

Editing Web pages—The MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom (Chapter Ten)

Effective background images—Adrienne Dailey (Chapter Nine)

Effective placeholders—Nike (Chapter Eleven)

Frames as an interface tool—The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (Chapter Four)

Freeing page elements from constraints—Roberto Ochoa (Chapter Nine)

Humor and parody—The Squeegee Guy (Chapter Nine)

Hypermedia as artistic form—The Brink (Chapter Three)

Iconography—TimeOut Net (Chapter Seven)

Interface and audience relationship—Word (Chapter Three)

"Jumping-off" sites—The Microsoft Network (MSN) (Chapter Six)

Keeping content fresh—The Phoenix New Times (Chapter Three)

Left margin solutions—Excite CityNet (Chapter Seven)

Link color matching—Konica Business Machines (Chapter Eleven)

Loading of background images—Ragú (Chapter Eight)

Mixing textures and colors—Sedgwick China (Chapter Eleven)

Navigation and large data management—The Tucson Weekly (Chapter Three)

Navigation consistency and text options—La Nacion Online (Chapter Three)

Offering information on Web sites—Crayola (Chapter Ten)

Promoting Web sites effectively—JCPenney (Chapter Eleven)

Proportion—Paramount Pictures (Chapter Two)

Proximity—GRP Records (Chapter Two)

Pull quotes—An Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright (Chapter Four)

Re-design of site using simple elements—The Web Developer's Virtual Library (Chapter Six)

Safe Palettes—Kid'n Around (Chapter Ten)

Shape—ARTnet IAMfree (Chapter Four)

Splash pages—The Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum (Chapter Three)

Tables as layout—The Film Vault (Chapter Two)

Thumbnail sketches—Museum of Modern Art (Chapter Four)

Top navigation—Microsoft (Chapter Six)

Treating space as an entire unit—Lumière (Chapter Five)

Voice—"M&M's" (Chapter Eight)

White space—Gadabout Salons(Chapter Five)

Writing for the Web—C|NET (Chapter Six)

Points to Ponder

Art on the Web as a unifying, community effort—AIDS Quilt Project (Chapter Four)

Collaborative paradigm and healthy work spaces—gURL (Chapter Five)

Copyright—The Internet Travel Network (Chapter Seven)

Corporate involvement in community service—7UP (Chapter Eight)

Fundamental resources—Tales of Four Iguanas (Chapter Nine)

New ideas into old themes—The United Kitty Front (Chapter Nine)

RSACi ratings—Expedia (Chapter Seven)

Sponsor-driven solutions—TerraQuest (Chapter Seven)

The human view in a technological environment—Shoel Perelman (Chapter Nine)

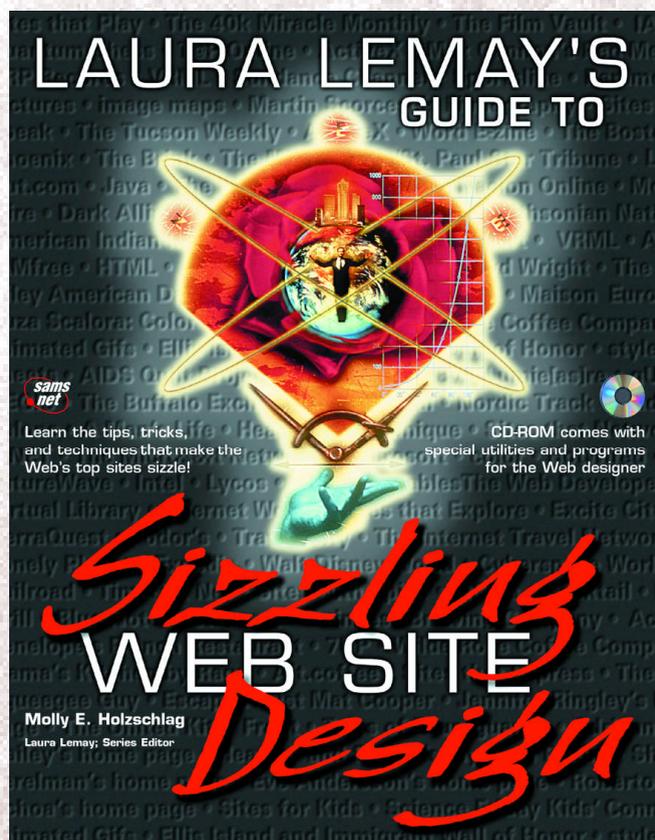
Web sites for customer service—MCI (Chapter Eleven)

When to contact graphic designers—Cyberspace World Railroad (Chapter Seven)

LAURA LEMAY'S GUIDE TO

About This

Book



Laura Lemay's Guide to Sizzling Web Site Design is both a guide to some of the Web's best sites *and* a Web designer's reference. Using the exceptional sites within this book, you'll learn about a wide range of Web design concepts and applications.

Molly E. Holzschlag

Laura Lemay, Series Editor

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Matt Straznitskas,
a visionary media designer, and my brother
in spirit.

—*Molly E. Holzschlag*

LAURA LEMAY'S
LAURA LEMAY'S

Guide to
**Sizzling
Web Site Design**

sams
net



Learn the tips, tricks, and
new techniques to make your
Web site sizzle!

Filled with tips and
practical details on programming
and Web site design

Molly E. Holzschlag

***Laura Lemay,
Series Editor***

WEB SITE



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Contents

Introduction	xiv
Who Should Read This Book?	xiv
How This Book Is Structured	xiv

1



On the Edge of Forever: Web Design and Human Potential	1
New Media, Interactivity, and Non-Linearity	2
What Makes a Web Site Sizzle?	4
Presentation of Information	5
Surfing Forward	6

2



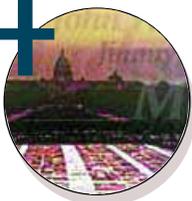
Sites that Play: Movies, Music, and Entertainment	7
The 40k Miracle Monthly	9
Film Vault	12
Quantum Chess	15
T@P Online	16
Red Meat	17
GRP Records	19
Sundance Channel	20
Sportsline USA	21
Paramount Pictures	22
Martin Scorsese	23

3



Sites that Speak: Newspapers and Magazines	25
Tucson Weekly	27
Word	31
The Boston Phoenix	34
The Brink	35
The Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune	37
Out.com	39
The Phoenix New Times	41
La Nacion Line	42
MoJo Wire	44
Dark Alliance	45

4



Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities	47
The Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum	49
The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA)	52
ARTnet's IAMfree	54
An Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright	56
The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater	57
Urban Artifacts	58
Maison Européenne de La Photographie	59

Color Therapy	61
Ellis Island and Immigrant Wall of Honor	62
The AIDS Quilt Project	63

5



Sites to Live By: Beauty, Fashion, Health, and Lifestyle 65

Lumière.	66
gURL	69
AEGIS	72
Buffalo Exchange	75
L'oréal	76
Nordic Track	77
Gadabout	78
A Man's Life	80
Health Girl.	81
Clinique.	82

6



Sites that Network: Computers, Internet, and the Web 85

C NET	87
The Microsoft Network.	90
Microsoft.	92
HotWired.	93
FutureWave.	94
Intel	96
Lycos.	97
UKweb.	99
The Web Developer's Virtual Library	100
Internet World.	102

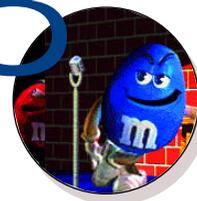
7



Sites that Explore: Travel and Adventure 105

Excite City.Net.	107
TerraQuest.	110
Fodor's.	112
Travelocity.	114
Internet Travel Network	115
Lonely Planet.	117
Expedia	118
Walt Disney World	120
Cyberspace World Railroad	122
TimeOut Net	123

8



Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web 125

"M&M's"	127
Cocktail	129
Border Grill	132
Blue Note Restaurant	133
Guinness Brewing Company	134

Penelope's Restaurant	136
7UP	137
Wilde Rose Coffee Company	139
Ragú	140
alt.coffee	142

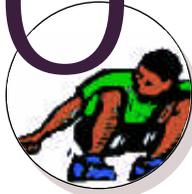
9



Sites that Express: People on the Net— Unique Home Pages 145

The Internet Squeegee Guy	146
Escape Artist Mat Cooper.	148
Jennifer Ringley	150
The United Kitty Front	152
Tales of Iguanas	153
Adrienne Dailey.	155
Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm	157
Shoel Perelman.	158
Eve Andersson	160
Roberto Ochoa	162

10



Sites for Kids: Education, Games, Items of Interest with Children in Mind 165

Science Friday Kids' Connection	166
Freezone	169
Crayola	171
Seussville	172
Kid'n Around.	173
World Surfari.	175
The Yuckiest Site on the Internet	178
The International Kids' Space.	179
Mello Smello.	181
The MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom	183

11



Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web 185

JCPenney	186
Bloomingdale's	190
IBM	192
Toshiba	193
Sedgwick China.	194
Nike	196
Beaudry RV	197
Konica Business Machines.	198
MCI	200
Gerber Optical.	201

A	Site Reference	203
B	Top Twenty Design Tips	207
C	Color Table	209
D	Resource Reference	211
E	What's on the CD-ROM?	219
	Index	221

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—*Molly E. Holzschlag*

About the author

Molly E. Holzschlag

I feel extremely fortunate to be writing books about subjects that I am learning at the same time as the reader. The Web simply hasn't been around long enough for anyone to be a true authority about it as a whole, although many people in the industry come to it with a great deal of experience in a variety of areas.

Academically, I have been trained as a writer and media artist. I hold a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Prescott College and an M.A. in Media Arts from the New School for Social Research. Professionally, I have worked for ten years as a technical writer and editor, and for seven years wearing a number of hats in various online pursuits. Currently, I balance my professional interests between book and column writing about new media, independent interactive media design, and online systems management for the Microsoft Network.

I maintain an avid love for music and write a column for *Goldmine Magazine*. "Line Noise" is about music on the Net. Check it out in your favorite record store each month. I am a singer and guitarist, and play in the duo Courage Sisters with singer/songwriter Patty Sundberg. We've got a CD, *Dancing Together*, that keeps threatening to appear commercially on the Crash Landing label.

Mostly, I appreciate my quality relationships with family and friends, the Sonoran Desert I call home, and my cat Tara—who claims all work and property as her own. Seriously, she spends her days in my office chair, right in front of the computer, when I'm not around. I always get that look when I walk in like "Ha! I do *everything* around here. Where have *you* been?"

Series Editor

Laura Lemay is the author of the best-selling *Teach Yourself Web Publishing with HTML* books and co-author of *Teach Yourself Java in 21 Days*. She also writes a regular column on HTML and Web publishing for *Web Techniques* magazine. You can visit her home page at

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As the publishing manager of the group that created this book, I welcome your comments. You can fax, e-mail, or write me directly to let me know what you did or didn't like about this book—as well as what we can do to make our books stronger. Here's the information:

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Introduction

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is a must if

- You are a fan of the Web
- You are interested in how the Web is designed
- You are looking for specific information on the Web, such as pages that would be enjoyable for your children
- You are a Web designer and require a hands-on reference with practical and conceptual techniques to expand your knowledge and enhance your work

How This Book Is Structured

There are 100 Web sites in the book, each with a specific tip or technique attributed to the site. The 100 sites are broken up into ten chapters of ten sites each, with each chapter focusing on a different theme, such as "Sites with Spice" or "Sites that Speak." Within each chapter are two feature sites, which are deemed to be especially well-balanced in design and content. The other eight sites are highlighted sites, each offering some unique and special contribution to the Web.

On the Edge of Forever

Web Design and Human Potential

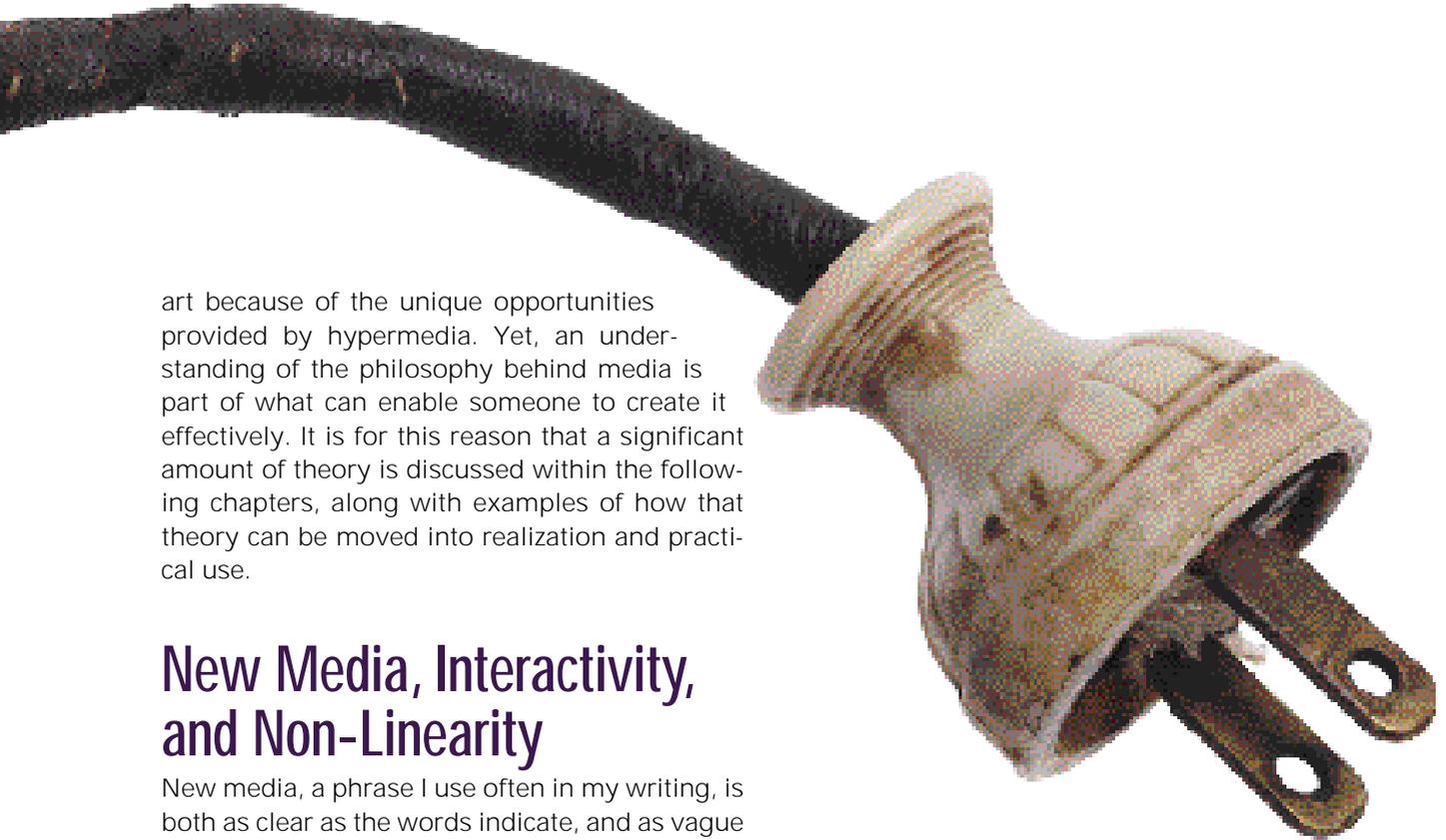
In a review written for *Scientific American* in August of 1996, Ben Davis comments that the World Wide Web “seems to be creating a broad definition of culture that forces us to recognize that science and art are parallel aspects of the same basic creative impulse rather than unrelated pursuits.” This compelling thought has stayed with me solidly since reading it.

Long aware that I have struggled with a desire to be a scientist and an artist, and having had some difficulty finding a place where the two meet, it occurs to me that Davis has hit upon a philosophical gap that the popularization of the Net in general and the hypermedia-based Web in specific is bridging. With one foot firmly planted on the land of science, and the other equally balanced on that of art, the meeting point is this elusive place called Cyberspace.

Web designers are challenged to be many things, including computer scientists, communications specialists, graphic artists, and advertising authorities. Precious little guidance exists to help these makers of a new medium, and, as such, the Web designer often makes up his or her own rules to navigate these unique circumstances. Most designers are, by necessity, preoccupied with keeping up with the stormy seas that this emergent technology instigates. Few have time to investigate the more theoretical ideas surrounding the impact this new medium is having on individual lives, as well as on the world society at large.

In my workaday world, I, too, am engaged in the creation of commercial Web site design. You can bet that my clients are typically not that interested in new media theories, the brain, or the shrinking of this chasm between science and

plug in to interactivity



art because of the unique opportunities provided by hypermedia. Yet, an understanding of the philosophy behind media is part of what can enable someone to create it effectively. It is for this reason that a significant amount of theory is discussed within the following chapters, along with examples of how that theory can be moved into realization and practical use.

New Media, Interactivity, and Non-Linearity

New media, a phrase I use often in my writing, is both as clear as the words indicate, and as vague as the difference between mind and brain. In simplistic terms, new media is any traditional media that is combined with *interactivity*. It requires, and responds to, response from the person or people who are involved with it.

Two unclouded examples of interactive media are CD-ROM presentations such as games or encyclopedias, where individuals make choices that result in a variety of possible responses from the given program. The World Wide Web is another clear example of interactive, or new, media. The best Web designers understand that this means engaging the visitor with the material on a Web site, and the best Web sites are those that do this successfully.

Another aspect of new media is that it is *non-linear*. This means that the right-to-left paging and hierarchical flowcharts to which the Western mind is accustomed are only two of many ways of arranging content. Pick up a book in English,

German, or Spanish, and begin to read. You will move in a linear fashion through the words, paging along as you go.

Although you can do this on the Web, there are other options as well! You can choose to move through the Web environment *tangentially*, first following one road, then branching off on another. Another good example of non-linear movement is casual conversation. Everyone has had the experience of starting out with a political topic and suddenly ending up talking about cheese, or children, or how bad the mosquitoes were this past summer. The natural rhythms of communication are also tangential rather than linear.

More than a call-and-response or non-linear environment, new media is a sensual one. As Web technology becomes more sophisticated, this is proven time and again with the addition of

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pair of glasses. The hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with the fingers gripping the temples of the glasses. The background is a solid, vibrant green color. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the skin and the metallic frame of the glasses. The overall mood is contemplative and intellectual.

sound, animation, three-dimensional graphics, technologies such as CU-SeeME that allow for point-to-point visual communications, and virtual worlds, which create replicas of existing environments or envision imaginary ones. I have even seen a Web site that was a parody of CU-SeeMe technology called Smell-U-Smell-Me! Who knows? Perhaps there will one day be a way of adding fragrances to our virtual environments, creating sensory adventures.

Brain, Mind, Computer

When hypermedia is taken away from the commercial realm and studied by those scientists interested in the relationship of intelligence to computers, an interesting observation is made. Hypermedia—the Web’s infrastructure that allows for the linking of documents and objects to one another in non-linear ways—acts very much like the human brain.

The non-linear environment created by hypermedia can be described as similar to the way human memory works. Think of your favorite piece of music. You should quickly remember its melody, name, or some combination of its aspects. However, this information won’t always come to you in the same order.

The reason is because all the pieces of that music that you know are stored in many places in your brain. Using a complex system of biochemical and electrical impulses, the brain retrieves this information as quickly as possible and places it into consciousness. Sometimes you'll notice, especially as the years of our lives pass or when we are particularly fatigued, that the response time is slower, and pieces are missing.

The brain is thousands, perhaps millions more times complex than a computer, but the concept of memory storage and retrieval is similar. This is, again, especially true of the hypermedia environment found on CD-ROMs and, of course, the Web.

Imagine the potential empowerment that surfing the Web can actually bring! In the process of looking at cool sites with animations and sound, or researching information, you are not just having fun or doing work, you are *learning*. And not only are you learning, but you are doing so in a way that works in a natural rhythm with your brain. This in and of itself provides a powerful argument to those naysayers in the world who believe that computer technology inhibits and reduces human creativity. The facts may very well show that these technologies have indeed allowed us to work those virtual mental muscles and come away with stronger, more realistic patterns of thought and information processing.

That might sound rather clinical, and herein lies the other virtue of the Net. You aren't just connected to an interactive, mechanized world. People are accessible! And not just people within your community, but people from world communities, cultures, and myriad ways of being. With mindful guidance and organization, the combination of hypermedia and communications technology reaches much farther than imaginable.

So What's This Got to Do with Web Design?

That's simple! To be a great physician, one must understand not only the parts of the body, but the way those parts work together in order to function smoothly. The same is true for Web design. As a designer, it is important for me to not only understand the parts—HTML, computer programming, whatever my specialty might be—but also the way those parts integrate with the whole. And, in this case, that whole involves technology, art, and the

way those entities will interact with the complex people at the other end of the data stream.

Web design is the creation of media. Most North Americans and many world citizens are familiar with the impact of media. The importance of journalism is a major thread in the fabric of democracy—the right to express a fundamental part of the U.S. ideal. On the other hand, the continuous barrage of stories about disorders such as anorexia and bulimia remind us of the power the media can have over minds and self-perception.

Web designers need to understand the impact of what is created and subsequently placed in front of humanity. This might not be something that I'm inclined to think about while building a Web site about music, or some other form of entertainment, or a product. But every so often, the impact of what I'm doing comes home to me, be it in the form of someone at the other end reminding me that he is out there by commenting on a Web experience via e-mail, or when I'm working on subject matter that relates to children.

What Makes a Web Site Sizzle?

I'm convinced that the foundation of a great Web site lies with a designer's ability to bridge art and technology. Many Web sites have yet to embrace the artistic aspect of Web design, and as design on the Web becomes more and more sophisticated, those sites become less and less effective. There is also an inherent danger in throwing too much technology at a design. As I'll point out in many places throughout this book, the simplistic can be just as effective as the fantastic.

For the purposes of this book, I've chosen sites that fill a variety of criteria that amount to "sizzling." The design is typically original, with strong graphic presence and unique style. Use of font styles, layout, white space, and background are each considered as important aspects of a design. I've usually avoided sites with cliché, over-used backgrounds and text layouts.

A sizzling site will generally have to be accessible and attractive in different browsers, specifically Netscape Navigator 3.0 and Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0. The browser issue is becoming

increasingly less of a focus as home computers, and the software that people use, become more advanced. My current inclination is to be much less concerned with the cross-browser issue with the one exception that informational sites must be text-accessible.

My rationale for the text access is much less oriented toward the bandwidth and load-time issues, but is instead related to accessibility. Many organizations have limited Internet access, especially those outside the English-speaking world. Of further note is access for the blind. GUI (graphical user interface) environments are typically very difficult for current screen-reader technology to handle. Therefore, text access is important when delivering significant data to people.

Sites that sizzle must load within a reasonable amount of time, and graphics should be optimized for speed but not at the loss of visual quality. HTML code should be clean. In many instances of sites that are well-designed graphically, the technology is poor or vice versa. There are many instances in this book where this is true, but in each case there is *something* of importance in what that site is giving the Web, as well as lessons for the Web designer.

In fact, please bear this in mind when you see a site that doesn't seem to fit into my own chosen parameters for a great Web site. Although this book features a range of Web sites, the point is to use these sites as vehicles for understanding concepts and techniques inherent in current Web design trends.

Moreover, there are only one hundred Web sites in this book. I've left out many that, in fact, might have embraced the ideas of sizzling *better* than those I've chosen. I think of those sites as the good children of the Web. They miss getting attention because they do everything right. So to those great sites and designers I didn't or couldn't include, or simply haven't found yet, keep up the good work, and know that you weren't excluded because I didn't think you sizzled!

Concept, Technology, and Technique

Much of what you'll find in this book involves the art and technology of Web sites. Each site

has brought some combination of cultural or artistic value to the Web, channeled through the Web's technology. I examine each within my evaluation of a given site, although I typically focus on one over another, depending on the teaching within that section.

When expressing concepts, I will usually give thoughts, guidelines, or simple exercises that can assist in strengthening your experience and hands-on application of those concepts. A good example is the writing trick in Chapter 8, "Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web." The site is "M&M's" , the issue, voice. I consider voice a conceptual rather than a technical approach. Conceptual lessons relate more to the ideas involved in a Web site's creation.

With technology, I may actually give physical examples of existing code, with recommendations on how to arrange that code in a different or more effective fashion. Or, I may offer a list of tips and tricks to apply to a given application for maximum effect. There's a companion CD-ROM to this book, and where it has been particularly advantageous, I've included programs and basic instructions on how to apply those programs to work with a specific technology.

Presentation of Information

I've selected 10 categories with 10 sites in each category. I based the categories on what I felt defined the various types of Web sites found on the Net. Sometimes you'll see that a given site will cross over, but that's okay! One of the powers of the Web is its flexibility, and the offerings here are intended to reflect just that.

Within a chapter there are both conceptual and technology techniques offered through two types of coverage. The first is the "Feature Site" the second is the "Highlighted Site."

