion of link data to proper page number cross reference data on export to Word. Combined with Flare's Master Page technology and output to Print options Flare provides the ability to create true "press ready" documents without having to do any post processing.</p>	<p>RoboHelp's MS Word integration is extremely lacking, and for imports is limited to a single, one time import. This gives you a "snapshot in time" of the Word document, but then makes it extremely difficult to keep the content up to date if additional edits or changes are made to the original Word document. RoboHelp is also lacking in MS Word support on the export side. RoboHelp is unable to handle even little things like specifying unique chapter page formatting or page number cross reference data derived from link data making it almost mandatory that you will have to do further work in Microsoft Word to get your document ready for the printer. This is just not an acceptable model in a modern single-sourcing world.</p>
Adobe FrameMaker Support	<p>Flare has the tightest FrameMaker integration in the industry. While Flare can import the .mif format, if Flare and FrameMaker are installed on the same machine Flare is able to open and work from the native FrameMaker source files (.fm and .book). This gives Flare full access to FrameMaker variables, conditionals, autonumbering, import of cross-references, etc. Flare also supports the concept of "Easy-Synch", or the ability to store the import settings so that the source FrameMaker files can continue to be referenced and new data imported when necessary allowing the inclusion of the most recent information possible whenever you generate any outputs. Add to this Flare's ability to also export back out to the .fm and .book formats and you can see that Flare's support for FrameMaker makes RoboHelp (and other tools) pale in comparison.</p>	<p>RoboHelp has only the crudest level of FrameMaker support being limited to the import of the .mif format. Once imported the source of the content is forgotten, resulting in a "one shot" import. That would have to be repeated manually if new edits to the source FrameMaker file would have to be incorporated. RoboHelp has no support for FrameMaker conditions, variables, autonumbering, or cross-references.</p>

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.NET	MadCap Software has created an entirely new help format designed specifically to support Visual Studio 2005 developers, called DotNetHelp. The DotNetHelp format includes a freely redistributable viewer (written in C#) and also includes components for the Visual Studio 2005 developer that can be dropped into your project to facilitate context sensitive help, embedded help, and things like automated search string communication between the application and the DotNetHelp documentation.	The initial release of RoboHelp 6 has gone backwards with regard to .NET support. The RoboEngine.NET, the cornerstone of .NET support in RoboHelp X5, is apparently not shipping with RoboHelp 6. The result is that RoboHelp 6 now has zero dedicated .NET support.
Windows Vista	Flare has already been tested on the new Microsoft Windows Vista operating system and the new DotNetHelp, with its modern look and feel, is an ideal help and documentation solution for a Windows Vista environment.	The Adobe web site does not include Microsoft Vista Windows under the RoboHelp 6 compatibility list.
Language Publishing	Flare is fully Unicode capable making it possible to handle the entire world's Unicode language characters. Flare is capable of not only the Western European languages, but also the double-byte Asian languages, the Eastern European languages, and more.	This is another category where RoboHelp is losing ground. RoboHelp has lost the ability to support the double-byte languages (Japanese, Korean, and Chinese) and is now limited to a short list of Western European languages. Language support will always be a problem as RoboHelp is not a Unicode capable environment.
Interface Language Choices While Authoring	Flare is now available with a configurable author interface. You can choose an English, French, German, or Japanese Flare interface at startup, and you can then change at will. No additional versions to buy, these alternate language interfaces are all included with Flare. Additional languages will be added in future releases.	RoboHelp is only available with an English user interface for the author to use.

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Support for Modern Output Formats	Flare has continued to innovate creating the new DotNetHelp format for .NET applications and has now added support for new Microsoft technologies including the XPS (XML Paper Specification) format and the new Microsoft Word DOCX format. MadCap Software is committed to supporting new technologies as they become available, and innovating where there is a need.	The only new advertised publishing format for this release of RoboHelp was the FlashHelp Pro format. Since Adobe has not released the server component users can not use this new output.
Single Sourcing: Architecture	Single sourcing was a core design criteria in the creation of Flare	Single sourcing is a concept foreign to the original architecture of RoboHelp and the few single sourcing capabilities in the RoboHelp environment have been tacked on over the years...and it shows.
Single Sourcing: Snippets	Flare includes a Snippet library - a library of reusable content that can be included by reference at any point of your documentation. If you have content that needs to be used in 300 locations you only have to write the content once (as a Snippet), and then include it by reference at all 300 locations. This ensures consistency and makes maintenance extremely easy – there is only one place to update the content and it automatically updates all 300 locations. There is no limit to what can be included in a Snippet file, anything in a normal topic can be used in a Snippet.	RoboHelp has no such capability. In RoboHelp if the same text is used in 300 places it has to be entered manually every time, and if there ever needs to be an edit you will then have to manually edit all 300 occurrences, or resort to error prone search and replace attempts.
Single Sourcing: Conditionals	Flare has full support for conditionals throughout a project. Conditional markers can be used in text content, on images, in lists, in tables, in Snippets, in headers, in footers, in Master Pages, in Tables of Contents, and even at a file level.	Traditionally RoboHelp has limited the use of conditionals to content on the topic pages. RoboHelp 6 has added two minor additions to this, the ability to add conditionals to a Table of Contents ( it was nice of them to validate the work we did in Flare version 1 and copy this capability) and the ability to add conditionals to index entries (more info below).