There are a total of 20 Feature Sites in this book, two per chapter. These sites typically have great all-around presentation, strong HTML, great graphic design, quality writing, and a balanced use of multimedia and interactive components. There is more detailed teaching with these sites, and a special component to some of these sites is that, where it's been possible, I've included comments, philosophies, and ideas from the designers themselves.

Highlighted Sites focus on content, with the opportunity to serve as an inspiration to demonstrate a specific concept or technique. The teaching is abbreviated, as is

the description, but here's the great part—you can always visit the site online to get a fuller view of what's occurring.

All sites have been rendered in full-color screen captures to give as complete an experience of their detail as possible. Obviously, a two-dimensional rendering cannot take the place of the interactive medium. For this reason, I've included as many sites as possible on the accompanying CD-ROM, in whole or in part, in order to allow for instant access to the pages of note.

Surfing Forward

Brock Meeks of *Wired* Magazine asked me what was the point of writing a book using models of Web sites—sites that might be gone tomorrow. Aside from the practical teaching involved, my answer hadn't yet matured. However, after thinking about it, my response to him would also reflect how important it is to document the way Web design is done, the concepts involved, and the practices.

Many of the books on my shelves are about the history of typography, or the evolution of technology. The account of a process is as important to the practitioner as is the practice itself, *if* that practitioner is to

have a deep and personal understanding of what he or she is choosing to spend significant parts of the day doing.

I am certain that when I look back at this book a year from now, most of the sites covered will have changed, and as Meeks points out, some will be gone completely. However, I will also know that the fundamentals of interactive media and the practical design concepts covered here will still be applicable. Even if the Web was to go away, ideally, the issues discussed in this book would be interesting *and* useful to individuals who design media in the coming century.

And, with the beautiful color renderings and presentation within it, this book will stand in the future as a historic testament to the way things were done in the early days. A pioneer's guide, if you will, to the way it was.

Finally, and most simply, this book is fun. There is art, humor, personality, optimism, and, perhaps most importantly, humanity within these pages. Writing this book taught me how to really enjoy the Web from each of these perspectives. I've learned that the Web is much more than a simple surf. But, then again, some days it is just that—the adventure of knowing that anything is possible, and the joy of the unusual and astonishing places where the virtual waves will take you.

Sites that Play

Movies, Music, and Entertainment

The 40k Miracle Monthly

<http://www.40kmiracle.com/>

The Film Vault

<http://desert.net/filmvault/>

Quantum Chess

<http://www.br1abs.com/quantumchess/index.html>

T@P Online

<http://www.taponline.com/>

Red Meat

<http://www.redmeat.com/redmeat/>

GRP Records

<http://www.mca.com/grp/>

Sundance Channel

<http://www.sundancefilm.com/>

Sportsline USA

<http://www.sportsline.com/>

Paramount Pictures

<http://www.paramount.com/>

Martin Scorsese

http://www.wenet.net/~clayton/directors/martin_scorsese/

Movies, Music, and Entertainment

Everyone needs a daily dusting-off from the edges of the work-a-day world. Most of us do this by going to a movie, enjoying humor, music, books and magazines, sports, or playing games. Everyone has his or her preferred method of entertainment, and some extension of these favorites can be found on the Internet.

When fun, games, and the Web come together, it's an especially exciting time. Many analysts suggest that the Web is moving in the direction of merging the many forms of in-home entertainment enjoyed today. When bandwidth problems are solved, and technologies such as cable TV and new media converge, the world will know new levels of interactive pleasure.

A great example of this movement toward convergence, but with respect toward today's bandwidth limitations, can be found at the 40K Miracle site. Dedicated to creating great animation and games that all come in under 40 kilobytes, this site is well designed, superbly interactive, and very entertaining. Because the enjoyment of this site requires that you enjoy indulging in it yourself, I'm going to focus primarily on a more general issue—how to be sure people get to your site!

Next up is the Film Vault, a humorous and well-designed site for film buffs. Film Vault offers up capsule reviews, extended reviews, and a very nice search function where visitors can decide whether to view film information by genre, director, or date. Using tables for design layout, which is becoming commonplace, is examined, with a helpful guide to various table elements and what they do.

ActiveX is Microsoft's exciting addition to Web technologies, and I'll offer a little information as to what it is, the types of applications it is used for, and where to get more information on how to develop ActiveX functions for the Web. Quantum Chess is an excellent example of ActiveX; I'll use this Internet-based game environment by BR Labs as the jumping-off place for the ActiveX discussion.

A very entertaining magazine for "next generation" users is T@P Online. Offering coverage in literature, music, style, and sports, this is a sassy and fun e-zine that provides hours of enjoyment for visitors. I'll examine the `
` tag, as well as the HTML 3.0+ additions to it that have made it an extremely powerful and functional HTML element.

A little humor is always in order, and that is sure to be found on Max Cannon's Red Meat site. The macabre cartoon is becoming one of the world's most popular, with translations being offered as far away as the Czech Republic! The balance between visual design and content is an important conceptual lesson, and I'll offer some points to ponder when discussing Cannon's humorous offering.

GRP Recording, a subsidiary of MCA/Universal, has a stunningly well-designed Web site dedicated to the Jazz and Blues artists represented under its labels. Proximity is an important design concept that will be examined in this overview. Then I'll jump back into film, and look closely at the Sundance Channel's site, where the clever use of typography has been aided by the HTML `<tt>` tag. Sports enthusiasts are sure to enjoy Sportsline, a very extensive site with all there is to see, do, play, and read about in the sports world. Here, I'll examine character entities and how to apply them to effectively communicate various symbols, signs, and special characters most often required by Web designers.

Paramount has a visually attractive Web site that offers a very fine example of graphic proportion. And, if you haven't had enough of film, I'll give you one more site to enjoy. A fan of director Martin Scorsese has created a very interesting set of pages, well-designed and highly functional, and with the most impressive treatment of a hit counter that I've ever seen. I'll discuss the problems with hit counters, and show that if you have to have them, the way the Scorsese site has used it is at least attractive.

On with the show!

Featured Site I



This site is the epitome of entertainment. I thoroughly enjoy the animations, which are beautifully rendered and totally funny, and the design itself is visual candy. It's especially worthy of respect for the general bandwidth-respecting multimedia, which all comes in under, as the title of the site says, 40 kilobytes.

Now, get warmed up to the site with some dialog from one of the animations presented. Meet Intergnat and PixelBoy, an unlikely dynamic duo who are out to battle the evil bandwidth abusers:

"Oh no, Intergnat, that building is burning down!"

"You're right PixelBoy! And those flames look like bitmaps, too."

"Think of all the K that's been wasted!"

"Boy, if the fire trucks come with those siren .au sound files, the netizens will be waiting forever!"

Intergnat and PixelBoy save the day, of course, by putting out the fire. They didn't use water, as that would require streaming video, but they did indeed find a way to solve the problem in a low-bandwidth fashion. (See Figure 2.2.)

Sites as marvelous as this simply cannot be missed, yet they very often are. The reason is simple: with all of the growing information on the Web, sites can easily be overlooked. There are many things that Web site developers can do, some costly, some not, to ensure that a Web site gets seen. A discussion of banner promotions and off-line marketing techniques is offered in Chapter 11, "Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web." For the purposes of this chapter, I'm going to examine the domain name as a marketing device.

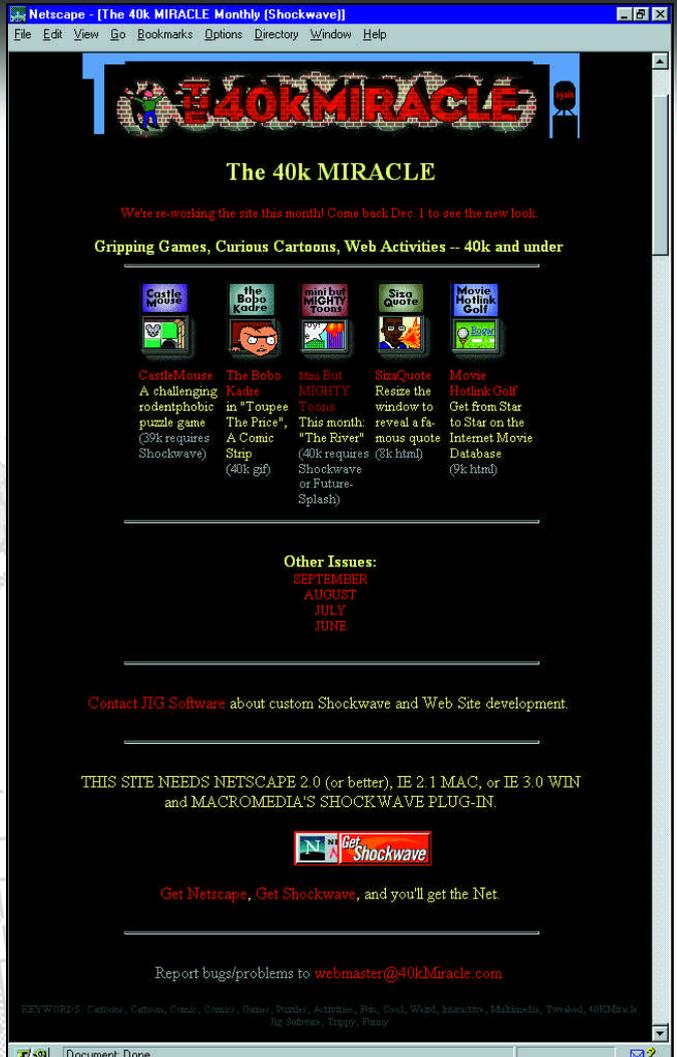


Figure 2.1. 40k Miracle Monthly home page.

What Is a Domain Name?

Domains are the data that the Internet uses to identify specific “lots” within the network. In their raw form, domains are numeric. I’m sure you’ve seen this reflected in numeric URLs.

Domain names are alphanumeric overlays to the numeric component of a given domain. Essentially, they are the name of the server on which the information resides. Systems Administrators get the names from the Internic (<http://www.internic.net/>). How a name will be implemented is going to be up to you and the server situation you are involved with. But, to some, having a domain name is as much a part of their marketing strategy as other forms of advertisement.

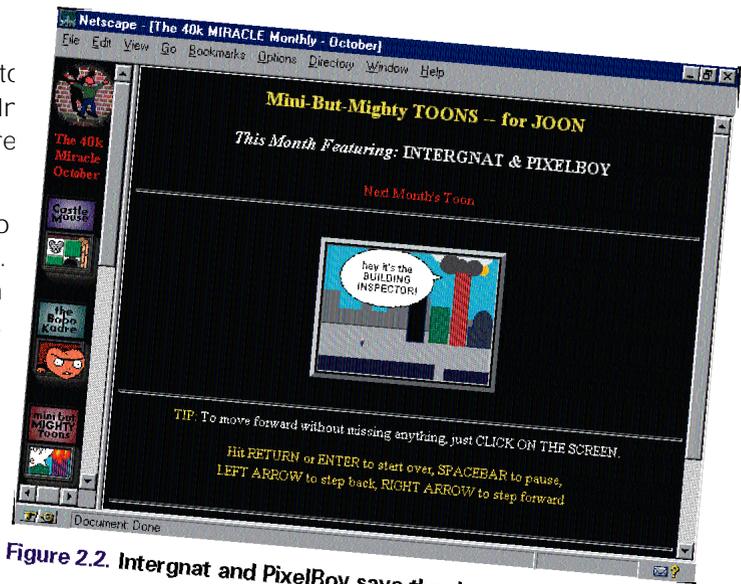


Figure 2.2. Intergnat and PixelBoy save the day.

Domain Name Parts

Domains have two primary parts: the name and the suffix. Names can be almost anything you want, although there are some character restrictions. Typically, any combination of letters and numbers can be used to create the name. This is followed by a suffix, which determines the type of organization under which you register. General suffixes include

- .com—Commercial organization (very common on the Web these days!)
- .edu—Educational organization
- .gov—Government institution
- .mil—Military institution
- .net—Network
- .org—Organization

There are also country codes that fall into the suffix section of a domain. Some examples include

- .jp—Japan
- .uk—Great Britain
- .mx—Mexico

Note that the `www` that you see at the beginning of most domains is typically a requirement of the server rather than an actual part of the numeric necessity. Sometimes they are necessary, sometimes not. With 40k Miracle Monthly, it is, in fact, necessary to include the `www` with the domain name and suffix.

`http://www.40kmiracle.com/`

From the preceding URL, you can see the placement of the defining `www`, the domain name (`40kmiracle`), and the domain suffix.

How to Select and Register Domains

Registered domain names are very much like a personalized license plate. If I want people to remember me, I might go out and put “Molly” on my plates, just as I could go and register the domain name `http://www.molly.com/`. Well, I could, if someone else didn’t already have that particular domain! Internic keeps track of registrations, and it’s very simple to find out if something is already being used.

Therefore, the routine is to figure out what I want my domain name to be, check it out with Internic, and if it isn’t used, to register it.

Selecting a Domain Name

Domain names, when used for the purpose of association and marketing, must be easy to remember and relate to the product or offering. The reason goes beyond my just being able to find the 7UP Web site by typing in `www.7Up.com`. It also helps get the site indexed by Web worms and crawlers. Many of these highly-trafficked databases will index URLs, and will find associated references in a given search. This boosts the probability of your Web site getting found.

A domain name should not be too long, as there’s too much opportunity in that case for someone to make a mistake and have trouble finding you. Keep them as short as possible. 40k Miracle has 10 total characters; this is almost stretching it. I would recommend keeping names down to

seven or less characters. It's no accident that phone numbers in the U.S. are seven digits. This is because seven has been found to be an effective number for people to recall. I'd stick to that convention, as it's something people are already familiar with.

Selecting a Suffix

Suffixes should best represent your organization. Most commercial Web sites should be registered with the .com domain. Because there's a glut of names in this suffix, there is some discussion that Internic will be adding another suffix, such as .biz, to accommodate the commercial infiltration of the Net. If you are a commercial organization, start with the .com suffix.

Educational, military, and government organizations must fulfill specific requirements in order to qualify for those suffixes. The .net suffix is always an alternative. Any network qualifies, and the meaning of network in this instance is considerably vague. The same is true for .org, which refers to the general "organization." Typically, .org is appropriate for not-for-profit organizations, but as with .net, there is an amount of vagueness involved, and it will be up to you to determine what most truthfully reflects your site.

Note that if you've selected a great domain name but someone already has it registered with your preferred suffix, you might try changing suffixes to something else, in order to get the combination that best suits you.

Searching Domains

Once you've made your selection, you can do a simple whois search. Using a Telnet application, or logging into a shell account with a command prompt, simply type the following:

```
whois www.molly.com
```

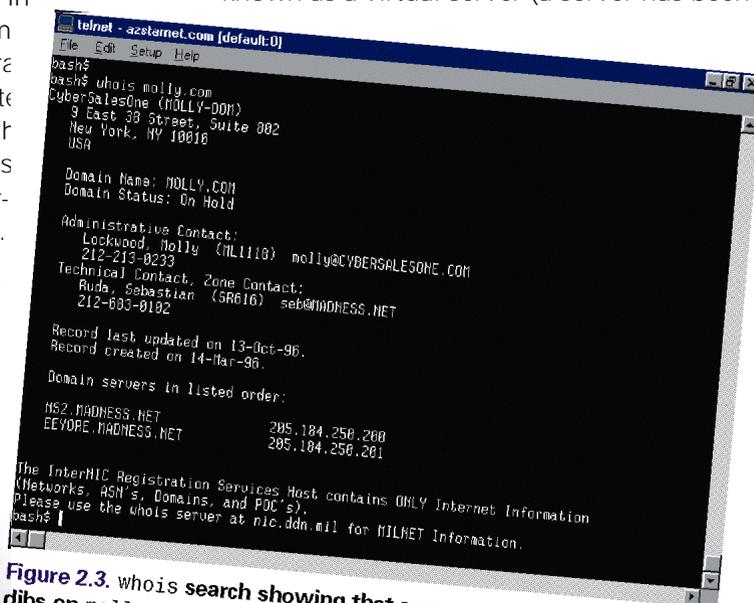
If the domain is taken, the search results will show who owns it and what its status is, as you can see in Figure 2.3, where someone has absconded molly.com! However, if a domain is not taken, which molly.net is not, a "no match" will result.

The Internic also has a Web-based whois application that you can use as an alternative to this line-based option.

Registering Domains

I can now register my chosen domain, molly.net. To do this, I can use the Internic's Web interface. From the main page at <http://www.internic.net/>, select Registration Services and follow the links accordingly. Choose your preferred way for payment. Fees are very reasonable: \$100.00 to register and \$50.00 a year thereafter will maintain the domain name.

Once your domain is registered, it will be implemented by your Systems Administrator to work on your server. Some Sysadmins require payment for this service, and there will be various ways to handle the domain. If you either run at the root (you *are* the server), or if you have what is known as a virtual server (a server has been



```
telnet - azstarnet.com [default:0]
File Edit Setup Help
bash$
bash$ whois molly.com
CyberSalesOne (MOLLY.COM)
  3 East 38 Street, Suite 002
  New York, NY 10018
  USA
Domain Name: MOLLY.COM
Domain Status: On Hold
Administrative Contact:
  Lockwood, Molly (ML1118) molly@CYBERSALESONE.COM
  212-213-0233
Technical Contact, Zone Contact:
  Ruda, Sebastian (SR616) seb@MADNESS.NET
  212-603-0102
Record last updated on 13-Oct-96.
Record created on 14-Mar-96.
Domain servers in listed order:
NS2.MADNESS.NET          205.184.250.200
EEYDRE.MADNESS.NET      205.184.250.201
The InternIC Registration Services Host contains ONLY Internet Information
(Networks, ASN's, Domains, and POC's).
Please use the whois server at nic.ddn.mil for MILNET Information.
bash$
```

Figure 2.3. whois search showing that someone already has dibs on molly.com!

"multi-homed" to make your section pretend it is root), you can have the straightforward domain name. If your Sysadmin doesn't provide this type of service, you will likely have a directory name after the domain name:

```
http://www.molly.net/molly/
```

Make sure to work *with* your Sysadmin from the start. This will ensure that you get the type of domain name and the results you are seeking!

Featured Site II



<http://desert.net/filmvault/>

This extremely popular Web site has gone through several incarnations in its design, as many sites that stay with the times do. The current incarnation is very notable for several reasons. First, the graphic design is quite attractive and humorous! Enjoy the flickering film light sneaking out under the door on the home page. Custom JavaScript enhancements have allowed for very sophisticated sort-and-search options, and the use of advanced frame technology makes the interface extremely functional.

Although much of what is on the Film Vault could conceivably provide interesting, individual design discussion, the most significant, for the purposes of this book, comes with the way the designers of the site have used tables to create the graphic layout of the pages. The technique of using tables as the layout code for most sites has become so commonplace on the Web, it almost indicates the beginning of a standard. Although HTML is in and of itself a layout tool, it has limitations. When tables were introduced, designers realized that tables were the answer to many of the headaches brought on by HTML limitations. Tables have become the real layout tool, rather than just a way to organize lists of information.

There are many ways to approach table layout; often, similar layout results can occur from different approaches. Here I'll discuss table basics, showing what various table elements do. It will be up to you as a designer to implement these various elements, in order

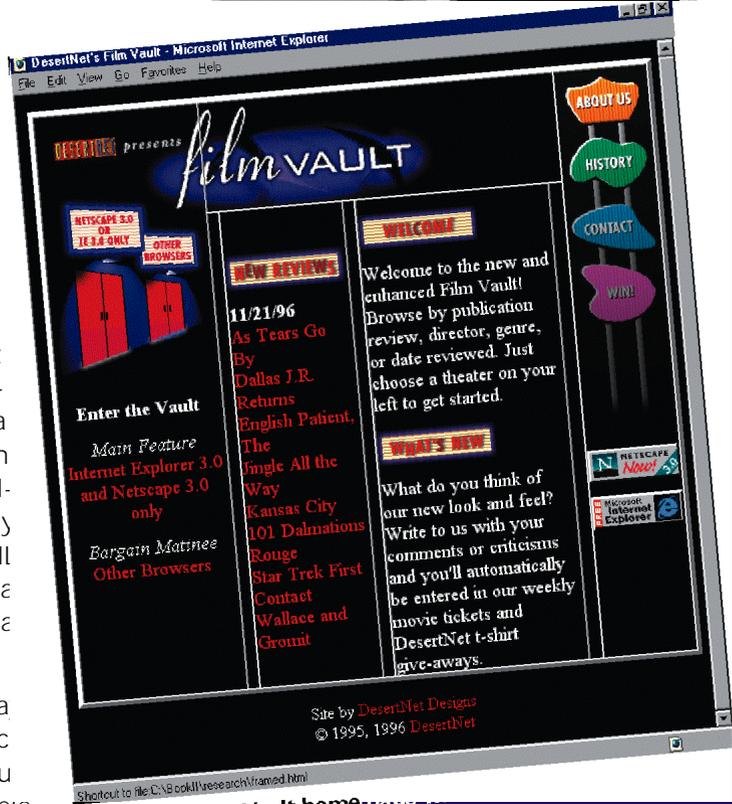


Figure 2.5. Film Vault home page

to get the results you're after. In Figure 2.5, I turned on the table borders so you could see how the Film Vault designers actually broke up images in order to gain effective layout with tables.

Practice might not make perfect in the case of tables, because there is so much evolving in HTML and the way it is used. Despite the rapid changes in the Hypertext Markup Language, practice might very well find you discovering all kinds of unique ways to present material, as it has with the Film Vault.

Table-Related Tags

I'll begin with the most obvious, the `<table>` tag. This tag invokes a table, and the data that comes after it will determine the structure and content of how the table will be implemented. Like most traditional HTML tags, `<table>` requires a closing tag to indicate the end of the table, represented by `</table>`.

Data within a table is handled by the determination of rows and table data. Table rows are signified by `<tr>` and the companion close, `</tr>`. Table data tags follow the open and close rule, `<td>` and `</td>`, respectively.

There are other elements, such as `<th>` that refers to a table heading cell, and `<caption>`, which places a caption for the table. I rarely use either of these. Their general use seems limited too, because there are more logical methods of achieving the same effects.

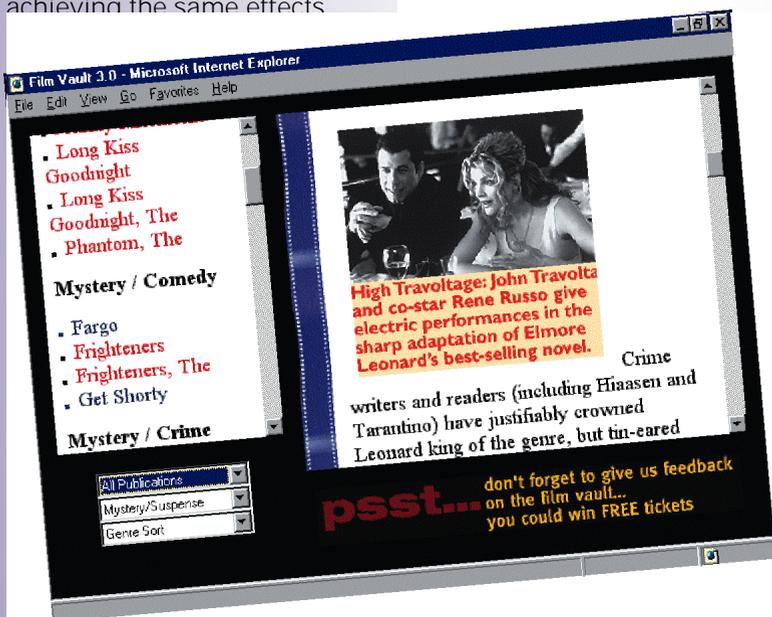


Table Tag Arguments

Each of the preceding tags allows for a variety of arguments. It is constant addition to these arguments that makes tables considerably effective as a layout tool. Table tag arguments control a great deal of information, and learning various ways to use the arguments will dramatically increase the quality and diversity of your layout skills.

The `<table>` tag itself allows for the following arguments:

- **border.** This calls for the appearance and width of a table border. In most instances, turning *off* borders allows for the layout control without the disruptive lines. I am not a big fan of borders on anything; they tend to be very restrictive. But, some designers find occasion to use them. The best use of table borders is, in my opinion, as a way to test and demonstrate how tables are put together. Beyond that, use them carefully. Here is my preferred syntax. Of course, the digit value will change depending on your needs.

```
<table border=0>
```

- **cellspacing.** This argues for the amount of space *between* individual table cells. Designers will find different times when a value is called for, regardless of borders being on or off. Either way, it is an excellent idea to have this in your `<table>` tag string, even if you force the default value to 0. The syntax is as follows, where 0 can be any value you require.

```
<table border=0 cellspacing=0>
```

- **cellpadding.** Padding is the amount of space found between the cell border and its content, effectively, its "pad." The same concepts defined in the cellspacing description apply as in this example:

```
<table border=0 cellspacing=0  
cellpadding=0>
```

- **width.** This is how many pixels or the percentage of a page a given table will take up. My personal preference is to argue for pixels, but currently, different browsers interpret pixels differently; therefore, be sure to test the results in both Netscape and Internet Explorer, or other browsers if the audience demands it.

Syntax by pixel, showing 500 pixels in width:

```
<table border=0 cellspacing=0 cellpadding=0 width=500>
```

Syntax by percentage, expressing 75% of the page as a table:

```
<table border=0 cellspacing=0 cellpadding=0 width=75%>
```

The table row tag `<tr>` is the container for table data information. Table rows can argue the following attributes:

- alignment (`align`). This refers to where the table data defined within this row will align horizontally: left, center, or right.

Syntax for right-centered data:

```
<tr align=right>
```

- vertical alignment (`valign`). Data can be arranged to the top, middle, and bottom on the vertical axis.

Syntax for vertically aligned data at the bottom of a cell:

```
<tr valign=bottom>
```

The last tag attributes I'll examine here in detail are the table data, or `<td>` arguments. They include

- alignment. Similar to table rows, this argument aligns the data along the left, right, or center horizon.

Syntax for a left horizontal data arrangement:

```
<td align=left>
```

- vertical alignment. As with table rows, this is the vertical alignment of table data along the top, middle, or bottom of the axis.

Syntax for a middle arrangement:

```
<td valign=middle>
```

- colspan. This is the number of columns this particular cell will span.

```
<td colspan=4>
```

- rowspan. Rows can be spanned as well, by defining this value:

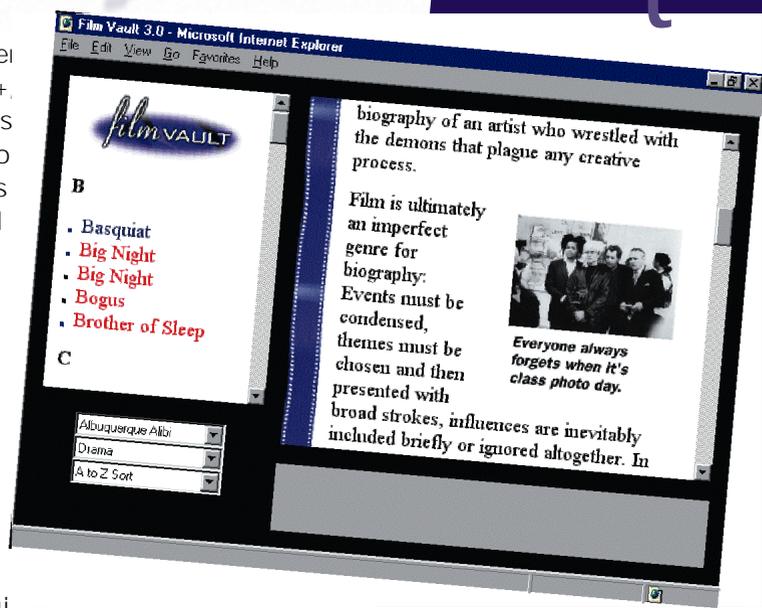
```
<td rowspan=2>
```

- bgcolor. Introduced by Internet Explorer and then picked up by Netscape 3.0+, background color has really given tables design power by allowing each cell to have a designated color. Use `bgcolor` as you would in the `<body>` tag. Additional references are cited throughout the text and can be found in Appendix C, "Color Table." Syntax to create a black cell would read:

```
<td bgcolor="#000000">
```

There are, of course, other instances of arguments and methods of working with tables. For more details on how to use them effectively, one excellent place to find cutting-edge use of and extensions for table layout is Microsoft's Site Builder workshop (<http://www.microsoft.com/workshop/>).

f
i
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v
a
u
l
t



Quantum Chess

<http://www.brllabs.com/quantumchess/index.html>

Chess lovers will thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to gain both practice and bona-fide live-over-the-Net chess games with a beautiful, flexible chess-board interface (see Figure 2.7) created by Brilliant Labs.

ActiveX seeks to create a component that integrates objects built in *any* programming language or multimedia application with Web client/server technology. These languages and applications can, and do, include Java, C++, Visual Basic, VRML, QuickTime Virtual Reality, and Shockwave. Essentially, this means that no matter what the developer tool, there is a way to integrate these as applications via the browser.

This integration enables tremendous cross-browser and cross-platform solutions. Web designers are quite enthusiastic about the possibilities and extended applications that ActiveX can bring to the desktop via the Internet. ActiveX is an extension on the OLE (object linking and embedding) concept, and brings that technology into a new time.

For Web designers, it is imperative to become familiar with ActiveX applications, even if programming is not your specialty. Understanding a bit about what ActiveX can do, and learning where to find more resources now, will help you in the long-term development of dynamic, integrated Web content. A few minutes at the Quantum Chess site should inspire you in terms of games, but this is only one very small application.

The best information on ActiveX development can be found by visiting Microsoft's Internet for Developers (<http://www.microsoft.com/intdev/>). Another very impressive resource, particularly for examples of ActiveX in action, is C|NET's ActiveX site at <http://www.activex.com/>.

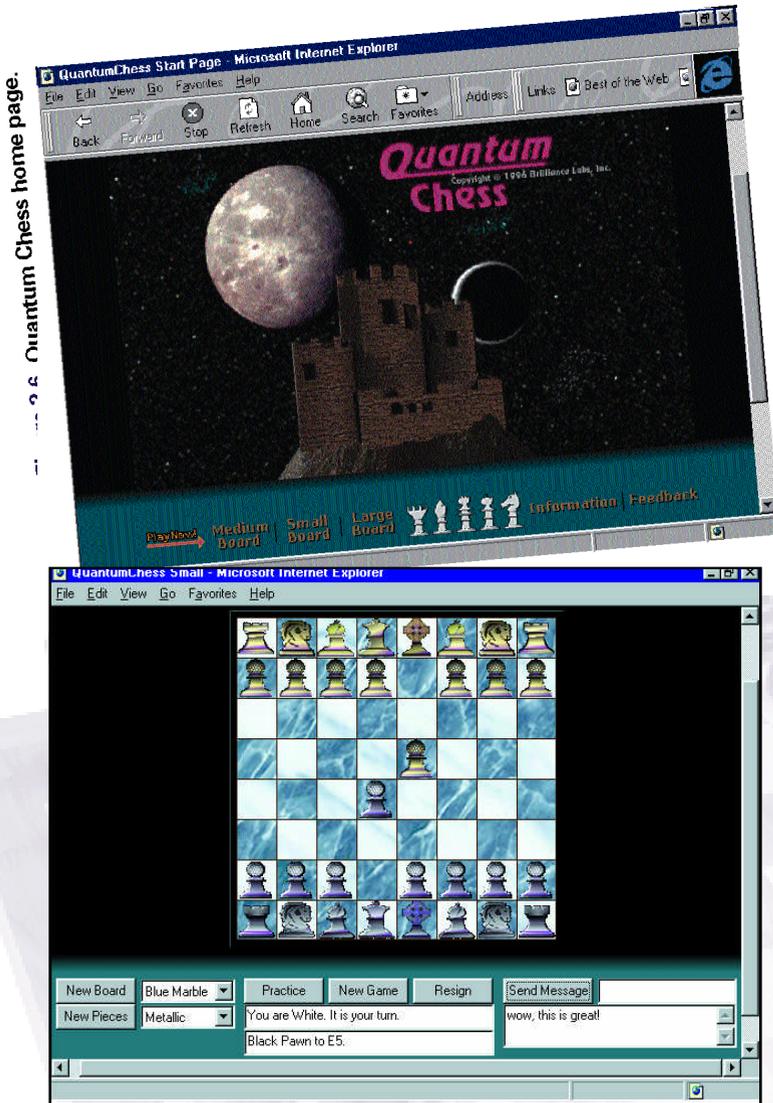


Figure 2.7. Quantum Chess interactive board.

Using ActiveX controls, Brilliant Labs has built several interactive games for use over the Net. An ActiveX-enhanced browser is required, and that's easily managed with Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

It's young, independent, sassy, and full of fun. T@P Online is a well-designed, well-written, and superbly presented 'zine geared toward the "next generation" (whoever that is)! My sense is that it's catering to twentysomething-year olds, or what others might refer to as "Gen-X'rs" (before that became déclassé). It doesn't matter, though. If you're young-at-heart and want a fresh perspective on all forms of entertainment, from fashion to sports, this 'zine is worth a look.

The layout uses lots of tables, as described earlier, and allows easy access to the wide variety of articles and interests within. Simple navigation and a fine appreciation of typography and Web design elements are noted throughout, as is the clean HTML code. This clean HTML code makes good use of a number of HTML 3.0+ arguments and extensions, including those related to the break `
` tag.

The `
` tag (no closing `</br>` exists) has historically been used as a way to create white space between paragraphs or to mimic a hard return. This hard return breaks lines of text where the designer wants to do so without adding a line of white space beneath the break, as would a paragraph (`<p>`) tag.

In earlier days of HTML, page creators used the `
` tag in a number of creative variations, including multiple tags in a row, to arrange elements spatially. Thank goodness that as HTML has evolved, so have the way important elements such as this have been used.



Figure 2.8. T@P Online home page.

Extensions to the `
` Tag

There is actually only one argument allowed in the `
` tag, but it has three values, each powerful enough to give the tag new flexibility and importance in HTML coding.

`<br clear="x">` is the syntax, where x equals one of the following values:

- **right**. This is used when image, table, or other page element data appears on the left. The break allows the text to continue on the right, creating “floating” images, or elements. (See Chapter 7, “Sites that Explore: Travel and Adventure.”) Say I have a graphic, `my.gif`, and I want it to appear on the left of the page, with my text wrapping around it to the right. Here is the syntax:

```

<br clear="right">
```

- **left**. Following the same concept, the `left` value is used when an image or page element is floated along the right, and text wraps around it, creating, again, what is referred to as a “floating” image. The syntax for this scenario would be the following:

```

<br clear="left">
```

- **all**. This is fairly self-explanatory, suggesting that the element will clear *everything* from the defined area, beginning on a new line on the page:

```

<br clear="all">
```

This series of syntax is especially helpful when trying to control page data in a consistent fashion between different browsers that support HTML 3.0 and above. Using these arguments with the `break` tag creates a default layout for the elements involved that is determined by *you*, the Web designer, rather than the browser.



<http://www.redmeat.com/redmeat/>

The rather bizarre work of cartoonist Max Cannon is taking the world by storm, both offline and online. The Web site is used as an extension of the syndicated cartoon, as well as a place for interesting sale items, history, press information, and other important data on the life and works of this contemporary cult hero.

The Red Meat site is very well-designed, having begun as a fan’s site, which then was taken control by Cannon’s agent and publishers. The look of the site improved, the custom, Java-enhanced navigation (see Figure 2.10) is simply a joy, and the graphic design is as humorous and macabre as the cartoon strip itself.

Web sites need a certain balance of content-to-design, and this is an important note for Web designers to take and place in the concept section of their design references. It speaks to the idea that a Web site can

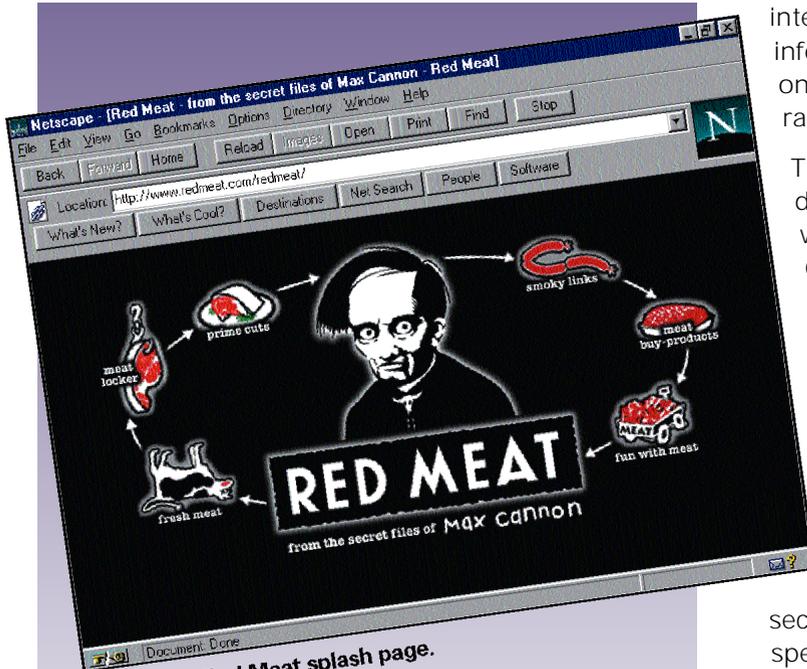


Figure 2.9. Red Meat splash page.

have fantastic visual imagery, sensible sections, and impeccable presentation, but if the content isn't fleshed out (if you'll pardon the pun), savvy eyes are going to notice.

In Figures 2.9 and 2.11 you'll see the complete navigation set and an example of one section of content, which provides some side-splitting, fun graphics and information. Other sections are almost bare, as can be seen in Figure 2.12. Although I often discuss how writing for the Web should be "short, sharp, and shocked," there are also examples where too little written content is detrimental. This can be avoided by doing one of two things:

1. If the site (such as Red Meat) is very well-designed, add written content that helps balance the empty spaces.
2. Don't create so many areas that you don't intend to use functionally.

Balance is the key, which could also be said about just how much red meat one eats!



Figure 2.10. Java mouse-over animation on Red Meat: Note reverse colors on the second navigation option.

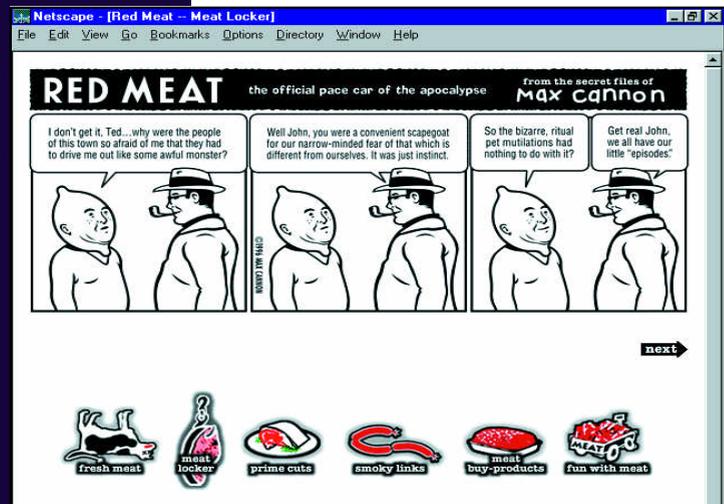
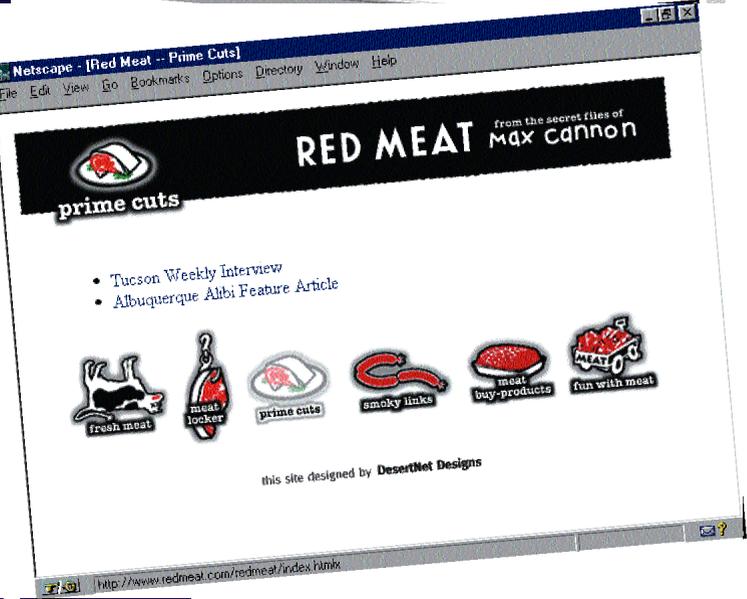


Figure 2.11. Fun with Meat Page: Note ample content.



Figure 2.12. Prime Cuts Page: Note the beef? This page lacks text!



GRP Records

<http://www.mca.com/grp/>

Truly a beautiful site, this site, designed by T3 Media, is a visual, as well as aural, tribute to the contemporary jazz artists within its group of labels. Such noted musicians include George Benson, Larry Carlton, and Keith Jarrett.

GRP's home page is a study in *proximity*. This is the design concept that relates the distance of a given page element from the next. It's a lesson designers should take home and study, because this is a design concept that flies right over the head of many people creating Web pages. That's forgivable for the hobbyist, but unforgivable for the professional. And there are many professionals not paying attention!

Because of the small visual space of a Web page, trying to fit too many elements into a page goes against the primary need of proximity, which is to group elements that form a cohesive idea together. This grouping creates organization, ease of access to the information, and aids in the creation of white space by forming natural clusters of visual information.

Breaking up space in clever ways is part of the challenge of design, especially Web design. Again, this is because of the limitations of the space. Turn those limitations into opportunities and you've accomplished a great deal in improving the vista of the Web.

Note that in Figure 2.13, the GRP home page has done a very precise job of keeping important elements together, but has also allowed for some spatial fun in the way the top graphics are arranged. In Figure 2.14, an internal GRP label page, notice how the type to the left is larger, separate from the picture to the right or the navigation bar along the bottom.

The concept of proximity suggests that each element has a relationship to itself, to other like elements, and to the page as a whole. First, keep the necessary information, so that it appears together in one space. Then, lead the eye to the next information, with just the right amount of space in between. Too much distance would confuse, too little would be visually busy and annoying. Finally, notice the general balance of the site. Does it flow well? Is there enough space between elements, or too much? None at all? Remember that organization is the key!

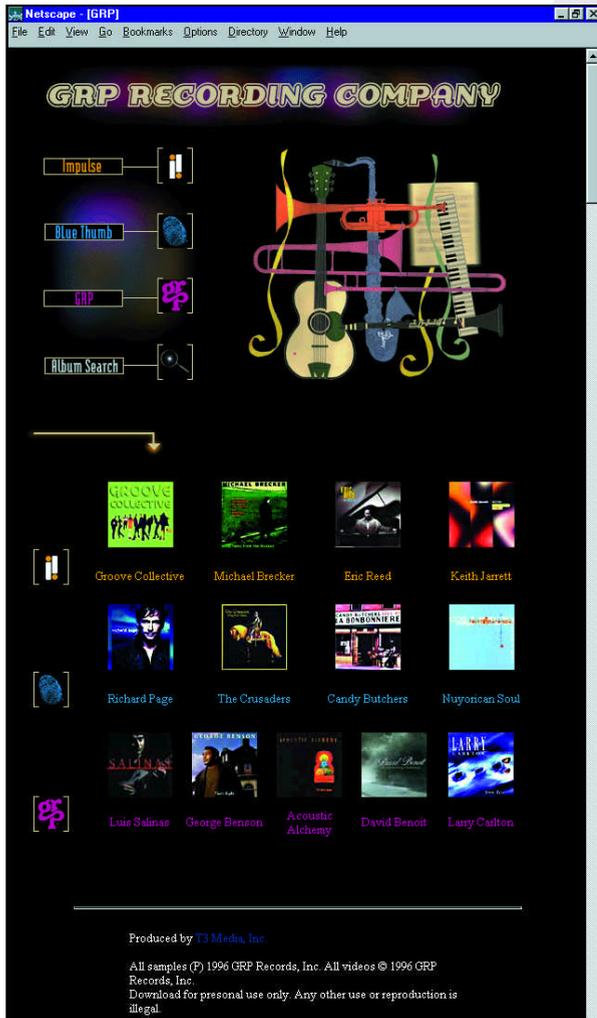


Figure 2.13. GRP home page.



Figure 2.14. Internal GRP page.

sundance channel

<http://www.sundancefilm.com/>

This site is the home page for the film extension of the variety of Sundance-related projects started by actor/director Robert Redford. Long interested in the works of independent film makers, the Sundance Channel is a subscription-based service available via satellite, or by petitioning local cable companies to carry it. Independent full-length and short subjects are featured, as are animation and documentaries.

The Web site is expertly designed, with advanced use of lines, color, shape (see Chapter 4: "Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities"), dynamic animation, and a very nice respect for typography. (See Appendix B, "Top Twenty Design Tips," for more references to type control.)

There are more and more methods of type control coming to the Web, via graphics, HTML advances and special browser extensions, Cascading Style Sheets, and clever uses of HTML tags. For some time, designers played with the `<pre>` tag, which forces preformatted text and space, as well as defaulting to the monospaced default font within the browser. Due to the inconsistencies with using the `<pre>` tag to force a monospaced type, it has become less and less popular to use it as a typographic trick.

Appearing more frequently are the `<tt>` and `</tt>` tags, which force a monospaced font. This can be used very effectively as a typographical element, as shown in Figure 2.16, an internal page from Sundance.

See how the type looks like a typewriter-style font? That's the result of the `<tt>` tag. The syntax to create this look is very simple:

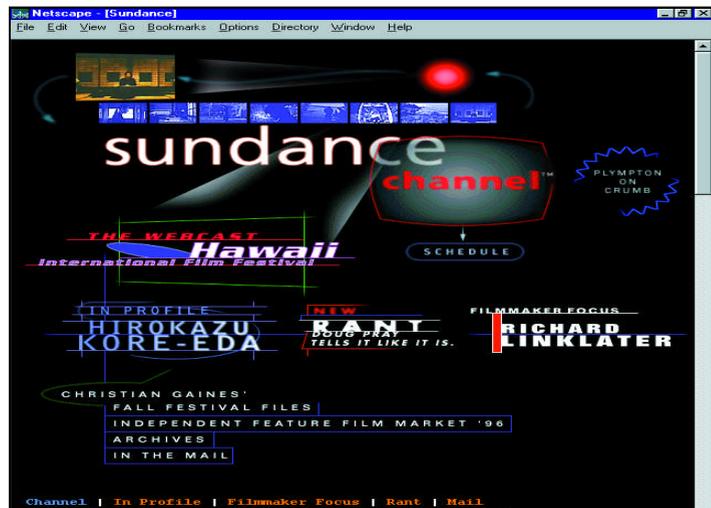


Figure 2.15. Sundance Channel home page.

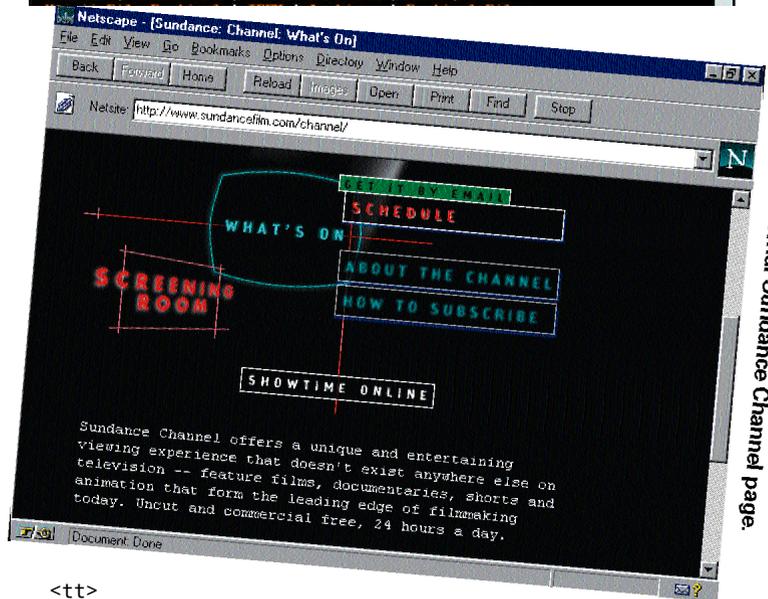


Figure 2.16. Internal Sundance Channel page.

```
<tt>
```

Place the text you wish to appear as monospaced here.

```
</tt>
```

Typography on the Web is really in its infancy. As you've seen with this discussion, and with others throughout the book where typography is discussed (please refer to Appendix A, "Site Reference," for a list of references), Web designers are using as many workarounds as possible to achieve font control. It is likely that creative applications, as found here with the `<tt>` tag, will continue to serve Web design in this fashion until such a time that better type controls are available.