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Single Sourcing: Variables	Flare has full support for Variables throughout a project. Variables can be used in text content, in lists, in tables, in Snippets, in headers, in footers, in Master Pages, etc.	RoboHelp has added support for basic variables in content pages (again, it was nice of them to validate the work we did in Flare version 1 and copy this capability, or at least part of it)
Single Sourcing: Multiple/Modular Table of Contents	To fully support the concepts of single sourcing and multi-channel publishing Flare includes the ability to create as many Tables of Contents as necessary for a given project. Which TOC to use for a given publish deliverable can be chosen (and stored for future use) at build time. Different TOCs can be created for alternate navigation, to support multiple languages, or even to create modular TOCs that can be worked by multiple authors at the same time.	A RoboHelp project can only contain a single TOC which must be shared in all help outputs and print outputs must have a TOC override created (another after thought tacked on), severely limiting single sourcing capabilities.
Single Sourcing: Indexing	Flare performs indexing at the character level providing the tightest integration possible between index terms and the actual content being referenced. As a result any meta data, such as Conditional tags applied to content, are automatically applied to the index markers as well. This means that if you use a conditional tag to suppress some content when you build an output, the associated index terms tied to that content are automatically suppressed, there is absolutely no extra work to do. This is yet another example of how Flare has been built from the ground up to support a single source work flow.	RoboHelp 6 has an outdated indexing model where index keywords are associated at the page level, not at the character level (the actual point of reference). To attempt to work around this architectural defect RoboHelp 6 has introduced an awkward model of manually applying build tags to index terms outside of the content page. This is just more after thought band aids being applied to a core architecture not designed to support single sourcing. This means that authors will have to rework the same content multiple times. First write the content, then go back and index the content (at the page level, not the content level). Then at some point if you decide to apply build tags you will have to do it to the page content, and you can't forget to then research if and where that content may have index terms and then manually locate those index terms in a separate interface and apply build tags there as well. A grossly inefficient process with too much re-work to cover a poor architecture.

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<p>Animated Tutorials/Demos</p>	<p>Flare has full integration with MadCap Mimic. Tutorial and demo files created with Mimic can not only be used in Flare projects, they can share Flare project attributes such as variables. If you need to customize your documentation for multiple customers you could create a variable called "Customer Name". This variable could be used in your Flare content and could also be used in your Mimic built tutorial / demo files. Then when it is time to publish documentation for "XYZ Corp" you do a simple variable definition once and both your Flare content and your Mimic content are automatically updated for that customer. Now that is single sourcing and product integration on a scale this industry has never seen before.</p>	<p>RoboHelp has support for Captivate movies, but the integration between the two is limited to importing and choosing to edit files previously imported. Is this even worthy of the term "integration"?</p>
<p>Images</p>	<p>With the MadCap Flare/MadCap Capture combination, MadCap Software has introduced the concept of single source images. When adding text notations/call outs on screen captures you can use the very same Variables used in your Flare projects. This allows for extreme customization of even the images and screen captures used in your documentation. A single sourcing first from MadCap Software. Add to this the other single sourcing capabilities in Capture like being able to assign different profile values to a single image for different uses (like 300 dpi, TIFF format for print, 72 dpi, JPG format for online), and you can see that MadCap Software is continuing to innovate and streamline the single source publishing concepts.</p>	<p>RoboHelp has no dedicated single sourcing capabilities for images.</p>

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Glossary Support	<p>Flare has full support for creating term-definition pairs for including glossary information in your projects. Like all things in Flare this has been designed to support single sourcing and for any deliverable document the author can choose to include glossary information as a dedicated glossary tab, as dynamic inline effects adding definitions as expanding text in topics where appropriate, or by adding definitions in topics as popups where appropriate. Any of these options can be selected for any set of documentation that you generate. The important thing is that Flare adds all of this glossary information when you generate the deliverable outputs, never altering your important source files.</p>	<p>RoboHelp's glossary support is extremely single-source unfriendly and breaks the master commandment of single sourcing. No tool should ever permanently alter the master source files, yet this is exactly what the RoboHelp "Smart Glossary Wizard" does. Running this wizard will inject definitions as expanding text into all of your topics, but instead of doing it when you generate the outputs, ROBOHELP PERMANENTLY ALTERS YOUR SOURCE FILES! From that point on you no longer have a choice, all outputs you generate will always contain the expanding text definitions (and there is no option for popups). Again, an outdated architecture which is actually damaging to a single source work flow.</p>
Access to Document Structure	<p>Flare provides a brand new graphical interface to access document structure without disturbing the content in the visual editor. This is a brand new, innovated here, approach to accessing and manipulating document structure which has had rave reviews from users. Just another example of how MadCap Software is not following or copying other tools, but is dedicated to actually innovating and bringing professional authors the tools they need to be more effective and efficient.</p>	<p>RoboHelp does not even understand the concept of document structure and therefore has no method of providing access to the author.</p>
Multiple Document Interface	<p>Flare has a modern multiple document interface allowing authors to have as many content pages open at one time as they deem necessary. This makes cross page editing, review, and copy and paste evolutions effortless.</p>	<p>RoboHelp only allows a single topic to be open at a time. Attempting to open a second topic will cause RoboHelp to immediately save and close the topic currently open (even if you didn't want it saved). Needless to say, this makes cross page editing or review extremely difficult.</p>