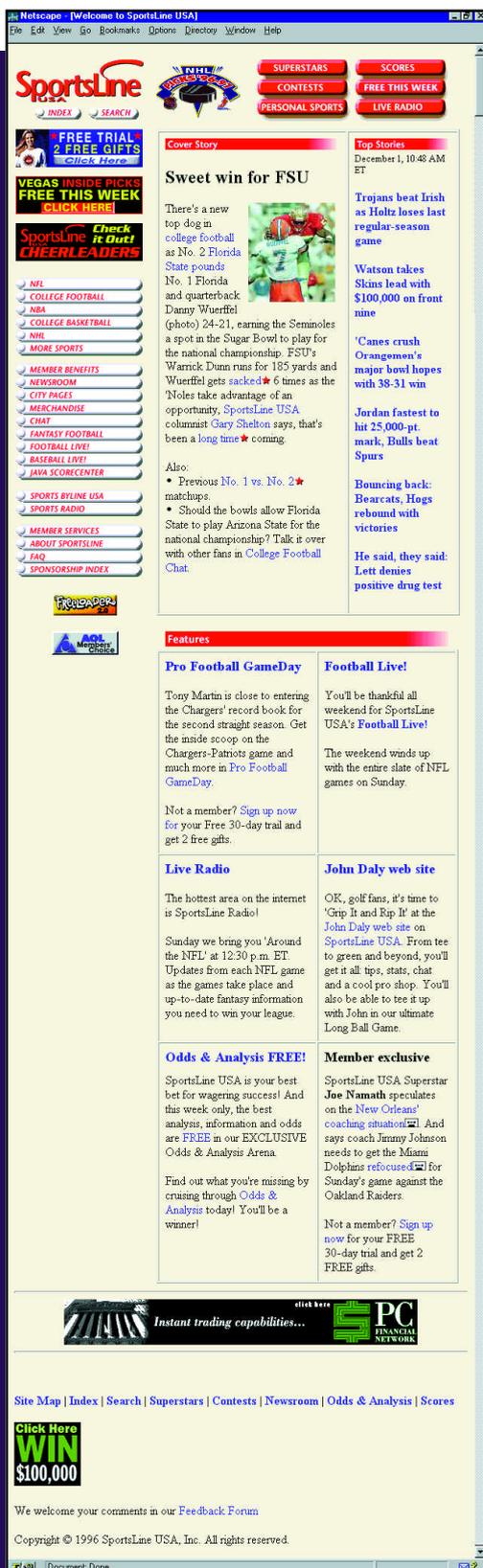


Figure 2.17. Sportsline home page.



Sports fanatics who also enjoy the Web are sure to be in for a treat with this great offering from SportsLine. (© 1997, Sportsline USA, Inc. All rights reserved.) This magazine-style site serves up feature stories, up-to-the-minute scores, contests, odds and analysis, and even radio broadcasts of various events.

The design is easy-going, more functionally pleasing than esthetically so, but with plenty of sensible, mature design elements employed. The site is well worth many return visits for both the content and its ease of use.

When peeking at the code, it occurred to me that this was a perfect opportunity to discuss character entities. These are elements that appear in what is known as the ISO-Latin-1 character set, several of which are used frequently by coders to achieve a variety of important symbols. I'll go over a few that are used most frequently, as well as offering a few resources that you can explore to get the full set.

The advantage of using character entities allows for consistency across various browsers. One could literally type out an entire document using the ISO-Latin-1 set; however, that would be ridiculous.

Some of the most frequently used character entities are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Frequently used character entities.

Character	Entity	Classification
&	&	Ampersand
@	@	The famous "at" symbol
©	©	Copyright Symbol
®	®	Registered Trademark
	 	Creates a tab indent

For a complete listing of ISO-Latin-1 entities, visit Jasper Verkroost's character set (http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jasper_verkroost/isolatin.htm).

Paramount Pictures

The earlier discussion of proximity relate well to the example that Paramount's home page provides. This is *proportion*, or the size of the graphics that are placed on a page.

Paramount's site is attractive, offering information on motion pictures, home video, television, digital entertainment, the Paramount Studio, and access to the Paramount store online. There's plenty of fun to be had, particularly for movie buffs, who will appreciate the ample information on new releases and upcoming attractions.

Note in Figure 2.18 the way that the size of the graphics don't force me to scroll down to view the main interface of the site. This is intelligent proportion, working within the parameters of a 640x480 pixel environment. Paramount takes that a step further by being aware that some of that space is further taken up by other elements, such as my browser tool or location bar. When I do scroll down, it's because I *want* to, not because I have to.

This is not to say that many well-designed sites don't require me to scroll down to get the gist of the design. However, if the objective is to create a navigational interface with that first "splash" screen, it is very wise to make sure it all fits into that defined area. Test and then retest on different browsers, machines, and monitors to be sure.

Web designers have a bad tendency to oversize graphics, perhaps because many of them either have no design background, or because they misunderstand the diversity in technology—that not everyone is using high-resolution, large monitors and millions of colors. It might also be the fact that graphic designers are simply not used to such restricted space. Please bear in mind that I am expressing this not to place blame or highlight a fault, but rather offer an observation to designers who wish to become more effective in the mien of the Web.

This means thinking about proportion! Certainly, things can be designed larger and then rendered

<http://www.paramount.com/>

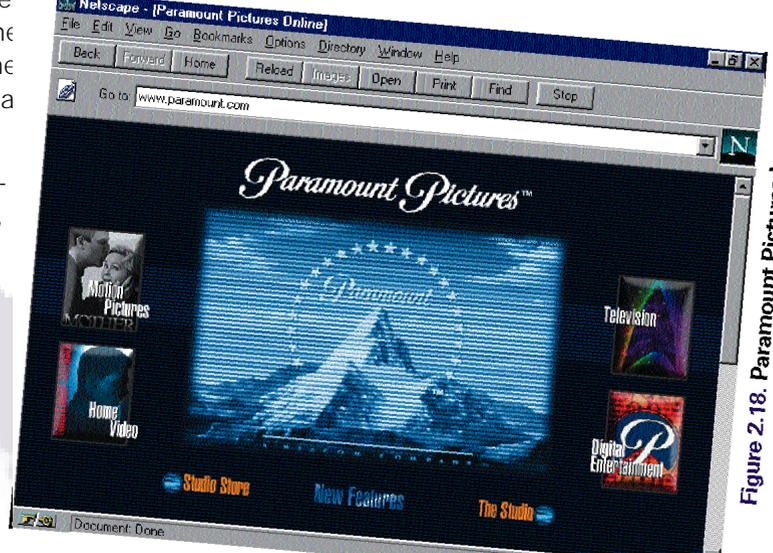
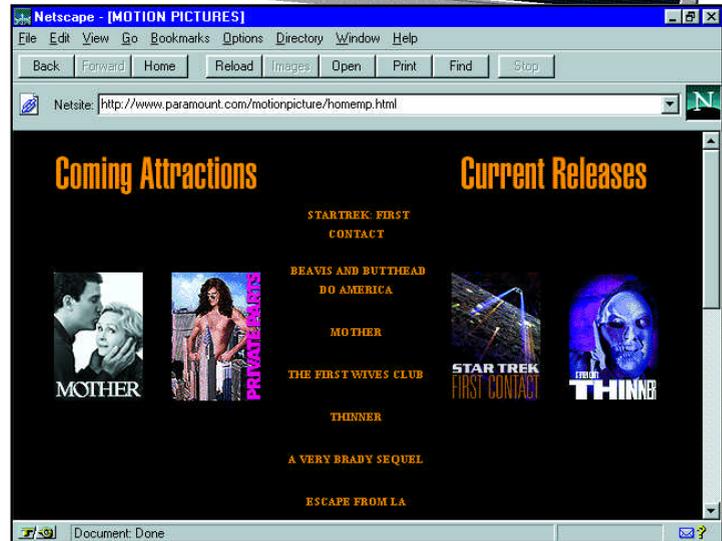


Figure 2.18. Paramount Pictures home page.



smaller in order to be able to play with layout, proximity, placement, and so on, but be sure to remember that, as with the kilobytes of data you'll be sending over limited bandwidth, size matters!

The following are a few questions and considerations:

Is the visual information clear?

If I'm creating a complete interface, does the most important information fit within one screen?

Have I created a page that is simply too long? Three screens of scroll should suffice, give or take.

MARTIN SCORSESE

PICTURES



This highly discerning Web site built by a fan is not only jam-packed with information about one of the most venerable living film directors, but is presented in a high style as well.

A right-sided navigation bar is used, an unusual choice that begs some danger; however, it creates a divergence from the more standard left-margin, which is very admirable. Tables are used to create a very aesthetic as well as functional layout, and the site is regularly updated with fresh information for the Scorsese fan.

One of the things I liked most about the site was the way hit counters were placed. Typically, I'm one of the members of the "I hate them/won't use them" group, for a number of reasons, ranging from their total lack of accuracy to the way they are overused to the point of disgust. But some people want them, in fact, demand them, and if you find yourself wanting or needing to use them, I'd take inspiration from this site.

The counter appears way at the bottom of the page, along with other "announcement" style information, including browser links and so on. Then, very simply, and proportionately subtle, the counter resides alongside this common information. Nothing is pulling extreme attention to it. It's not placed at the top of the page, or the center of the page, as some page creators do. (See Figure 2.20. Note that the counter is an example of a real counter program, but the page is fake, so as to protect the perpetrators.) Instead, it's there if you look for it, but it doesn't hit you over the head and say "LOOK how many hits I have."

The screenshot shows a Netscape browser window displaying the website. The browser title is "[MARTIN SCORSESE: Movies And The Man]". The address bar shows the URL: http://www.wenet.net/~clayton/directors/martin_scorsese/. The page content includes a large header image with the text "MARTIN SCORSESE" and "PICTURES". Below this is a "SCORSESE REMOTE" section. A "LATEST NEWS" section features an article titled "The Last Temptation of Kundun" with a sub-headline "Well, it looks like Martin Scorsese's current religious project, Kundun, has already hit a major snag. China is boycotting Disney in light of the release of Kundun. Disney is adamant on its stance that it will release the film. This problem is similar to what Scorsese went through when trying to get The Last Temptation of Christ made. Except this time he has the blessings of the studios." Below the article are links for "old news" and "Related Web Sites: Disney.com, CNN News Story". A "MOVIE SITES" section follows, with a sub-header "MARTIN SCORSESE MOVIE SITES" and a paragraph: "Here is a small collection of web sites I have created on some of Scorsese's best films. Most of them are far from complete but I'm still working on them. I might also create sites on other films if I have the time. Keep an eye out." Below this is a grid of movie links, each with a small image and text: "KUNDUN NEW! A film based on the life of the Dalai Lama.", "TAXI DRIVER Scorsese's landmark film about a taxi driver fed up with the scum that live in his city.", "KING OF COMEDY Coming Soon! The story of a crazy comedian and his quest for fame.", "GOODFELLAS Coming Soon! Three friends are three gangsters looking for money.", "COLOR OF MONEY Coming Soon! The sequel to The Hustler starring Tom Cruise before his major stardom.", "MEAN STREETS Scorsese's break through film on small time street violence and gangs in the big city.", "RAGING BULL What some consider the greatest movie of the 80's." At the bottom of the page, there is a navigation bar with links: "REVIEW A FILM", "DISCLAIMER", "E-MAIL", "WHAT'S NEW". A hit counter at the very bottom shows "number of hits 0006050". A vertical navigation bar on the right side of the page contains links: "AFI Read up on Scorsese's Award", "Pictures Download various pictures", "Links Other Scorsese related web sites", "Filmography Reviews and info on Scorsese's films", "Biography Info on Scorsese's movies and his life", "Quicktime Download and view video clips", "Articles Read up on Scorsese".

Figure 2.19. Martin Scorsese site main page.

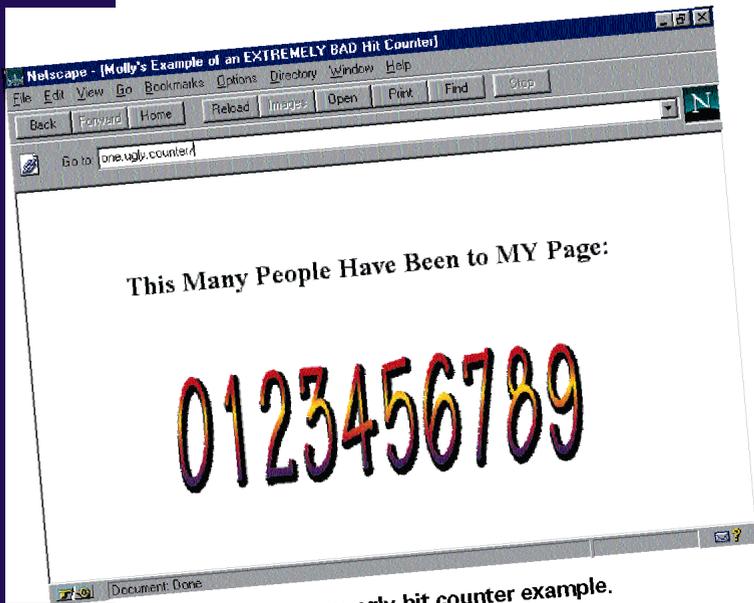


Figure 2.20. One very ugly hit counter example.

Hit counters, links to browsers, awards, in fact, any item that is extraneous to the information that is imperative to a given page, will ideally be left off, simply because it impedes the quality and integrity of a design. In some instances, these things might be desirable, so how about placing them on a help page, or credits page? This way, your audience members can visit a page designed around that information, rather than forcing the information into a page that is well-designed.

That's Entertainment!

Take your final bows for having fun *while* learning how to do the following:

- Understand domain names
- Use tables as a layout device
- Become familiar with ActiveX technologies
- Employ the extended attributes to the `
` tag
- Balance text-based content and graphic elements
- Understand the concept of proximity
- Use the `<tt>` tag instead of `<pre>` for monospaced fonts
- Become aware of character entities
- Understand proportion
- Don't use hit counters, or know how to use them if you really, really have to

For my encore, I've prepared the next chapter, which highlights newspapers and magazines on the Web!

Sites that Speak

Newspapers and Magazines

Tucson Weekly

<http://tusconweekly.com/tw/>

Word

<http://www.word.com/>

The Boston Phoenix

<http://www.bostonphoenix.com/>

The Brink

<http://ww.brink.com/brink/>

The Minneapolis/ St. Paul Star Tribune

<http://www.startribune.com/>

Out.com

<http://www.out.com/>

The Phoenix New Times

<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/>

La Nacion On Line

<http://www.lanacion.com/>

The MoJo Wire

<http://www.mojones.com/>

Dark Alliance

<http://www.sjmercury.com/drugs>



Newspapers and magazines are the print venue for humanity's expression. They keep people informed, entertained, and, in some cases, change the course of political destinies.

Publications on the Web function in much the same way, although there's the exciting element of access to a much broader range of titles that might otherwise require a lot of effort to find. These include papers and magazines from cities, states, and countries all over the globe. This is the so-called Information Age in action.

Online publications are, in fact, one of the hottest types of Web sites. As such, there are many of them, so I urge you to go exploring and find ones that meet your interests, as well as those offered here, for the purpose of design commentary and learning.

First up is the Tucson Weekly Online, a small-town paper that has captured national attention for a number of reasons, including the discussion here: navigation. Large amounts of data require user-friendly, intelligent means of maneuvering the space, and the Tucson Weekly provides a very admirable example.

Next up is Word, a very popular 'zine that is a fine study of interface development. This extends the more specific ideas of navigation into a broader-spectrum of learning for the designer: how to drive content by understanding how to contain it.

The Boston Phoenix's online offering is visually rich, with many beautifully designed image maps. Client-sided mapping is becoming the popular choice. You'll walk through an example of how to do this with the marvelous program MapEdit, available on the accompanying CD-ROM.

The next publication on the rack is The Brink, a 'zine that seeks to exploit hypermedia in artistic and cutting-edge ways. How can you use the Web as an artistic medium? Find out as I explore this on-the-edge online creation. On the more traditional front, the Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune offers up an attractive site with a variety of highlights, including downloadable movie clips.

Out.com is an alternative magazine that not only represents community, but fosters it via its interactive, global messaging forums. Designers wishing to implement this type of technology have the opportunity to think about some of the conceptual ways to present such forums. Do you think conversation might get scalding on an interactive system? It's always far above room temperature at the Phoenix New Times Online, which teaches how to keep content hot by making sure it's fresh.

La Nacion On Line is one of Argentina's contributions to the global mien, and text alternatives and consistent navigation are discussed when you tour their contemporary site. MoJo Wire is an example of appropriate design, a simple-but-effective approach to making sure just the right amount of color and design enhances, but does not detract, from written content.

The last page of this tour is Dark Alliances, a journalist's project that is a fine example of what has been termed *Way New Media*. This is the combination of journalism with interactive, multiple medias. Dark Alliances provides a comprehensive look at how that can be done while maintaining respect and consideration for the variety of Web browsers and visitors.

Featured Site I



<http://tucsonweekly.com/tw/>

Figure 3.1. Splash page of the Tucson Weekly.



It has been said that small businesses move more quickly when it comes to progressive ideas. When the Internet began its first public-at-large gurgling in 1994, the *Tucson Weekly* paid attention. By July of 1995, the first version of the Tucson Weekly Online had been published, and it has been published every Wednesday since then, without fail. It is a tribute to new media at its finest. Often opinionated but resoundingly thought-provoking, the content is perfect for the information-hungry news hounds on the Web. Sensibly but attractively designed, the Weekly embodies new media theory as well as strongly embracing mindful, individually expressed, Web technology.

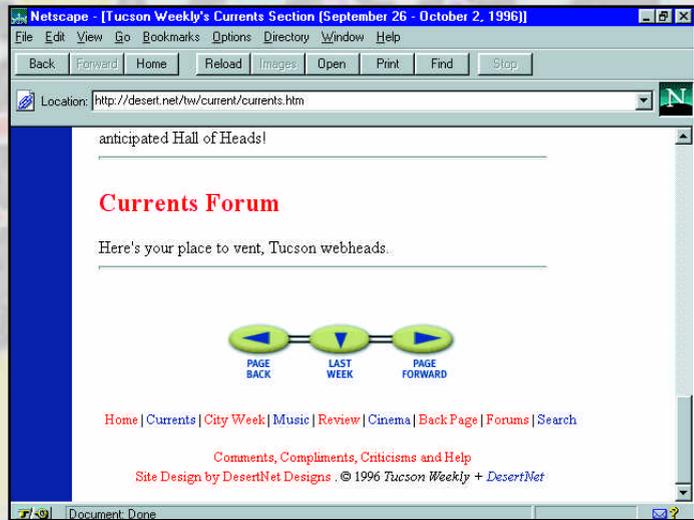
Current, Past; Forward, Back: Newsworthy Navigation

The Tucson Weekly Online is strong in a variety of areas, but what first makes it stand out among online publications is its brilliant navigation. Sweeping industry award categories and receiving acclaim from harsh critics such as *Internet World's* Dr. Joel Snyder, the Tucson Weekly Online has forced even the most trenchant of Web watchers to take notice.

New media is the combination of more traditional media with interactivity. One of the most often overlooked ways of creating effective interaction between viewers and a Web site is by offering compelling navigation features. This is certainly one of the reasons the Tucson Weekly Online has been pointed to as an example of great design, and is a primary aspect of why it was chosen for this book.

The power lies in the site's combination of linear and tangential options. What this means in ready terms is that there is a way to interact with the online version of the Weekly as you would with more familiar written media, as well as a more choice-driven, interactive method to enjoy the site.

Figure 3.2. Page forward, page back navigation on Tucson Weekly.



The Direct Route: Linear Pathways

Essentially, the Tucson Weekly Online offers sections, much as a daily paper does, and the ability to read each by paging through in a linear fashion. Upon examination of the design, you will find that the paper offers a variety of different methods of surveying the content, and that these methods expand and demonstrate the power of this new medium.

This main level hierarchy is sensible in that it provides a very accessible, easy-to-relate-with, top-level arrangement. Within that structure, there is another linear, left-to-right structure that most newspaper readers will be familiar with: the page forward, page back option. (See Figure 3.2.) This allows for virtual paging through the paper, just as one would do over a tree-and-ink-based version with a cup of morning coffee.

Side Roads: Tangents as Opportunity

Now there's an opportunity to get a little adventurous in your travels and take one of the side road navigation options. Let's move in to view one important deviation from linear methodology into a technique that would be otherwise impossible in print media. The Last Week/Next Week option, as shown in Figure 3.3, allows for an individual to follow a column or series as far back, and as far forward, up to the current issue, as he or she would like.

Along with the Forward/Back, Last Week/Next Week options, there is the Current Week" option, as also seen in Figure 3.3. This option allows a person to jump from any article or section back to this week's edition. This is very convenient—instead of the individual having to page from a 1995 feature all the way through time—the user can simply jump ahead to the present should he or she so choose.

To add to the tangential internal navigation, there is the vertical menu bar, shown in Figure 3.4, which runs along the right edge of each page. This gives a visitor the opportunity to jump to another section of the publication from any point in his or her experience. Adding significant choices, this interactive opportunity allows visitors to experience the site in as unique and personal a fashion as possible.

Figure 3.3. The Last Week/Next Week option.

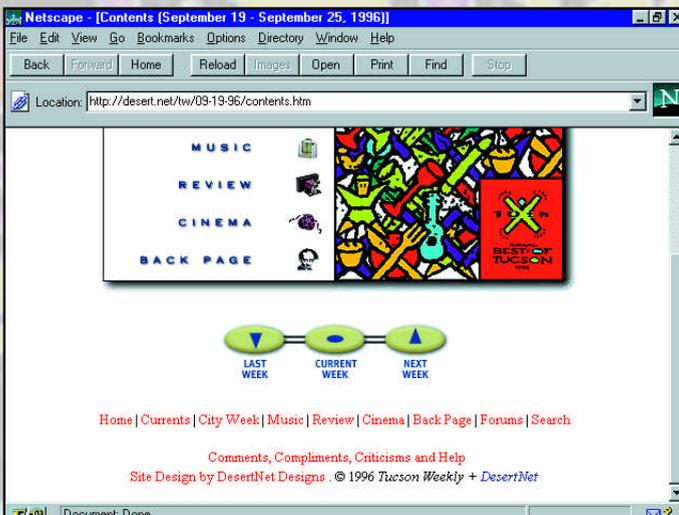




Figure 3.4. Right menu bar, providing even more navigational options.

Hypertext promoted the ability to footnote academic documents by linking the referenced text to the originals electronically. It is this concept and the Internet platform that Web designers are using as an entire foundation for the building of a new medium. Exploiting the Internet's hypertext strengths—tangents and layers of information rather than linear presentation—is part of the challenge and the benefit to the designer!

Interestingly enough, linear information is antithetical to human thought and memory. Proof positive

Conceiving Non-Linear Environments

In general, non-linear environments are not a ready thing for occidental minds to immediately grasp. Accustomed to linear logic, you and I read left to right, and live within a hierarchically structured environment.

The Weekly's non-linear structure came out of an unusual event that the Tucson Weekly's designer Wil Gerken describes as "inspirational." While playing with computer games on an old Atari, he began to notice the way the joystick could move. He told me, "...then I thought about what I started calling joystick navigation. Linear paging forward and back and now an up/down motion in the form of last week/next week options."

Other, more technical terms for this approach would now be "threaded column" or "daisy-chain" navigation. This approach is of critical importance for Web designers to notice because not only does it relate strongly to the earliest intentions of the Web's development, but it works more effectively with human memory.

of this lies in any conversation that people have together. Do you follow only one thought? No! You might start out talking about the weekend, but then you talk about another subject, and another, naturally moving from issue to issue with ease. This is non-linear, and it is much more natural than the imposition of linear media that is so prevalent in our culture.

So why on earth does this matter? For the Web designer, it matters a great deal, because he or she must understand something of the way the human mind works. This allows for the creation of navigation that makes sense to people. This understanding helps a designer take advantage of the additional value found in hypermedia—perhaps most important in terms of method—and to know how to effectively create tools and solutions for the challenges that arise within this unusual environment.

Management of Information

When it comes to method, Gerken was faced with yet another task. How would he take this seemingly complex mix of large data and non-linear tangents and create an opportunity to make it work quickly and effectively?

This is where Web developers can take added inspiration from Gerken. Frustrated with what he was able to find in terms of a quick processing, commercial program for HTML documents and related attributes for the Web, he did what all visionary programmers would have done: He built the tools himself.

"Once I had a basic flowchart of navigation," he says, "I realized this was going to be quite a task! I had to figure out some way to automate the process. From that realization I

wrote the early version of Dispatch, which is now used to process a number of online publications by quickly and effectively handling all the HTML conversion and navigational elements."

Dispatch is a proprietary program—Gerken isn't giving away any industry secrets—but he does allow that it is part of an electronic publishing process that begins with the native Quark documents and ends with HTML documents fully coded to his brand of clean style and design.

Links to Linktionary

Then, there are links—the heart and soul of the Web's functional hypertext environment. The Tucson Weekly has made very wise choices regarding how these links are managed, both internally and to external sites. Again, Gerken was faced with the need to manage a great deal of data. It became obvious that writing his own program would allow a great deal more control over his work.

Linktionary (see Figure 3.5) is another of Gerken's programs that automates the process. Basically a large database of current Web URLs, Linktionary searches the text for possible link opportunities. A human hand is required for further edits, because Gerken has yet to write an intelligence agent that can determine the difference between Alice and Gary Cooper!

```

Netscape - [Source of: http://desert.net/tw/09-19-96/currents.htm]
<!-- Publication Processed - 1:18 PM - 09/19/91 -->
<!-- Serial Number - TW33500 -->

<!-- Site Design by Wil Gerken (wil@desert.net) and Matthew Bardram -->

<!-- The Tucson Weekly is processed by DesertNet Dispatch and Linktionary -->
<!-- To find out more information on how to get your publication on the -->
<!-- Web using DesertNet products contact Doug Biggers at (520) 792-3630 -->

<!-- No Search Keys -->

<html>

<head>
<title>Tucson Weekly's Currents Section (September 19 - September 25, 1996)</
<meta name="keywords" content="politics, weird, Arizona politics, conscio
<meta name="author" content="wil gerken, nathan hendler, matthew bardram, jas
</head>

<body background=" ../images2/twback.gif" bgcolor="#ffffff" link="#d60017" vli:

<!-- Begin Date Header -->
<table border=0 width=100% cellspacing=0 cellpadding=0>
<tr>

```

Figure 3.5. Source code from the Tucson Weekly showing time and date stamps from Linktionary processing.

Getting There from Here

Web sites are constantly evolving, or they should be! It is new information, additions of technologies and solutions to technical problems that allow for growth and change in this young environment. In order to keep content fresh, and experience the joy of the Web as it grows, creators of Web sites must always seek original ways to enhance the work they are doing.

For the Tucson Weekly, this means evaluation and re-evaluation of the site's navigation and use of the hypertext medium. It also means the development of faster, better, and more effective tools to manage large data. The Weekly, and the publishing industry, can only benefit from the fruits of these Web labors.



TABLE OF CONTENTS



HABIT



GIGO



PAY



MACHINE



PLACE



DESIRE



DEAD WORD



INFO

Intent Drives Content

Web designers must know some basic facts before embarking on interface design. Intent, which I define as the major purpose of a site, ideally determines how the site will develop. This is especially true when dealing with magazines or newspapers online, largely because there is a lot of data, and that data needs to be organized to make sense.

How do you find intent? If you're developing a commercial Web site, discussions with the client will reveal his or her desires in terms of what results are desired from the ultimate site. Intent could be point of sales, or perhaps the idea is to present a certain image for a given business or organization. Still another would be the provision of customer service on the Web—accessible to customers 24 hours a day.

Just how intent drives a Web site's content is demonstrated when each of these potentials is looked at individually. Say my client wants to sell products. The issue of selling alone demands that the content of the Web site contain certain features; in this case, some kind of order form or catalog-style interface will be required. An organizational image is also desired. If the organization is a toxic waste management company, I'm going to want to be sure to include information on how that company helps the environment. If the intent is to provide customer service, the content is going to be organized based on the services offered, and there will be plenty of feedback options available.

Word's primary intent is an intimate, creative communication with others on the Web. Bowe describes Word's intent: "I wanted to provide a series of windows into other people's lives from various angles. The first-person stories where maybe someone has had an experience, or difficulty." The way that this intent has driven content with Word is found with its stimulating interface. (See Figure 3.7.) Interface helps make the content interactive, offering visitors options and opportunities to explore, thereby becoming involved with the work as a full participant.

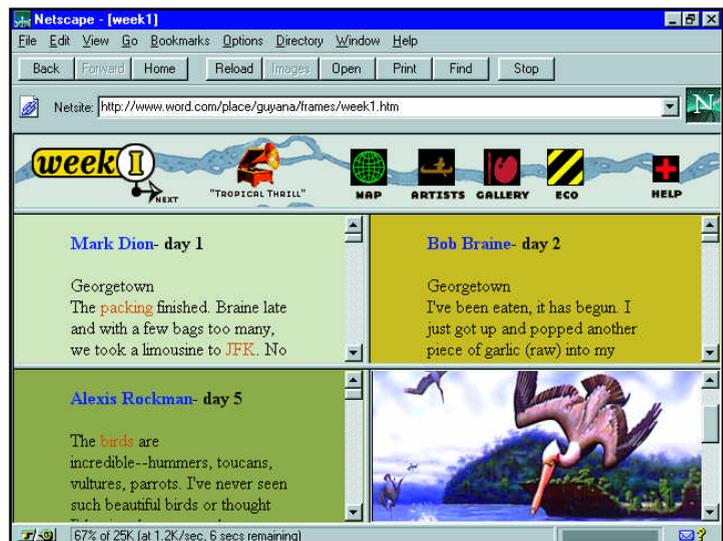


Figure 3.7. This creative interface tells the story of three artists and their personal journey through the Guyana jungles.

Audience, Audience!

In any situation where the objective is to communicate some idea, whether it be the quality of a product or the intimacy of a personal journey, knowing my audience is going to empower me to use more effective communication.

Bowe is very in touch with Word's audience, which teaches us just how that familiarity can help us succeed when creating Web content. "Word is for the 'zine crowd," she says. "For people who would like the band Nirvana. They're sophisticated, but jaded before they're five."

How to Know Audience

How does a Web designer determine audience? That information is also found with the people involved with a given Web site's arrival on the scene. If you're interested in creating your own Web site for personal or creative purposes, the intended audience is going to lie within you. Are you a work-at-home father, who wishes to share helpful information or ideas with other dads working from the home? Maybe you are a poet and want to publish your poetry on the Web. Information will dictate a user-friendly, straightforward interface for easy access to the data. Creative art will often allow for creative uses of access, because the audience is going to be *interested* in creativity!

If you're working in a commercial mien, having to work with a client to determine his or her intent and audience requires asking a series of important questions:

Who is your current audience? (For example: purchasers of goods or users of services.)

What type of media have you created in the past? Television, print advertising, brochures?

How have things served you and your customers?

What is the voice you use to speak with your customer? Are you a "Family Business?" A slick corporation? An alternative newsmagazine?

Are you looking to change your current customer demographic with the Web, or are you looking for the same type of customer?

How does technology affect your image now, and how do you think it will affect your image in the future?

These questions will help you and your customer explore critical areas that relate to how presentations will be made to an audience. Write or record your conversations, and refer to your notes regularly during the development of the Web site in question.

Word of Mouth

"I figure there's more than enough information and data in the world at this point. What's missing is getting insight into experiences psychologically. How do people survive daily life? Rather than give advice, I want to provide a series of windows into other people's lives from various angles.

What a radical thing, I think, to actually just tell the truth. We don't have lifestyle or celebrities to sell. Intimacy...what fascinates me is the intimacy. I try to convey that on Word. People who are talking because they have something to say."

The Boston Phoenix

<http://www.bostonphoenix.com/>

This visually striking site is an excellent example of high quality graphic design that creates upbeat, fun, and enticing environments for delivery of information and entertainment.

One way the Boston Phoenix has made good use of the visual is by setting up splash pages for each of its sections. These pages invariably use graphics that combine colorized photographic elements broken up by space, as shown in Figure 3.8.

What's important about these graphics is not only are they expressing their related areas' intent visually, but they are fully functional image maps.

Server-Sided Versus Client-Sided Mapping

At the time of this writing, the Boston Phoenix—as have many pages on the Web—has chosen to stay with server-sided image maps. These are mapped images that call out to the server using a CGI script to process the coordinates that allow you to use the image as navigable, or “hot” media. Adding client-sided maps—maps that are interpreted by the local browser rather than the distant server—can help in several ways.

Every time a browser has to make a server request, well, that takes time! If the browser is requesting local information, it's going to be much faster to get that data to the viewer. Another strong feature of client mapping is that it allows you to identify the hot area's link.

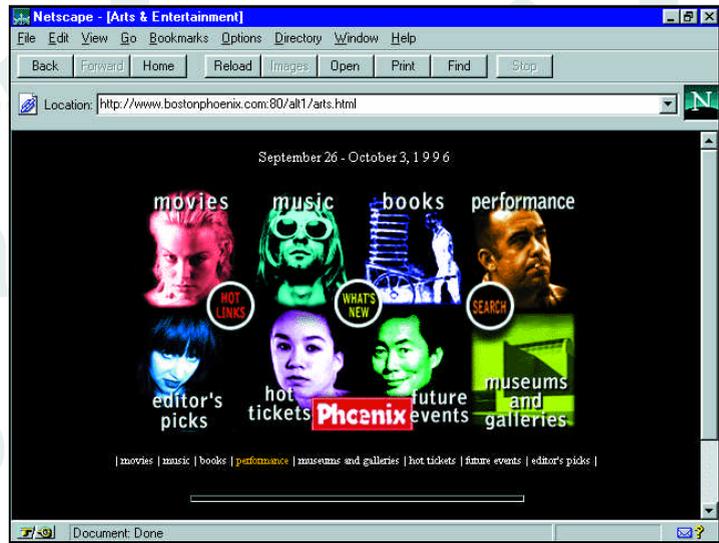


Figure 3.8. The Arts and Entertainment page on Boston Phoenix, showing colorized photographic elements.

In Figure 3.9, you see the Boston Phoenix's server-sided map through the Netscape browser. Notice along the lower-left corner that as I pass the mouse over a hot section, the map coordinates can be read. With a Client-sided image map, the browser interprets the map to identify what area you want to go to by providing the link's URL. This helps make navigation much more user-friendly.

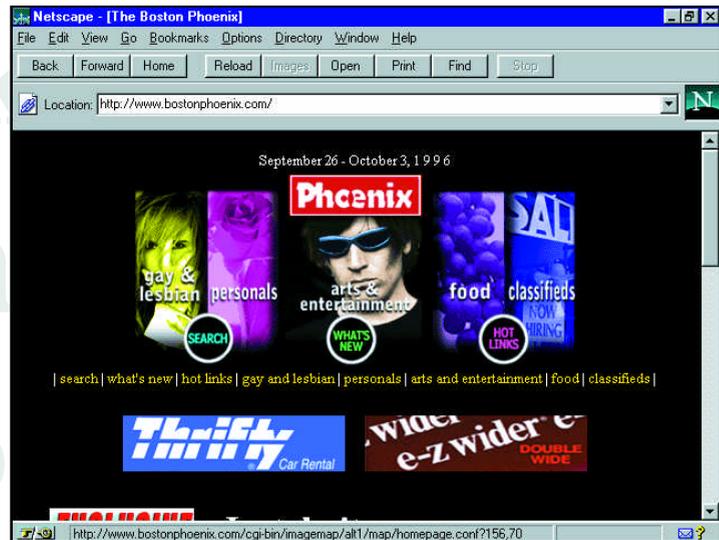


Figure 3.9. Server-sided map coordinates.

Making a Client-Sided Image Map

Technology has come a long way in the past year. There are many powerful commercial and shareware tools for both the PC and the Macintosh that do the hard work for you. One such tool for the PC is MapEdit, a compact, very reliable shareware product that can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM. Certain HTML editing packages, such as Microsoft's popular FrontPage and Macromedia's Backstage, also offer Client-side image mapping features.

You'll need to select an image that makes logical sense to map. As can be seen with Boston Phoenix, their mapped images are broken up into fields. An image with distinct areas is

going to be much more easy to deal with than an image without clearly defined areas.

With a tool like MapEdit, the process is quite simple:

1. Open the image with the mapping tool.
2. Select the appropriate area shape, in this case a rectangle.
3. Draw the first area which is to be "hot."
4. Input the corresponding URL.
5. Follow this procedure for each of the mapped areas that require designation.
6. Save the file as `Client-Sided Map`. Note that one option is to save the map data right into an HTML file.

MapEdit and other such tools allow you to test your maps during the process. However, it's also a good idea to test them in your browser. Simply open the HTML file that contains the map data and see how it works.

Phoenix Rising: The Brink

<http://www.brink.com/brink/>

The Boston Phoenix offers some terrific design that makes the site visually enjoyable. The content is fresh and interesting, gracing the Web with a very worthwhile effort. The addition of client-mapping will enable the intelligent graphics on this site to truly shine.

If the desire is to create a Web site for the sake of art, The Brink stands as an excellent example of one approach. An impressive aspect of the Brink is its continual challenge to Web design standards—so few exist to begin with. Well, it's humorous and compelling to find a publication that really exploits hypermedia and interactivity with little regard to the constraints that guide the Web.



Figure 3.10. The Boston Phoenix home page.

Although I wouldn't recommend this method for anyone getting into publications or Web design for commercial or broad spectrum audiences, as an exercise in art, a magazine of this ilk is truly a departure from the norm. It most certainly pushes the cutting edge, hence the name, The Brink.

Embracing the Free Ranges of the Internet

Perhaps this renegade behavior embodies the Web in many ways because it embraces the idea that information on the Internet should be vast, free, and diverse. Even as the Web becomes more and more popular for mainstream use, there will be a place for the alternative electric magazine. Artists, musicians, and publishers who want environments that fall outside the range of what is available in the mainstream will turn back toward this original idea of alternative 'zines.

Typically, this could be cause for criticism rather than praise, but I felt that it would be a good example of what can be done by people less interested in the rules and more interested in the artistic potential of the Web. After all, if people don't seek to push the limits, what opportunities to discover new territories can exist?

Hypermedia as Creative Expression

For the Web designer looking to use hypermedia as art, go back again to the critical lesson that an understanding of the Web's tangential opportunities strengthens the ability to find techniques that work well within the medium.

To understand a few concepts, I'd like to walk you through a non-technical experiment in hypermedia design. You'll need two items to begin, including small slips of paper or index cards, and a pen.

On one of the cards or pieces of paper, write your first name. Then, on each of the next cards, write down the following:

- Your most prized possession
- An object in the area near you
- Something you do every day
- Your favorite sport or activity
- Your favorite color
- Your favorite food
- The word "skillfully"
- The word "laughing"

Now place the first piece of paper on the floor, your name in the center, any random three papers above it, to the side of it, and below it, creating a grid.

Now, read the words starting at the left corner, working your way left to right as though reading a book. This should be the most familiar, and the easiest route. Begin approaching different words first, following random patterns, reading the words aloud. Sometimes it will sound funny; other times you'll stumble across meanings that work.

This tiered approach demonstrates how hypertext works at its most basic level. Imagine what happens as these layers expand in every direction? Move these layers from two-dimensional space into the conceptual three dimensions created by networks of computers, phone lines, and satellite systems, and you end up with the Web—an environment of many doorways, options, and methods of getting from one place to another. There is no definable center, but it is woven together by its relationship to individual pieces within the grander whole. Moreover, there are new pieces being welcomed on a minute-to-minute basis!

Transposition

Joy McCrary's "Transposition" is a great experiment in the use of interactive hypermedia. For artists interested in creating non-linear presentations, "Transposition" stands as a perfect example.

Every line in her poem is linked to another section of the poem. You move through the poem linearly, from beginning to "end." But then, you begin to "loop" around conceptually, and revisit old phrases as well as exploring new thoughts not seen on the linear path. You can get a glimpse of this in the grid of images taken from her poem pages. (See Figure 3.11.)

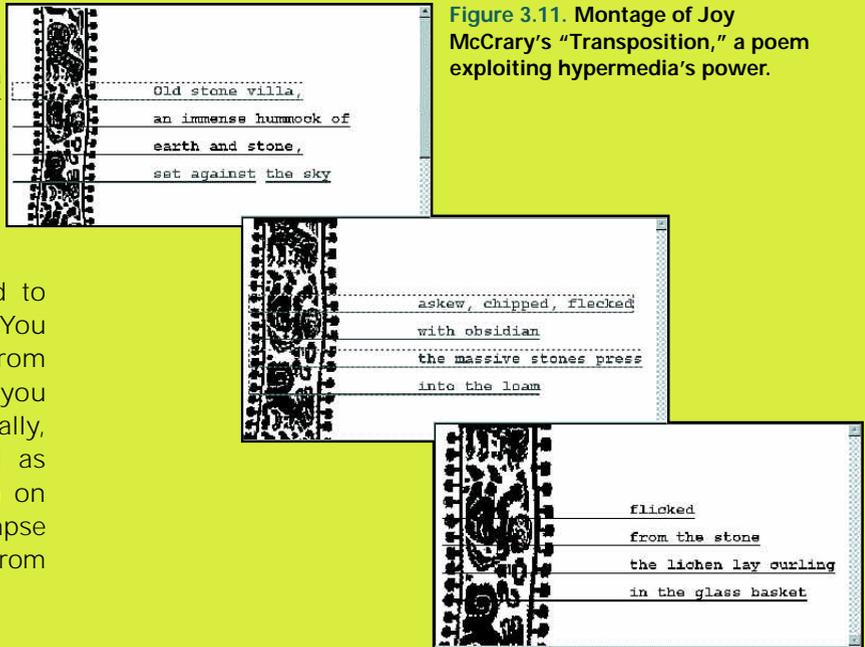


Figure 3.11. Montage of Joy McCrary's "Transposition," a poem exploiting hypermedia's power.

Walking the Edge

Just when you think you're lost in a tangent of weird, sub-pop culture madness, the Brink turns the tide and changes your direction. After a journey through hypermedia as just demonstrated, The Brink will pull

individual pieces of the magazine together—seaming one artist's work with another, creating an entirely new, blended piece of art. This is where the Brink's true brilliance lies. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to create synthesis between entirely, downright antithetical concepts, or ideas, in a linear medium. On the Brink, you are captivated by the bizarre, as well as the intriguing ideas generated by way of new media.

The Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune

<http://www.startribune.com/>

Because content for daily newspapers is generated by a full staff of writers, artists, editors, and sundry contributors, it's logical that the articles, editorials, and commentary would, in many cases, simply be shifted to the Web. The *Star Tribune*, as do most of the publications featured here, certainly does this.

There is an area for special projects on the *Star Tribune* that stands out as being a general wisdom for all online publications taking material from traditional media. By giving space on the Web for identity unique to the Web,

Figure 3.12. The home page of Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune.



readers are offered a reason, in addition to ease, access, and comfort of electronic news—more cool information that might not normally be as flexible in its paper state.

A prime example of this is the downloadable .avi of a series of photos taken from the *Star Tribune* in the spring of 1996. The paper followed the budding of a silver maple tree, offering a photograph each day for a series of 32 days.

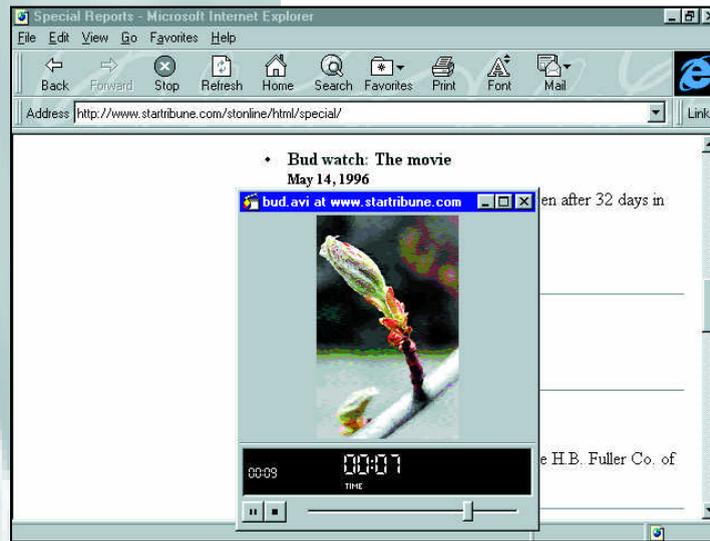


Figure 3.13. The budding silver maple tree AVI, as shown through the Internet Explorer browser.

Video Clips

Video presents unique challenges for the Web. Technologies exist to create high-quality video, but one major problem is delivering large files quickly over the Internet. To do so requires advanced compression techniques, clipping of video size, and careful selection of the subject—the more detail and action, the more memory involved. Because of these reasons, there is inevitable loss of quality when compression is applied.

There are two primary actions of video on the Web. One is the video file that must be downloaded and played by a helper application, which is an additional piece of software that the browser calls up to run the video. Inline video is becoming more popular. This is when the video information is handled by the Web browser itself.

For now, I'd like to focus on video formats that are available to the Web developer for offering compressed video format files that allow for downloadable real-time life for visitors to enjoy. Some of these formats, including AVI (see Figure 3.13), are employed as inline by some browsers, and some contain audio compression mechanisms as well.

A rundown of the most common file formats that are used to deliver video over the Web include

- **.avi:** This Microsoft format has been used in multimedia for some time. AVI stands for "Audio/Visual Interleave."
- **.mov:** Movie files are a compact compression option from Macintosh.
- **.mpeg:** "Moving Picture Experts Group" is a very popular and especially effective format.

A great deal of links to technical information about these formats can be found by pointing your Web browser at <http://www.webreference.com/multimedia/video.html>.

Opportunity Knocking

The Web offers the opportunity not only to capture day-to-day events, but to keep them alive and use them in intelligent, opportunistic fashions. The concept of this project within a strong Web site such as the *Star Tribune* points to the clever way in which technology enhances simple experiences by keeping them alive, and accessible, in a clever, idealistic expression.

<http://www.out.com/>

Out.com



Figure 3.14. Out.com's colorful interface.

Life and lifestyle of an international subculture is expressed on this site with incredible grace, indisputable style, and no apologies. Taking issues regarding sexuality—issues that might normally be difficult to express in mainstream media—Out.com focuses on high culture, beautiful fashion, quality of life, society, and news and information on world health, without ever falling into discriminatory or inappropriately explicit expression.

Community

Various sponsored events, social groups, surveys, hot Web sites of note, and regional forums and global forums make up Out.com's community area. The social groups are, in fact, interactive forums that include areas for discussions about couples, people of color, teen support, and a clean and sober area. The focus is on how to live life well, safely and happily.

That the Web should be a gathering place for international communities is a powerful tribute to its innate power. Furthermore, this kind of interaction counteracts the pervasive, and important, trend in the use of the Web as a mass

media. Both aspects are critical for the Web's survival. Out.com is a fine example of offering community-based information, education, and opportunities.

Interactive Forums

Modem fans of some years will remember the BBS craze, which has taken a backseat to the glitz of the Internet in the past two years. BBSs, or Bulletin Board Services, are also found on commercial services such as America Online and Microsoft Network. Another version of this type of interactivity would be Internet newsgroups.

These services provide areas where people can "post" notes to one another, and to the general visiting public, on a given topic or special interest. On the Web, interactive forums are becoming more and more visible as the technology to handle them is more stable.

Typically, interactive forums use CGI (Common Gateway Interface) scripts to communicate with the Web server responsible for running the forum software. Other instances of interactive forums are being developed using Web-based programming technologies such as Java and ActiveX.

Forums are the essence of the Web community, as shown with Out.com Figure 3.15. Not only do they supply the vital interactive component for successful Web sites, they also offer a place to express individual ideas, argue, give feedback to Web developers or interest group moderators, or the public at large.

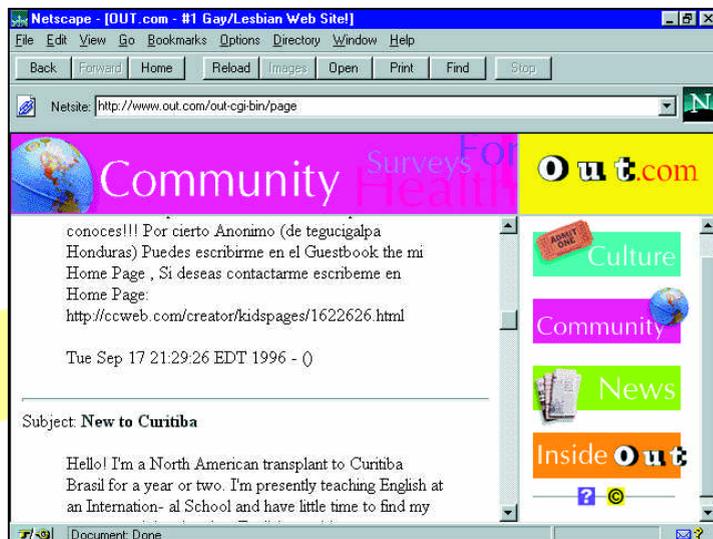


Figure 3.15. Interactive forum on Out.com. Note the combination of Spanish and English language posts.

Moderated or Unmoderated?

Messages posted to forums are usually handled in one of two ways: Information is posted freely with no one controlling the posts that appear; or posts are reviewed by a moderator before being placed for the general public to see.

For Web developers interested in forums, the choice as to moderated or unmoderated is an important one. Give people an opportunity, and some are likely to exploit it. This is very often the case with Web forums, so planning for moderation on commercial or wide-audience sites can be a good idea. Costs will typically be higher for moderated forums because they necessitate the involvement of personal time.

Unmoderated forums can also be powerful reinforcements in a democratic society, or create the opportunity for people in nondemocratic countries to get information they might otherwise be unable to access. If you are developing a forum with a particular desire to support First-Amendment-style rights, unmoderated is the way to go. Sometimes a middle ground can be achieved, with a forum generally going unmoderated but under a watchful eye willing to pull posts that are unduly offensive or inappropriate.

Get Out!

Out.com embraces and embodies the Web in its finest form. Communication, self-expression, global integration, and human interactivity coexist with art, fashion, politics, and medicine. A very strong Web site with real soul.

The Phoenix New Times

<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/>

You've already seen the power of content and clean navigation from one Arizona paper. Phoenix New Times is yet another excellent opportunity to enjoy both, with expanded coverage of the Phoenix area people, politics, arts, and entertainment.