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List Editing	Flare has the professional level list handling you would expect. The ability to create lists, merge lists, sort lists, reverse lists, etc. More importantly Flare also supports continue numbering options for interrupted lists, list start overrides, and specific numbered list single bullet overrides.	RoboHelps list handling is so basic that RoboHelp can not even handle a simple “skip numbering” (interrupted list) event.
Table Editing	Flare table editing includes full copy and paste support, including full rows, full columns, multiple rows, multiple columns, or any number of contiguous cells. Even better, Flare includes dedicated table interface elements making most row or column copy and paste events unnecessary. Simply drag and drop entire rows or columns at will.	RoboHelp table editing is limited to working on a single cell at a time. Trying to copy and paste an entire row or entire column fails. You have to create a new row manually, then one by one copy and paste each cell individually, and then delete the original row. This was disappointing 5 years ago, but is unforgivable that Adobe has chosen not to address such basic functionality for a modern release.
Table Formatting	Flare supports external style sheet (CSS) formatting for tables. In a project with 200 tables, they could all be associated with one external style sheet. If you need to update the look and feel of all 200 tables you simply edit one style sheet and instantly all 200 tables are updated. Beyond that, Flare also support the concept of “Patterns” in table style data. This allows you to specify table formatting based on automated rules. These table patterns can be used to automatically alternate color rows in a table, or to apply a special background to every 5 <sup>th</sup> row, or any other pattern that you need. Even better, the patterns are self healing. If you have to add or remove rows in a table then Flare automatically updates the table formatting. Use conditional tags to remove table data while single sourcing? Again, Flare will automatically adjust the table formatting to match your defined patterns. On the rare occasion you need to do manual style formatting in a table, that is also supported.	RoboHelp only supports inline formatting on tables. If your project contains 200 tables in 200 different topics then to make any project wide change you will have to manually find and hand edit all 200 tables.

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Undo Buffer	To support Flare's multiple document interface each and every page open is assigned its own unique undo buffer which is never disturbed. At any time you can go back to a page you worked on previously and the undo history for that particular page is still available.	RoboHelp only supports a single undo buffer. If you make several edits on a page and then switch over to the true code editor to make a quick check, then POOF, your undo buffer gets flushed without even a warning dialog. An outdated design.
CSS Support	Flare has full support for both the CSS1 and CSS2 specifications. Flare can use external CSS files for formatting of any topic element, including tables. Flare supports having multiple CSS files associated with a single topic for single sourcing purposes, or for the support of Media Types (the ability to specify different style data for onscreen or print usage).	RoboHelp has extremely limited CSS support and creates an extreme amount of proprietary code in your CSS files, doubling their size. RoboHelp only supports having a single CSS file per topic, no single sourcing capability with CSS files, does not support CSS formatting of tables, and does not support Media Types.
Installing Multiple Versions	There is no limit to the number of different Flare versions that can be installed on the same machine. There is no problem for customers using Flare version X to download the trial version of Flare version Y for testing and analysis without having any adverse impact to their original Flare install. It is not uncommon for Flare consultants to have Flare 1.0 installed, Flare 2.0 installed, and Flare 2.5 installed, all on the same machine.	RoboHelp versions are not compatible with each other. You are always instructed to uninstall RoboHelp version X before installing RoboHelp version Y. Even if you simply want to install the trial version of RoboHelp version Y. There are some hack instructions on the web for doing multiple RoboHelp installs but these are untested, unofficial, and outside the RoboHelp design and will result in Adobe denying you technical support until you do a full uninstall of all versions.
Installation	The Flare installation conforms to the latest Microsoft guidelines.	The installation of RoboHelp requires you to have full administrator rights on your PC or the installation will fail. This can be extremely problematic in corporate environments where the IT department resists providing administrator level PC access to employees.
Support on Site	The Flare Technical Support and Customer Care teams are here in San Diego with the rest of the MadCap Software team. They have full access to the programming staff and upper management to resolve any issue promptly.	RoboHelp support is provided by outsourced call centers thousands of miles from the developers.