Perhaps it is the desert that makes these Arizona publications sizzle, or maybe it's the corrupt politics, clashing of cultures, and historically rebellious nature of the American West. The fact remains that no single area, despite many good publications, can boast two online, independent newsweeklies such as The Tucson Weekly and Phoenix New Times. Each is produced with high-style, interesting content and fiery design by Web creators down there in the heat.

What's specifically fun about the Phoenix New Times Online is that it departs from its paper parent and is updated, according to its editors, "whenever news breaks." This compelling idea exploits the power of the 24-hour-a-day electronic medium, instead of waiting until next week, when news about Arizona Governor Fife Symington's latest legal scandal has already raised the eyebrows higher (if such a thing is possible!) of Arizona citizens.

Nothing is more stale in the information age than week-old news, and Phoenix New Times Online has chosen to embrace the opportunity of keeping its paper fresh and clean.



Figure 3.16. Phoenix New Times home page.

Keeping Content Fresh

For the smaller commercial Web site, fresh content can be costly, although from a Web designer's standpoint, regularly updated content is a must. It keeps people coming back to a site. It is invigorating and enjoyable.

That newspapers such as Phoenix New Times actually think about the updated content shows not only how important updates are, but also flexes the muscles of the Web's power over print, which is a static media.

Even with the most simple and inexpensively produced Web site, something on it should—must—change to keep it interesting. The simplest way to make that happen is to write regular updates into a Web design contract, or offer the client the option to do the updates themselves. Sometimes this is the most effective method, although not everyone is equipped to make changes or allow specialized access for a given client.

With newspapers, fresh content is part of the process, as seen with the regular rotation of writers and regionally interesting articles such as Greg McNamee's intriguing "Titan Missile Museum" in the Phoenix New Times. (See Figure 3.17.) This brings another solution to mind, and that is to have a base of information that can easily be rotated.

Instead of having to write, code, and design new pages, a piece is pulled from the base into the site with very little time consumption.

Hot Stuff

To wrap it up, Phoenix New Times Online sizzles for its exceptional understanding of the importance of staying on top of changing data. There are a few more reasons why this is a great read—you'll find them on your own. The least reason being that this fine online newspaper comes forth from one of the hottest places on earth.



Figure 3.17. Cover of "Mondo Arizona" and the "Titan Missile Museum" article header.

LA NACION LINE

<http://www.lanacion.com/>

The challenge was to find an international, non-English daily or weekly newspaper online that has good quality design, effective, clear presentation, and is contemporary in its construct—good use of tables for column control, graphical elements selected with care and style.

I visited a lot of international publication sites, including newspapers in Africa, Europe, Asia, and other parts of the Americas. I found many content-rich sites that spoke of world politics and issues of extreme importance, but this site has the most care, consideration, and professional expression out of all the sites I looked at.

At first it seemed unfair to leave out sites that are undeniably important to world culture because of limited Web design. But the deciding point is simple: If a group has the resources to *be* on the Web, they have the resources to do their homework while on the



Figure 3.18. La Nacion On Line.

Web. There truly is plenty of information out there on how to make a publication strong not only in content, but in layout and design as well—and this information is free to those with access! I wanted to find something where someone had really done their homework and had thought extensively about the importance of design elements in the creation of effective Web publications.

Fortunately, I found La Nacion On Line (also written “La Nacion Line”), a daily newspaper in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This Spanish-language paper is quite interesting to browse. Of course, it helps if you understand the language, at least a little bit! Even without understanding Spanish, the navigation and layout is sensible and familiar enough that it communicates the gist of its statement.

Un Poco Diablo: A Technical Challenge

I speak a lot about navigation throughout this book, and especially this chapter. It’s no small wonder, because navigation is a basic necessity for Web sites. Navigation is also a challenging problem for designers because, typically, they want to give the visitor options, but also create a certain experience, or direction, for the concepts within the Web site to be well understood.

La Nacion by no means falls short of providing all the pieces required for good navigation. The challenge, then, is creating a standard for the site.

The current navigational components on La Nacion include

- A left margin navigation bar with a La Nacion link to the home page
- Text navigation at the bottom of some pages
- A navigational help button, “como navegar este Web,” linking to a help page
- Navigation tips at the bottom of some pages to help visitors understand their way around

All in all, this makes up a set of comprehensive navigational elements. But what begins to happen in La Nacion is that only the first component is available on every page, and other options disappear! It would be helpful to add the help button to a page that includes the navigation tips on every page.

Web designers take note: When planning navigation, be certain to remain consistent. There are very few, if any, reasons to leave out a navigational element on a given page.

Texto También, Por Favor: Text Also, Please!

It is still also very wise to add the text options to every page of a Web site. Although this is becoming less and less of a problem in the United States, where access to better computers and browsers is the rule rather than the exception,



for areas where there is likely to be a lot of text-only Internet access, these options are a must! For most Spanish-speaking countries, the need for text access remains high.

Adelante! Moving Ahead

La Nacion is undeniably strong and moving gracefully forward in a competitive mien. It is a well-maintained paper, each visit is met with the correct news of the day, and few, if any, technical problems, other than slow loading times (the result, in this case, of distance, not optimization). With a rational layout, conservative, but effective look and feel, and interesting content, this is an enjoyable, informative, and useful publication.

One added extra: Click “Portada del Dia” from the home page for a look at the actual daily paper edition’s cover for that day. It’s fun to compare the online version to the offline one!

MOJOWIRE

Mother Jones Interactive

<http://www.mojones.com/>

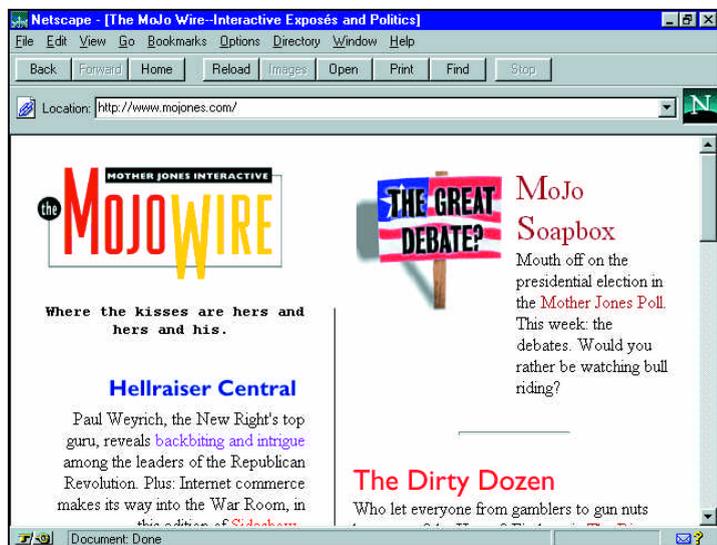
MoJo Wire takes to the Web with as much venomous bite as its print version, *Mother Jones*. (See Figure 3.19.) This no-holds-barred, political, environmental, electronic magazine is bull-dog relentless, and a strong proclamation that democracy is alive and well somewhere in the ethers.

Make no mistake: MoJo Wire gives the conservative viewpoint an opportunity to talk back, exploiting the best of Web technologies by offering a way for others to scream, yell, hoot, and holler their opinions before the entire world. It's cathartic, it's informative, it's downright entertaining.

MoJo Design: What's the Big Deal?

Frankly, there's not much that is a big deal. But listen, that's what makes it work. A Web site geared to this kind of content can't pull out hoops, bells, and whistles that are inappropriate. That's not what Web design is all about. Readers who have followed anything I've written so far are sure to remember my dominant cry, "intent drives content." And so it is with MoJo Wire. Designers simply cannot go overboard sometimes. That's an important lesson. Let the material guide you, always. With sites like Word, experimentation is justified. MoJo Wire has issues to pound, so they get right to the pounding.

Figure 3.19. MoJo Wire's Masthead.



This is not to say that MoJo Wire is bad design. It isn't, not by a long shot, or it would never have made it to this book. The point is that it's *appropriate* design. The magazine is well laid out, keeping sections simple, using tables, frames, or plain pages accordingly.

How to Determine Appropriate Design

All design content should be dictated by two things: intent of the site, and intended audience. When you know these facts, you have half of the work done—seriously! A large part of the battle in creating great Web sites has to do with knowing how they'll be received by the people you're setting out to present them to.

With MoJo Wire, the intent is to present politically compelling news stories. The audience is made up mostly of U.S. democrats and independents, with a minority of more conservative but curious or debate-happy personalities.

When creating a Web site, you must ask these pertinent questions, and do it *before*, not after, you've begun working on content and layout.

Once these things are determined, you can move into looking at specific ways of representing these needs. In the case of MoJo Wire, the simple graphics, easy-on-the-eyes layout incorporating plenty of white space, and easy navigation make this site appealing because the focus is *off* of the design and on to the content!

MoJo Working

Certainly MoJo Wire and its parent, *Mother Jones*, have long held a reputation for being extremely outspoken

regarding their particular brand of opinion. What is extremely exciting about having this kind of publication on the Web has to do with putting ideas out there to be enjoyed, believed, disagreed with, or even hated. It's important stuff because it makes people think, makes people work a little harder to determine what to believe, and, more importantly, why they believe.

Dark Alliance

A Special Project from the San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.sjmercury.com/drugs>

Unlike other Web sites within "Sites that Speak," this is not a full paper or magazine. It is, instead, a special project written by journalist Gary Webb and laid out by multimedia designer Albert Poon.

It is so astonishing in its content and powerful in design that it speaks quite loudly on its own, even though its origins are with the San Jose Mercury Online—quite a decent site in its own right, which can be found at <http://www.sjmercury.com/index.htm>.

The subject is drugs, in particular, crack-cocaine, and the story that Gary Webb uncovers is so frightening and real that merely commenting on it in a book cannot come close to the online experience. This site is a must-visit. It is the perfect example of what investigative reporting will be. And it's here now.

Although much can be learned from the excellent multimedia presentation of this progressive project, what must be flagged for Web designers is how the developers of this site have created a variety of choices for the audience, as shown in Figure 3.20.

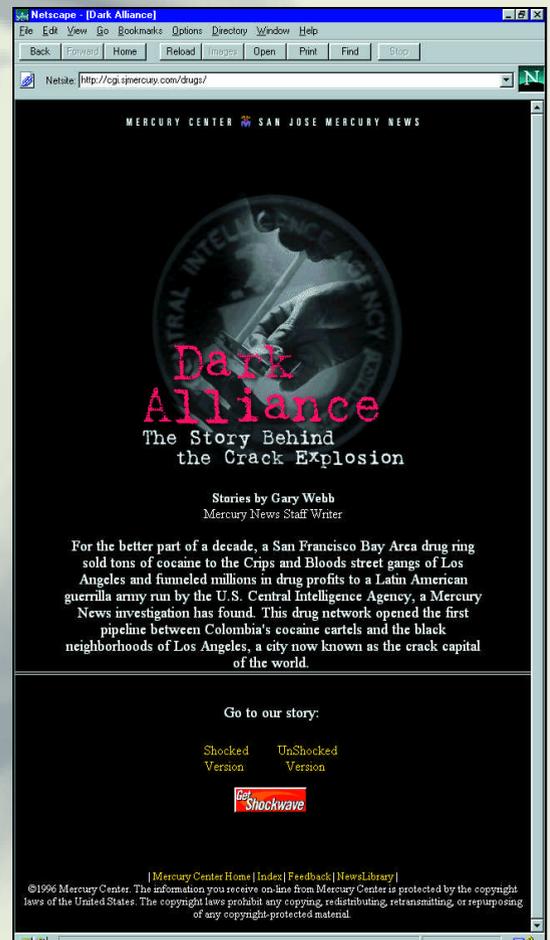


Figure 3.20. Main page of Dark Alliance. Note Shocked or UnShocked options.

Not Just Browser Dependency

Many current designers will argue that because both Netscape and Internet Explorer are now widely available, the browser issue is solved. Well, it isn't solved, and even if it were, the Web embraces choice. Even if people support frames or Shockwave, some are on slower connections or just don't like a style of presenting—this is particularly true of framed sites.

So, is the Web designer supposed to try and make everyone happy? Well, I think that in many cases he or she should. What Dark Alliance has done is ensured that people without tables, frames, *or* Shockwave can fully experience the content of the site—which is what is at issue here. The intent is not to sell a product, but, rather, to uncover the truth about a very profound social issue.

The question for the Web designer, then, goes back to audience and intent. If your Web site is aimed at a message, my advice is to make sure that message gets read. If this means leaving advanced technologies out of the picture, so be it. By the same token, the added power of sound and advanced design can really enhance the drama of a given situation. Dark Alliances shows how a balance can be achieved: By combining technology, a powerful message, and user options, you have a potent expression and a site that truly speaks.

Extra! Extra!

Have you gotten your fill of this chapter's design news? Here are the top headlines once again:

- Create dynamic navigation and deal effectively with large amounts of data.
- Design successful interfaces by understanding your audience's needs.
- Client-side image maps are effective and easy to create.
- The Web can be a very effective and unusual artistic medium; learn ways to be creative with hypermedia!
- There are several types of downloadable media for video delivery.
- Community can be built and maintained through the implementation of interactive forums.
- Keeping content fresh is a fundamental Web design concept.
- Text options and navigation element consistency must always be considered.
- Design appropriately! Java, Shockwave, and RealAudio all at once may not be appropriate for the content you are providing.
- Web browsers and user tastes require the designer to offer a variety of options so information will remain accessible and inviting.

The next chapter features art, culture, and the humanities. Tuck your newspaper or magazine aside and put your walking shoes on. Chapter 4, "Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities," is a virtual guide through some of the best visual art museums, cultural caches, and esthetically pleasing sites on the Web!

Sites that Teach

Arts, Culture, and the Humanities

The Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum

<http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/start.htm>

The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA)

<http://www.moma.org/>

ARTnet's IAMfree

<http://www.artnet.org/iamfree/>

An Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright

[http://selfpub.www.columbia.mo.us/
~jmiller/wright2.htm](http://selfpub.www.columbia.mo.us/~jmiller/wright2.htm)

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

<http://www.alvinailey.org/>

Urban Artifacts

<http://www.urbanartifacts.com/>

Maison Européenne de La Photographie

<http://www.pictime.fr/mep/>

Color Therapy

<http://myth.com/color/>

Ellis Island

<http://www.ellisland.org/>

The Aids Quilt Project

<http://www.aidsquilt.org/>

What is art? Every individual will have a unique definition, and in a place as content-rich and culturally diverse as the Web, many interpretations of art will exist. The unifying theme between various disciplines of art is that art is human expression. It seeks to answer questions, or to convey a belief or emotion, sometimes to motivate, still other times to unify.

The Web is becoming an artistic medium and cultural mien unto itself. It's interesting to search through the many art resources that exist. There are numerous human expressions on the Web, and some very good art indices, but it comes as a surprise that many art sites severely lack an understanding of the Web medium! This can especially be seen with various museums, which bring the marvelous experience of global expressions to the desktop. Although the viewing of the actual artwork or the reading of cultural narratives are undeniably enriching, the fashion in which they are displayed almost unanimously fails.

There are, of course, some very significant exceptions to the way art is handled on the Web. Many of these exceptions can be found on individual artists' pages; perhaps these individuals see the Web as an artistic medium (which it is), rather than a service more akin to data delivery. I have tried to give a few of these individual artists attention, but my hopes here have been, rather, to find and use more universally accessible art and culture resources.

The first lesson comes from the Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum. This colorful and enriching Web site is among the better designed of the Smithsonian collection online, which is quite extensive and well worth many visits. Here, I examine the use of splash pages, their effectiveness, and how to use them successfully.

I will never forget my first physical visit to New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) as an adult. I remember standing in front of Vincent Van Gogh's "Starry Night" and thinking how small a painting it really is, yet how incredibly large the impact of those swirls and colors are.

The exhibits at MOMA are always interesting, and MOMA's collections are downright breathtaking. They also have one of the most sophisticated museums online, helping me to relive the experience of seeing that Van Gogh in person. I hope you will enjoy examining the tasteful way MOMA has presented thumbnail sketches—making physically small expressions large in terms of emotional impact, with constant respect to borders, space, and shape along the way.

Shapes are critical to the study of art—how they are used, what various shapes symbolize, and what emotions they can evoke in people. ARTnet's "IAMfree" exhibit uses shape very succinctly. Frank Lloyd Wright had a visionary sense of shape as well as space. A visit to "The Wright

Place" demonstrates a beautiful use of pull quotes to effectively communicate ideas while breaking up Web space in an attractive, almost architecturally precise, fashion.

Space is important to dancers, too, and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has a pleasant Web site that gives the viewer a chance to explore the effective uses of framed space. Keeping cohesion between objects on a page can be achieved with the `<NOBR>` tag, and the HTML 3.0 extension, which is well demonstrated on the Urban Artifacts site. Across the Atlantic is the Maison Européenne de La Photographie, a great place to enjoy European photographic works as well as think about various ways to generate HTML effectively.

Artist Suza Scalora provides another look at interactivity, creating a complete sensory experience for the visitor with Color Therapy. A visit to Ellis Island teaches not only about a significant door to North American culture, but the `` tag, which helps unify and organize information. Finally, art can move humanity toward unity and compassion as is beautifully expressed in the contrasting colors and symbolic words on the Aids Quilt Web site.

Note:

Although I've been careful to use examples that can be viewed by people of all sensibilities, art—and the philosophical journeys of humankind—can sometimes be controversial, unusual, challenging, or even shocking. All of the screen shot examples in this chapter and the accompanying information on the CD-ROM should be comfortably viewed by all people; however, I do recommend that while surfing individual sites, people are aware that not all art or ideas may be appropriate for their particular beliefs and tastes.

Featured Site I

The Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum

<http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/start.htm>

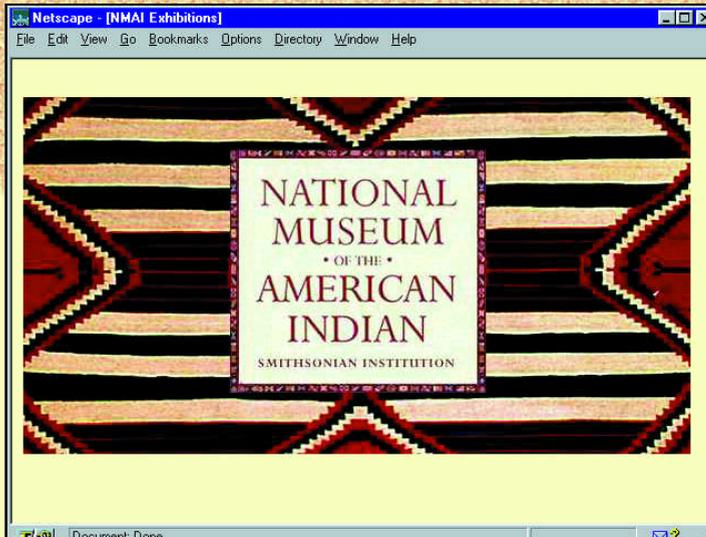


Figure 4.1. The Native American Indian Museum's first splash page.



Figure 4.2. The Native American Indian Museum's second page.

Using warm yellow, maroon, and black as the primary colors for this Web site, the Native American Indian Museum also makes excellent use of object artifacts from the collection itself. The information on this site is significant. It's an important site to spend time at for students, teachers, parents, and Native American art and history buffs, as well as the Web designer.

The page found at the preceding address (see Figure 4.1) brings the visitor to a single image placed against the background (often referred to as *splashed*, hence the name *splash page*), and hotlinked to the second page of the site (see Figure 4.2), which is where the top-level navigation is found.

You'll note that the pages are extremely similar, although the navigation page is more functional than the first page. It brings up an interesting question for Web designers: How effective are splash pages?

The answer isn't a simple yes or no. Splash pages can serve in different capacities, both in design and function. First and foremost, they can identify the site. Next, the splash page can visually fix a site's design elements in the visitor's mind, creating a foundation for design continuity. The Native American Indian Museum's splash page functions well in both of these fashions. Finally, a splash page can establish the user interface, setting up the navigation elements and site logic.



With the museum's example here, the second page achieves the user interface, but on close examination, it also fulfills the first two elements described! Essentially, the museum has *two* splash pages.

Designers are wise to avoid too many layers of information. It becomes confusing, time-consuming, and wasteful of resources. What has happened here at this Smithsonian site is a natural phenomenon for designers, because whether aware or not, the site follows a very familiar tradition—that of a printed book. First there's a cover, as represented by a splash page, and then a table of contents, and so forth.

This model isn't necessarily on the Web! Designers need to think about interface, as mentioned extensively in Chapter 3, "Sites that Speak: Newspapers and Magazines." Although interface has been successfully created, it doesn't start until the second page. My recommendation would be to use the second page as a splash page, discarding the first.

Successful Splash Pages

The first step in creating a successful splash page is to determine if one is needed at all. I personally like them, especially when the design and function have been equally addressed. I think a well-designed splash page sets the tone and pace of a site. However, not every site will require a splash page. Typically, large sites, or very visual sites, make good candidates for this technique.

Designers should then consider the following concepts:

- A splash page can convey the intent and subsequent content of the site to the visitor.
- The splash page provides an opportunity to introduce the Web site's design elements, including color, shapes, typography, and textures.
- Navigation elements can be introduced on the splash page level, setting up the logic of the site's interface right away.

Now, think about these practical techniques:

- Be sure that a balance between white space and graphic elements is present. Compare Figure 4.1 to Figure 4.2. The first screen's large graphic has little relationship to the yellow background, whereas the second screen provides much better flow between the graphic elements and the general space.
- Design for 640x480 resolution, and remember that much of that screen space is taken up by the browser's frame, buttons, and sundry structures. Don't make a splash graphic too large. It's better to use an image that is too small rather than create a page that forces a horizontal scroll or aligns improperly.

- The load-time of a splash page is going to be critical to keeping visitors engaged. This is a good time to be sure graphics are small in size and varied, instead of making the common error of using one large graphic. Exploit progressive renderings as well, such as interlaced GIFs or progressive JPGs. These types of graphics help keep the eye locked on the action, and the visitor involved. Although a good rule of thumb for kilobyte size on most pages is 60 kilobytes or less, a splash page will do better if the *total sum of its parts* is less than 30 kilobytes.
- Don't overdo special effects. Although animations, complicated frame layouts, Java applets, and other, more sensational elements can be used on a splash page, only use them if you are absolutely certain of your audience. Multimedia can be introduced later in the site.

By removing the first, awkward splash page, the Smithsonian's Native American Museum is more quickly accessed and the intended effect of that first screen is fully achieved. The remainder of the site flows well, with superb layout of information (see Figure 4.3). The site also provides an exemplary job of subtle-yet-effective design, meeting the needs of a very broad audience.



Figure 4.3. Layout of information on an internal page.

Featured Site II

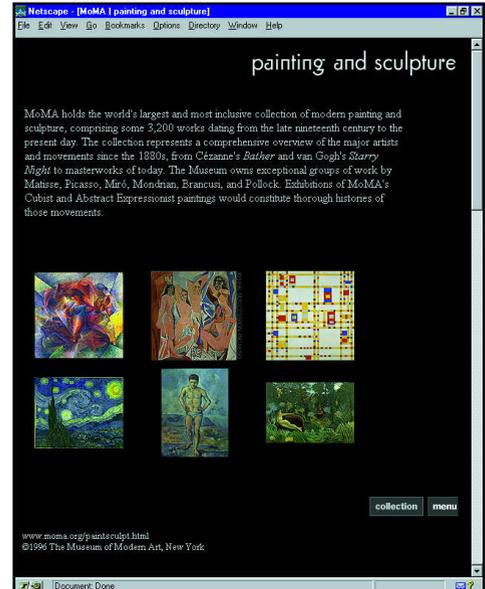
The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA)

<http://www.moma.org/>

MOMA Credits: Art Direction: Greg Van Alstyne,
The Museum of Modern Art;
Design and Programming: OVEN, New York



The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Web Site: www.moma.org/
© 1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Web Site: www.moma.org/
© 1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 4.4. Museum of Modern Art's home page.

Museum curators (as well as the Web designer) seeking to provide thumbnail options for clients would do well to take heed from the designers of the MOMA Web site. The thumbnail is a very effective mode of allowing the user to see a small version of a given object before clicking on the larger, higher-bandwidth version. This technique is used extensively, and unfortunately, very poorly, all over the Web.

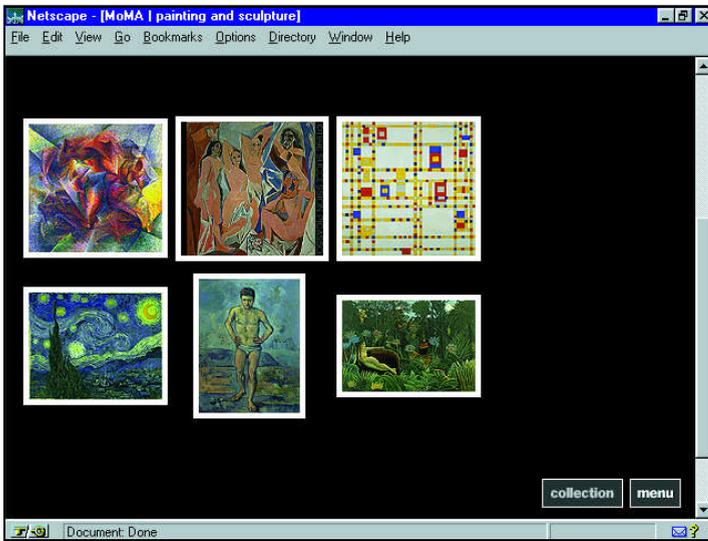
MOMA's approach has been to follow refined concepts and allow the design to dictate where and how thumbnails are placed. The first round of kudos goes to the designer who used the `border=0` argument in the images. There are few things more unattractive than borders around thumbnails; they not only contain elements that should have a natural relationship with the design space, but borders can also detract from the small, detailed content within.

It is precisely this graphic element-to-space relationship that adds to the sophistication of the MOMA site. Figure 4.5 shows a series of thumbnails. Figure 4.6 is my adulterated version of the page with the borders turned on. Note how MOMA's thumbnails are integrated into the space; there is a flow of visual energy in Figure 4.5 that my boxed-in version with borders does not have.

Figure 4.5. Thumbnail sketches on MOMA.

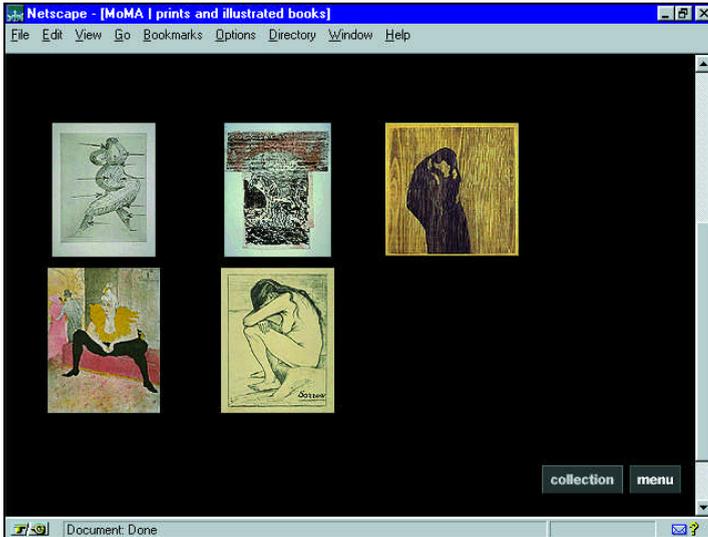
But how will a visitor know that a thumbnail is hotlinked, you might ask? Well, that's very simple. First, mouse over will change the pointer to a hand, which visually alerts the visitor to point, and then click. If this is too subtle for your tastes, try a brief description above the thumbnails, explaining to your audience that the following images are, in fact, hyperlinks to larger versions. My preference is to avoid explanation and give visitors the credit of being intelligent and intuitive enough to figure the experience out for themselves.





The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Web Site: www.moma.org/
 © 1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

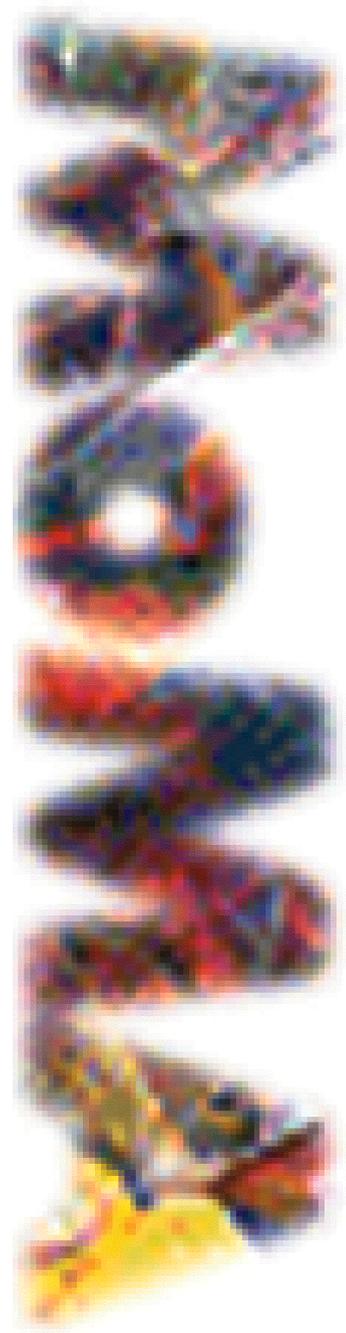
Figure 4.6. Thumbnails with the borders on are constrained.



The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Web Site: www.moma.org/
 © 1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 4.7. More thumbnail graphics.

The next round of applause is for the designer who keeps backgrounds consistent between a thumbnail and its larger version. (See Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8.) Note the consistent background, information, and navigational elements in Figure 4.8. How many sites have you visited where a click on a thumbnail takes you to a flat gray page with a really large graphic and nothing else on it? It's all too common, and it amounts to non-design. Maintaining the background keeps the continuity of the site intact, and designers using the thumbnail technique should take heed.



Finally, my hat is off to MOMA for not leaving me out to dry on the image pages. They have expertly used the space to provide extended information, and there's no need for me to resort to my browser's "back" button, because navigation is included *on the page*.

The Art of the Thumbnail

The following is a distillation of effective thumbnail technique:

- Turn off borders and let shapes flow naturally. Here's the simplified syntax:
``
- Large versions of the thumbnail graphics should be placed on a page that is as well-designed as the rest of a site, never on a gray page that disrupts the consistency of the experience.
- The large-version image pages should contain navigation so as to avoid forcing the viewer to use the back button on the browser, an unforgivable and very easily avoidable design faux pas.

The end result of these concepts has helped MOMA contribute a stunning Web site that flows visually on its individual and impressive pages. The visitor can then move flawlessly through the site, enjoying a well-planned, virtual museum with wonderful surprises and extraordinary art.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Web Site:www.moma.org/
1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

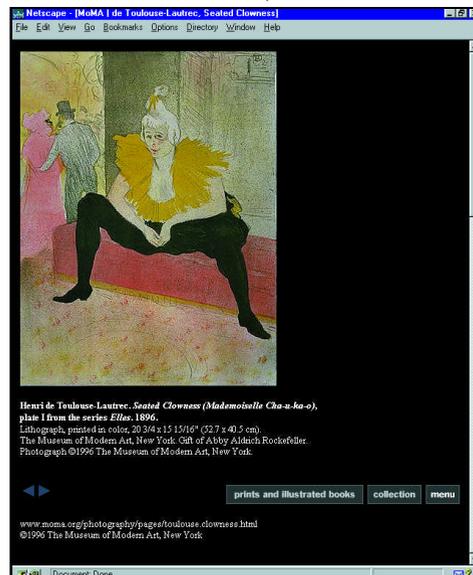


Figure 4.8. The large version.

ARTnet's IAMfree

<http://www.artnet.org/iamfree/>

Shape is one of the hallmark foundations of culture: Every visual extension of culture, be it science, language, religion, architecture, even the way food is prepared and presented, revolves around shape.

Rectangles have dominated the Web, and it is high time that other shapes become incorporated into Web design! Circles, triangles, and combinations of each can add a great deal to a design, moving it from the realm of the expected to the domain of the creative.

ARTnet's IAMfree (The Internet Arts Museum for free) exhibit is a wonderful blend of music, art, and literature donated to the Web in the spirit of maintaining cultural expression in the realm of technology. The acknowledged meeting of creativity and science always invigorates me,

and I am particularly excited when these ideas join together with great design. The impact is quite effective, and the relationship of these concepts to shape is inherent.

In the fascinating book *The Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe: The Mathematical Archetypes of Nature, Art, and Science*, author Michael Schneider studies the relationship of numbers and shapes to human expression. Interesting commentary on the symbolic and archetypal importance of shape as communication is available throughout the book.



Figure 4.9. IAMfree's home page. Note the triangles!

For creators of media, particularly designers who use shape on a daily basis as part of communication, these symbolic relationships are potent, and their study extremely important. Creators of effective and lasting logos understand this relationship intimately. The Web designer can be especially enabled by such archetypes as he or she seeks to visually express detailed and often universal information in a small amount of space. Consider the following geometric shapes and their symbolic significance when designing Web sites:

The Circle. This shape typically relates to wholeness, community, and the universe, eternity everlasting. The circle is emotionally appealing, often reminiscent of expressive qualities attributed to women, including warmth, comfort, sensuality, and love.

The Triangle. Alert and captivating, the triangle suggests power, balance, law, science, and religion (think about the scales of justice or the Star of David). Triangles are more related to masculine attributes such as strength, aggression, and dynamic motion.

The Rectangle. Rectangles typically suggest containment, and throughout this book you'll become familiar with my concerns regarding the constraint that rectangles cause, especially in the form of borders on graphics or frames. But, other symbolic relationships involved with the rectangle are important components of design, in particular the sense of protection, order, and logic. Interestingly, the addition of a fourth geometric point begins the foundation of three-dimensional objects. This fourth point suggests mass, volume, anything that is solid, secure, and in the strictest sense, real. That said, it's no accident that rectangles dominate the Web's visual space; there is a constant need to bring its non-linear reality down to earth, so to speak.

When using shapes, be aware of these ideas! They will make your designs inevitably more powerful and concise, and help move you away from the constraints caused by rectangular objects. This in no way suggests that rectangles are inappropriate; instead, my hope is that you will think carefully about the use of each individual shape.

The ARTnet IAMfree home page as captured in Figure 4.9 shows a generous use of triangles.

An Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright

<http://selfpub.www.columbia.mo.us/~jmiller/wright2.htm>

“Beautiful buildings are more than scientific... They are true organisms, spiritually conceived; works of art using the best technology...”

James Miller has created a small but very effective Web site about architect Frank Lloyd Wright. There are ample links to other sites showcasing the architect's life and work, but I feel that Miller has captured something intriguing and important in his expression.

Wright had an obvious and lasting relationship to shape and line, and Miller has used both as a means of designing his appreciation of Wright's legacy.

Of particular note is the use of quotes, along with squares and lines, to draw the visitor's eye to important ideas that complement the text. Note pull quotes along the left margin in Figure 4.10. This technique has long been used in print to accentuate ideas within a body of work, or many times to actually pull significant ideas out of the text and point the reader to them.

Aside from the more obvious advantage of giving fast access to concise ideas, the use of pull quotes helps visually break up space and create dynamic texture. This texture and focus can also be achieved by placing certain short passages in bold text. Again, by using alternative shapes, as discussed earlier in this chapter, this texture and focus draw attention out of typically rectangular blocks of text and graphics.

Miller has effectively pulled attention to main concepts using pull quotes with shapes and patterns. These geometric relationships available in his design (see Figure 4.11) are then again reflected (and probably inspired) by the impeccable understanding of design concepts available in Wright's own work.

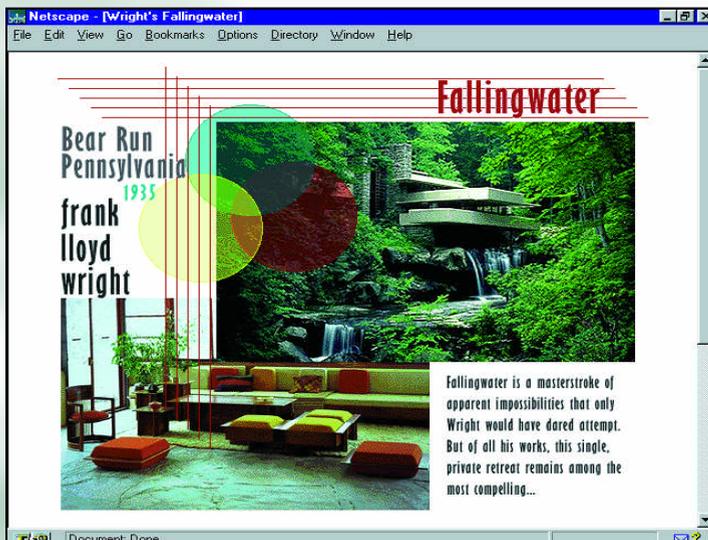


Figure 4.11. Geometrics and flow of Miller's tribute to Wright.



Figure 4.10. Frank Lloyd Wright home page.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

<http://www.alvinailey.org/>

With the focus of much of this chapter steeped in the importance of shape and space, it seems natural to introduce a discussion of frames.

Frames are becoming more and more flexible in terms of what can be done with them as a tool to control layout on a Web page. Frames are becoming the companion piece to tables as a layout control, although tables are inherently much more stable because of browser compatibility.

Many designers hate frames, and visitors to Web sites complain frequently about them, even if the understanding of *why* they complain is not clear. Simply put, frames take a small space and break it up into smaller spaces. The technique can be visually frustrating; if used intelligently, though, it can be visually, as well as functionally, powerful.

The Alvin Ailey site has achieved the most important issue involved with the use of frames: *Be very specific in the use of each space*. In other words, be consistent—if you choose one frame section for navigation, another for a title bar, and another for data, you need to keep that specificity consistent throughout the site. Frames will fail miserably in design if each page uses a different series of frame layout.

The designers of the Alvin Ailey Web site were quite savvy in keeping the navigation to the left, the title bar to the top right, and the main data in the right-central target frame. This works very nicely as an interface concept.

There is a less-than-satisfactory use of the data space, in terms of the framed interface. The home page, as shown in Figure 4.12, is very well done; however,

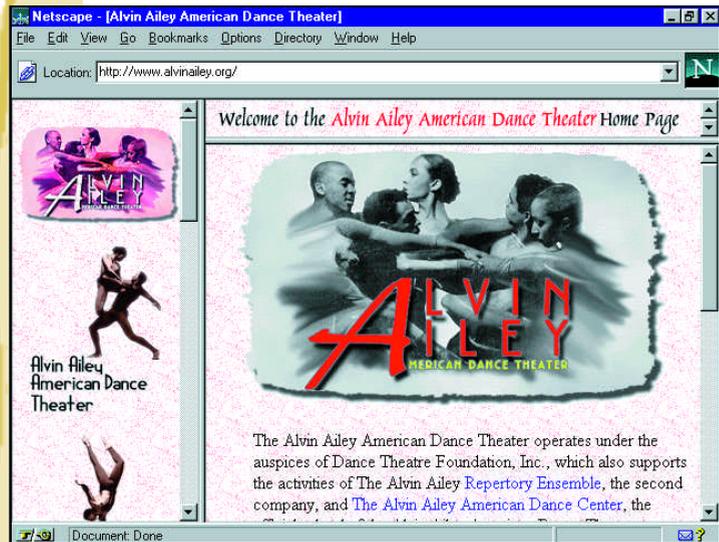


Figure 4.12. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater home page.

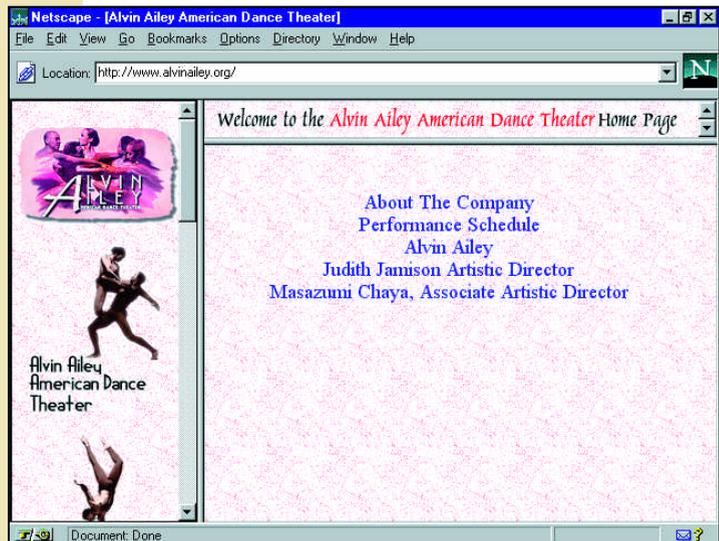


Figure 4.13. Note wasted space in the main frame.

as I progress through the site, I end up with pages that only have a few hypertext options (see Figure 4.13) and too much wasted space! Here, the designer has delineated this area for data, and hasn't always succeeded in using the area to its full potential.

An entire book could be written on the use of frames as an evolving interface tool, so I'll avoid the teaching of the technique and instead focus on some basic design thoughts that will help you in using frames well.



- Use frames as an interface tool, not just for the sake of having them. This means thinking about how each part of the page interacts with the other parts, and how each space will be used.
- Maintain consistency throughout a Web site. Avoid changing framed spaces—for example, moving the navigation from left to right, or an advertisement from top to bottom. Keep the interface well-structured.
- Stay away from too many frames. I think three spaces is plenty, more only if you're very certain of what you want to achieve. MCI's Web site, as covered in Chapter 11, "Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web," uses more than three spaces, and almost doesn't get away with it! Design consistency and detailed information keep the MCI site on the side of creative use of frames, rather than the side of overuse.
- Consider frame tag elements and how they can be used to control space rather than break it up. Fixing frame size and width as well as actually hiding the frames can become effective layout tools rather than distracting and extraneous visual elements.

Urban Artifacts

<http://www.urbanartifacts.com/>

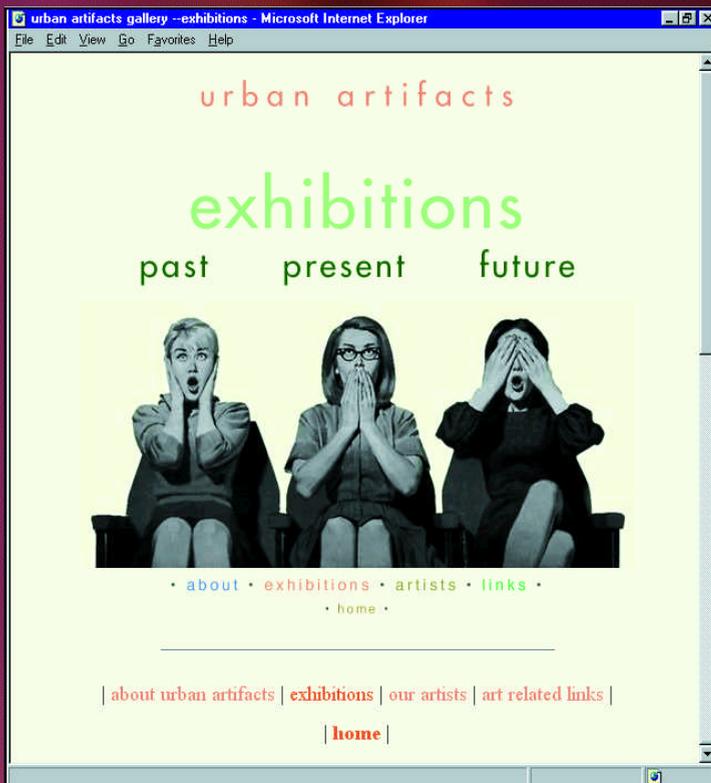


Figure 4.14. Urban Artifacts: hear, speak, see no evil.

This subtle Web site created in pastels is the online version of a Houston, Texas craft gallery featuring various media, including clay, jewelry, blown glass, sculpture, and fiber. The site makes excellent use of color, typography, and humor, as pictured in a contemporary hear/speak/see no evil theme shown in Figure 4.14. This site was designed and is maintained by Jon Stovall of dubon Internet Design (jon@dubon.com).

In order to be sure that the design created will be consistent across various browsers, screen resolutions, and browser sizing, the designers have used a very handy HTML 3.0 extension known as the "no break," represented by the `<NOBR>` tag, and its companion closing tag, `</NOBR>`.

This feature should be used any time a series of graphic elements need to remain together, side by side,

without the resizing of a browser affecting the end results. The `<NOBR>` tag is as easy to understand as its name; it simply means that the information within it should not break, regardless of what externals might influence it.

Notice that in Figure 4.14, the words (actually graphic images) “Past, Present, Future” appear together on the same horizon line. If I decrease the size of my browser, the information remains together. Now, if I take the `<NOBR>` tags out, the information (viewed in most browsers other than Netscape and Internet Explorer 3.0 and above) will stack awkwardly, losing the fine balance and intent of the design.

This technique is very helpful in maintaining a design's integrity. It is supported by any browser that is up-to-date with HTML 3.0 and above.



Maison Européenne de La Photographie

<http://www.pictime.fr/mep/>

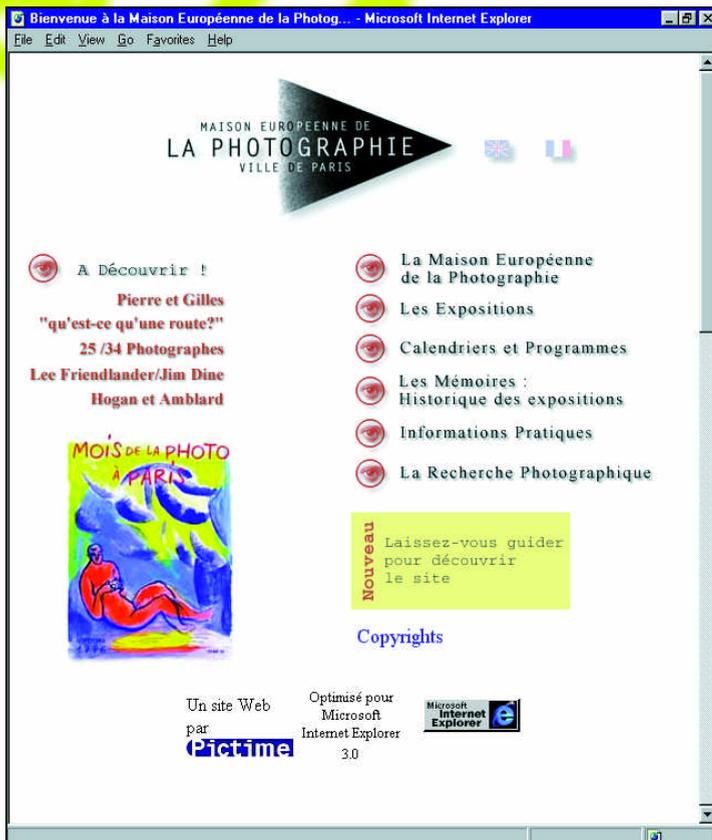


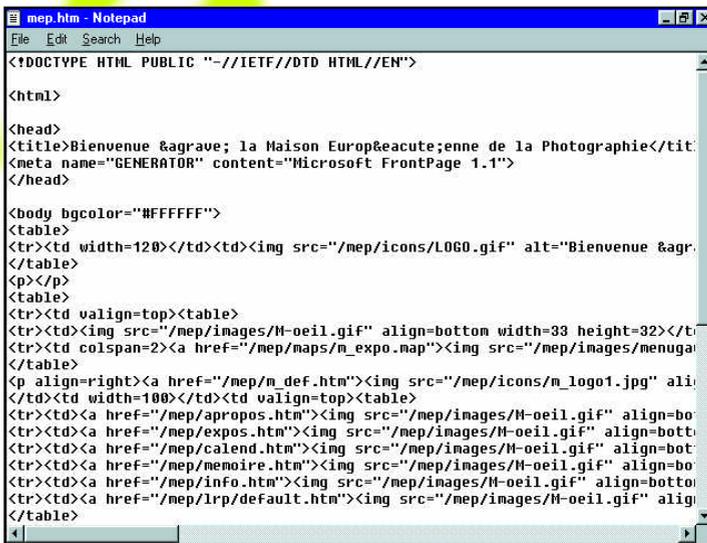
Figure 4.15. European Museum of Photography home page.

Although there's a perfectly good English version of the site available, I prefer to cruise around it in French, even though I don't understand the language very well. The French version lends a certain bit of worldly flavor, as well as challenging me to remember my lessons and figure out what the various links are taking me to!

The European Museum of Photography is a nice representation of a Web site with sophistication and style that is effective because it is understated. The theme is black, white, and red, in subtle, almost translucent hues, until you reach the actual exhibitions, which can be quite colorful in contrast. Thumbnails are also used effectively, without borders, larger versions are on consistent pages, and there is a way off the larger version page without having to resort to that “back” button.

The site was created using Microsoft's FrontPage 1.1 package, as noted in the source code in Figure 4.16. Upon seeing the notation, I thought about offering up some assistance regarding HTML coding and the onslaught of packages that are becoming available seemingly overnight.

Figure 4.16. Source code for the Maison Européenne de La Photographie.



```
mep.htm - Notepad
File Edit Search Help
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//IETF//DTD HTML//EN">
<html>
<head>
<title>Bienvenue &agrave; la Maison Europe&acut;enne de la Photographie</tit
<meta name="GENERATOR" content="Microsoft FrontPage 1.1">
</head>
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">
<table>
<tr><td width=120></td><td>
<p></p>
<table>
<tr><td valign=top><table>
<tr><td><td colspan=2<<a href="/mep/maps/m_expo.map"><td width=100></td><td valign=top><table>
<tr><td><a href="/mep/apropos.htm"><td><a href="/mep/expos.htm"><td><a href="/mep/calend.htm"><td><a href="/mep/memoire.htm"><td><a href="/mep/info.htm"><td><a href="/mep/lrp/default.htm">
```

As I see it, there are three ways to put together HTML:

1. By hand, using a raw text editor
2. With a simple HTML editor such as HotDog or HTML Assistant for the PC, or PageSpinner for the Macintosh
3. With an all-out, does-it-for-you package such as Microsoft's FrontPage, or Adobe's PageMill

I'm not in a position to endorse a product, and besides, I believe that there is something for everyone. You will find out what works best for you personally, or, if you are in a company situation, what is most effective there. For now, look at simple pros and cons of each of the preceding ways.

1. Raw text editors. These are not HTML editors. Their purpose is to edit raw ASCII text, and can be anything from emacs on UNIX, qedit or notepad on the PC, or Bbedit on the Macintosh. The disadvantages of a raw editor are that there are no speed features, no templates, no shortcuts, no HTML help files. The advantages of a raw editor? No speed features, no templates or shortcut, no help. The point, and my old school ideas are showing through here, is that if *you cannot code by hand* then you will inevitably not know how to control problems or create new and amazing methods of achieving things with HTML. My recommendation is that *anyone who aspires to be an HTML coder must be able to code in raw text*.
2. Simple HTML Editors. These products are typically the middle-of-the-road solution to HTML generation. They often have very nice features that a coder who knows

what he or she is after can use to enhance his or her speed and productivity. The user interface is typically a simple environment that, unlike full packages, does not dare to change or does not permit elements that you as the coder choose to manually place. I like these types of packages, and use them myself. There are several on the CD-ROM, including HotDog, and HTML Assistant.

3. Full Web Development Packages. My personal sensibilities are often offended by the amount of control these packages have and the restriction of control placed on a knowledgeable coder. Their use, however, is very important, particularly as more and more people need this type of power tool to get the work finished. Also, the various controls in many of the packages enable a lot of very tedious work to get finished quickly and efficiently. Therefore, I not only see their place, but I highly recommend seeking out a package that works for you *if this level of complex output with user-friendly interface* is what you are seeking.

All that said, I still maintain that at least one person, whether it is you, or if you have a staff member that the task can be delegated to, should be able to code by hand. I make the comparison of the acoustic versus electric guitar player. An acoustic guitar is harder and more precise to play. As such, learning it well will make an electric guitarist that much better in terms of technique. Generating fast code might be enthralling, but if the learning doesn't support it, potential problems can, and almost always do, arise.

Color Therapy

<http://myth.com/color/>

As has been mentioned several times in this book already, and as I'm sure you will read again, interactivity is the heart and soul of the Web medium. It is user choice and involvement that make the Web unique as a form of widely accessible media as well as particularly engaging and potentially empowering from the educational standpoint.

Artist and photographer Suza Scalora has created several interactive media pieces at myth.com that are excellent demonstrations of the Web's interactive form, and Color Therapy is among the best.

Nothing happens without the visitor. This could be said of any Web site, but even if a visitor clicked once and read most Web sites, he or she might come away with some information about a product, the activities of a given organization, or a multimedia experience that allowed them to be passive. This is hardly true of any Scalora site, even though the individual pages might please or stimulate curiosity, their personalities invite you to continue pointing, clicking, and exploring your way through her colorful maze.

Thematically, the goal of Color Therapy is to have visitors explore their own relationship to color, as well as describe the meanings of color, provide a meditation, and allow a journey through a gallery of Scalora's exquisite and unusually colored photographic works.



Figure 4.17. Suza Scalora's Color Therapy.

Much like shape, color has powerful impact on the human psyche. Designers learn about which colors give people a sense of security, which calm them, perk them up, excite them, make them nervous and tense, or bring them joy.

After the main splash screen, an animated and very colorful GIF allows me to pick a color from Scalora's bright palette. This visit, I selected "color meanings" and then chose the color blue. I ended up on a blue page with a swirling background and the significance of the color, which induces tranquillity, expresses intuition, and projects trustworthiness.

Visitors can follow the color meditation series, which is quite interesting in that, instead of selecting a color, you select an emotion or state of being. Then you are brought to the color corresponding to that emotion. Your job is to "Zone Out" on the color for two minutes, after which you may open the journal along the bottom and write about what you saw and felt during the color meditation. You can e-mail these directly to yourself and reflect on your personal experience of color.

The Color Therapy site is not only a great example of how individual and interactive a Web site can be, it is also a great place for designers to learn about the significance of color, think about how it affects them as individuals, and more importantly, how its symbolic concepts can be used in design.



Ellis Island

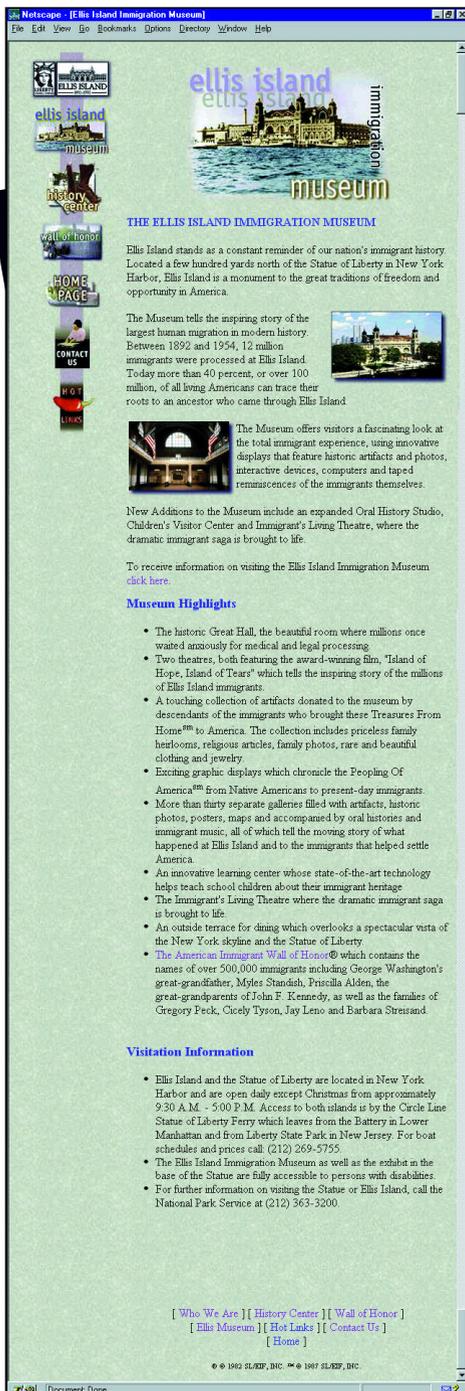


Figure 4.18. Page from Ellis Island.

There are some Netscape extensions to ``, which can change the bullet type. Here are two styles:

- `<li type="circle">` creates a circle bullet.
- `<li type="square">` creates a square bullet.

Other additions to the list can include breaking up the individual lines with a `
` or `<sp>` tag to get a little white space in between the list items. Use your visual judgment—always keep in mind that lists of this nature are very helpful to visitors who need quick information delivered in a succinct and easy-to-access fashion.

http://www.ellisland.org/

Immigrants to this country come through a variety of ports and passages. Ellis Island is among the most famous of landmarks for immigrant families to the United States, many of whom included. I was moved to learn not only about the Island's history and museum, but the marvelous project known as The American Immigrant Wall of Honor.

This project is one of the highlights of the Web site. It doesn't matter if a family came to the United States through Ellis Island or another entry, or settled here long before the U.S. became an immigrant nation. The Wall of Honor is an opportunity to remember families, acknowledge their struggles and triumphs in the journey to achieve freedom, to remember those families who were forced to migrate here and whose legacy and contribution to this nation endure, and to honor the indigenous people to this land. No one who has participated in the building of the American Dream goes unacknowledged here, and membership information is available via a handy feedback form.

One method of organizing information on Web sites in a clear and concise fashion is to use bulleted lists, which is managed by the `` tag. (Note bulleted lists in Figure 4.18.) I'm very fond of this technique because it, like the pull-quote technique mentioned previously, points visitors to key ideas in an orderly and efficient fashion.

To create an unordered (meaning no numbers), bulleted list, two tags are necessary. There's the already mentioned `` tag, and its closing partner ``. Each bullet is handled by the `` tag, which requires no closing tag. Here is an example of such a list:

```
<ul>
<li>This is the first idea.
<li>This idea follows.
<li>This is the final idea in the series.
</ul>
```

The AIDS Quilt Project

<http://www.aidsquilt.org/>

One of the most emotional Web sites I've ever visited, the AIDS Quilt Project is literally the largest ongoing community art project in the world. It is a testament both off and on the Web as to how art can be used to unify people from all walks of life.

Finding common threads is an important theme in helping build and maintain communities. And, as technology becomes more and more prevalent in daily life, there can be a tendency for people to withdraw into the fascination that computers can invite.

Scholars and analysts such as Nicholas Negroponte have looked at the issues surrounding what is known as "the personalization" of modern technology. Typically, such ideas refer to the creation of interfaces, in that the visual and navigational aspects of a given form of media, in this case, the Web, should be geared toward people.

I like to take that concept a step further and say that not only should interfaces be personalized, but the interaction that takes place on the Internet is naturally humanistic. In this way, there is a global body of people from a variety of philosophies, religions, and cultural environments. As the technology becomes more accessible and widespread, this concept becomes even more variegated.



Figure 4.19. AIDS Quilt home page.

The AIDS Quilt shows us in inarguable terms how community can be built and maintained on the Web. Yes, it is tragedy that brings individuals together in this particular instance. However, it is also hope and optimism, for the end goal is to help others survive this devastating illness that can no longer be viewed as a problem of specific geographical areas or sub-cultures. This is a world-wide epidemic, and as seen here, people respond with the best part of their hearts.

From a design standpoint, the site is subtle with a lot of details regarding various activities, detailed information about the project and how individuals can become involved, and extensive AIDS-related information. Each section has a header, and what is particularly impressive from a design standpoint is the use (this will come as no surprise to the reader, as shown already in this chapter) of shape and color.

Note in Figure 4.19 how the main header incorporates a circle. As you move through the site, different shapes and colors, such as triangles and purples (see Figure 4.20), can be seen. Each header incorporates different shapes and colors. This gentle yet effective approach stands as a perfect example of integrated issues regarding the use of shape and color on Web sites.



Another point of interest regarding this site is the use of words within the graphics, creating layers of meaning and textures. Never forget that words are symbols too, and can be used as design elements that have great impact.

Powerful and moving, this Web site is worth a visit. Perhaps it's a rather sobering place to leave you, yet I hope it also serves as inspiration, both through its intelligent graphics and sincere, dedicated, and humanistic expression.

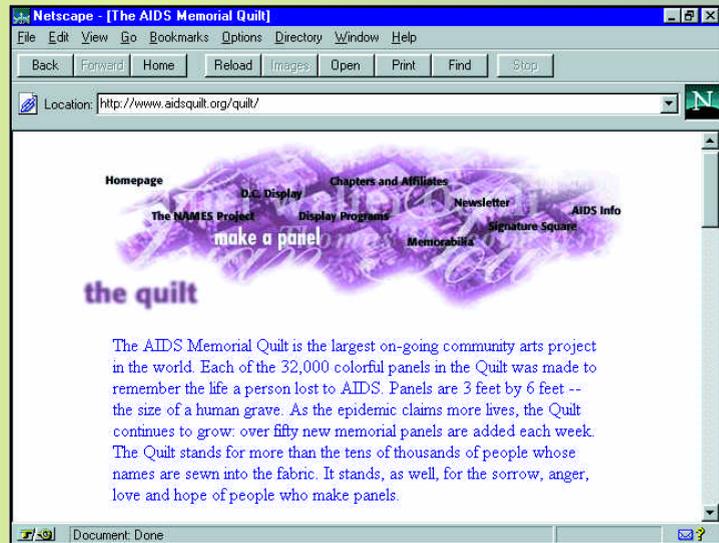


Figure 4.20. The color purple and the triangular shape of this header add subtle and effective contrast.

Art = Life

Before moving on to the next chapter, I'm going to leave you with an ordered list of lessons and concepts from this chapter.

- Splash pages are not for every site, but should you choose to use one, follow some simple concepts to be certain they are effective.
- The thumbnail is an excellent method of allowing users to choose what high-bandwidth graphics they want or need to see. Keeping thumbnails unconstrained and following up with consistent and navigable pages is an overlooked but very important design element to be aware of.
- Shapes have incredible psychological impact on audience. Learn a bit about what they convey and use these concepts when planning design.
- Pull quotes are an effective method of quickly drawing the visitor's eye to specific, important information.
- Frames are a sensitive issue. Learning how to use framed space as a consistent interface is one way to create successful framed sites.
- Keep data unified with the HTML 3.0 tag "no break," `<NOBR>`.
- HTML can be generated with three primary types of tools. Learn a bit about each to determine which is best for your needs.
- Interactivity means nothing happens until the visitor makes a choice! Combine this with other elements such as shape and color, and very creative interactive sites can result.
- The `<u1>` tag is another method by which to draw attention to specific bits of important information.
- Art can pull people together, creating unity and community, even from vastly different cultures and ways of being. The Web is the perfect matrix in which to use art as a means of helping the world grow small, rather than becoming isolated by advancing technology.

The next exhibit includes fashion shows, cosmetics, health, and lifestyle information. If you'll follow the curator, she'll be happy to lead you to the entry way to the next stop.

Sites to Live By

Beauty, Fashion, Health, and Lifestyle

Lumière

<http://www.lumiere.com/>

gURL

<http://www.tsoa.nyu.edu/gURL/>

AEGIS

<http://www.aegis.com/>

Buffalo Exchange

<http://desert.net/buffalo/>

L'oréal

<http://www.lorealcosmetics.com/>

Nordic Track

<http://www.nordictrack.com/>

Gadabout

<http://www.gadabout.com/spa/>

A Man's Life

<http://www.manslife.com/>

Health Girl

<http://www.nethealthgirl.com.au/>

Clinique

<http://www.clinique.com/>

People have long held a fascination for what is beautiful and fashionable. The desire for good health and well-being is also universal. Living well and feeling good rank pretty high up on my list of desires, and I've found a great deal of entertaining as well as enlightening information by visiting the sites contained in this chapter.

Using fashion, beauty, health, and lifestyle Web sites as a guide, I'll begin the chapter's design highlights by sending the all-important concept of originality down the runway with Lumière's stunning site, and I'll offer up some challenges and thoughts for you along the way. A more practical coverage of gURL airs ideas to keep your company healthy, and shows how the progressive pattern of new

media/new models can apply to running your Web design business.

Cascading style sheets show off the up-and-coming trend on the Web design scene, in this case, controlling those troublesome fonts for AEGIS, the Web's most comprehensive AIDS database. Server-push animation is next on the roster, with colorful, fun images from the Buffalo Exchange. Following closely behind is a seductive number from Loréal, showing you how to keep the audience coming back for more! Interlaced GIFs are any season's rage, and you'll learn not only why but how to use them fashionably while working out on your Nordic Track. The importance of *white space* is on every Web artist in-the-know's gossip menu, and Gadabout Salons shows you how the deed is done. A Man's Life sports the use of the `<embed>` tag, which always helps to add a little rock to your roll. Knowing your audience is always this season's pick, as sassy Health Girl understands. Finally, CGI-based password protection options on Clinique's runway close the event with sensibility as well as style.

Featured Site I

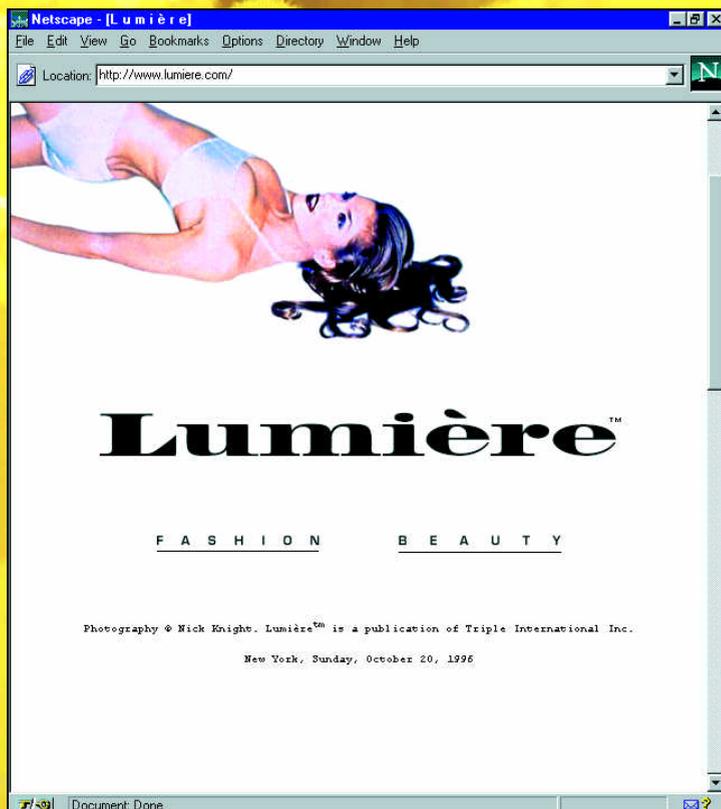
Lumière

<http://www.lumiere.com/>

When Web history gets written, Lumière will be featured as the grandparent of Internet imagination. Always ahead of the pack when it comes to high design, Lumière has always done cutting-edge work with every bit of elegance its online presence reveals.

Lumière is dedicated to fashion and beauty; originality is the word that Lumière's biographers will use, over and over again, to describe every aspect of the oft-changing Web site's design.

Figure 5.1. Lumière splash page.





Web designers need to take note of this type of always fresh, inventive approach to design. Not all Web sites are going to allow for the diverse technologies and unusual styles that Lumière presents; however, the concept of reminding Web designers that this field is art as much as technology is imperative.

Lumière has done several things that Web designers need to take note of, and to use as daily method for inviting technique and inspiration into the art of design.

Treat the Space as a Complete Unit

Notice the splash page for Lumière, shown in Figure 5.1. The model is at an unusual angle; the photograph bleeds right off the page. This use of space is a major part of Lumière's originality, an exercise in spatial arrangement of elements that depart from the more conventional centered header followed by text.

Look at the various elements you have planned for a site. Is there an unusual placement or treatment you can apply to the graphics or text to make the best use of your space? As you will read a bit later in this chapter, space is as much a part of design as the graphic elements, text, and navigation are. People often believe that making elements large draws attention to them. However, if every element on a page is large, then nothing stands out. The communication is lost in the over-emphasis of the design.

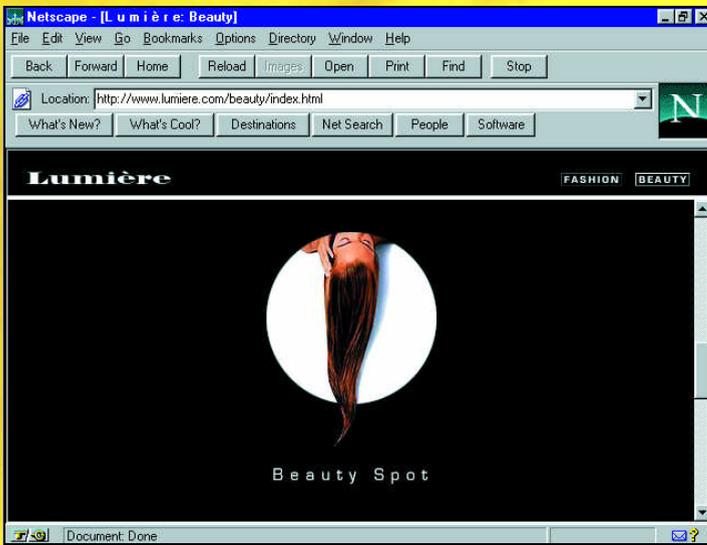
So not only are you challenged to come up with novel placement, but also understand how to balance the elements of your work! The best ways to gain a better understanding of this balance, if you don't have design training, are to read and study as much about the subject as possible. Then, browse the Web frequently. All Web designers should do this—it's the same as art students studying the work of other artists. Notice how some Web designers fall into the mistake of over-emphasis. Find how others have learned the art of subtlety. Look closely at the ways fonts, text, colors, and graphic elements are employed. Not everything will appeal to you, but some things will light fire under your design passions.

Elements Are Individual Parts of a Whole

In Chapter 8, "Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web," I discuss the importance of treating photo images as part of, not separate from, the Web environment, and I offer some technical practices to make your photos more efficient. With the Lumière site, the point is to look at how to treat photos and graphic elements as unique elements that are not disconnected from the flow of an entire page.

Figure 5.2 demonstrates a perfect example of the visual continuity found with Lumière's design. Note that the artist has created a field for the subject of the photo, yet the model's hair flows right out of the field into the main field! This creates a beautiful stream of image and space, flowing from one to the other, and joining them in a continuous whole.

Figure 5.2. Lumière photo image and continuity.



In fact, it occurs to me that this is the strongest way to remember the concept: Just as our hair, our bodies, and our hands are separate from one another, they are also connected to the greater entity. The same is true of each element of a design, be it a graphic, text, or interactive element—each aspect should have a common thread that conceptually involves them in the entire design.

Stay Ahead of the Pack

Where you can, be revolutionary. Think of something that nobody else is doing, or some new way of doing something that's been done before, as shown in the unusual photo treatment in Figure 5.3. Obviously, this isn't going to apply to all Web sites; it is understood that sites like Lumière are the exception rather than the rule when it comes to wanting this kind of high-style presentation.

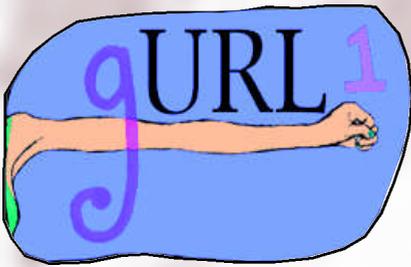
Figure 5.3. Unusual design approach.



Featured Site II

This doesn't mean that you as a Web designer shouldn't be playing with concepts and ideas outside of the client realm. No one wants to take his or her work home, so try to plan some hours of the week to spend researching and developing ideas that, if not immediately applicable to the type of projects you are currently involved with, will hone your skills and allow you the creative freedom to explore.

Encourage others in your company to do this too. It's a challenge finding the time to keep up with rapid trends, developing skills external of those used on a daily basis, and finding time just to browse the Web. However, these activities will provide the fuel for what is essentially a Web designer's responsibility, and, ultimately, his or her empowerment.



<http://www.tsoa.nyu.edu/gURL/>



Figure 5.4. The gURL splash page.

Beauty, lifestyle, and intelligent insights about all interests to young women are featured in this refreshing and self-proclaimed "playful" Web magazine.

What's interesting to note about this noncommercial project is the collaborative model in which the designers and contributors are working to create innovative Web design and content. It's long been my take that new media demands new working paradigms, and gURL appears to embrace that theory.

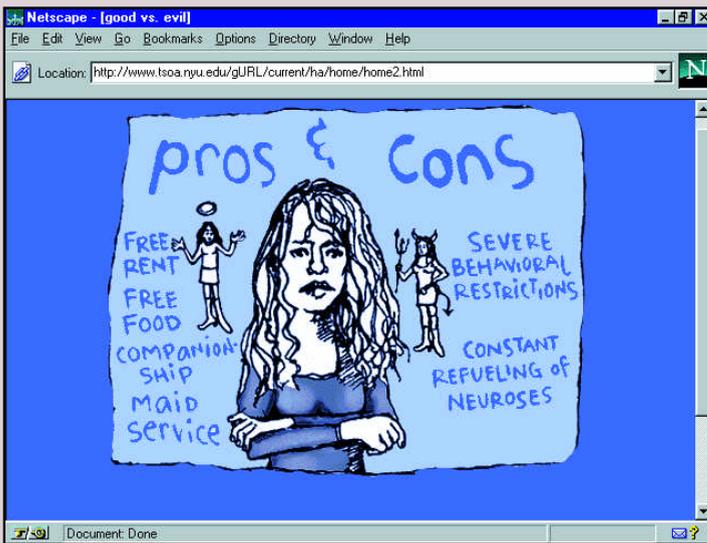
Nine women at New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program are responsible for gURL's content and art. Interestingly, each works independently to create the content and art that comes together as the final product. This in and of itself might seem to contradict the idea that a successful Web site is the result of comprehensive design—all elements working together.

Studying the site, it becomes increasingly clear that the goals of the site as a whole have been well-determined. As such, each independent artist knows and understands the parameters in which they are working, so the final product is, in fact, very cohesive and not at all choppy, as it might be if the underlying goal was not so crystal clear. Note the similarities between Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6, where a consistency in look and feel is maintained.

Figure 5.5. A page from gURL.



Figure 5.6. A page from another section of gURL. Note the consistency in look and feel.



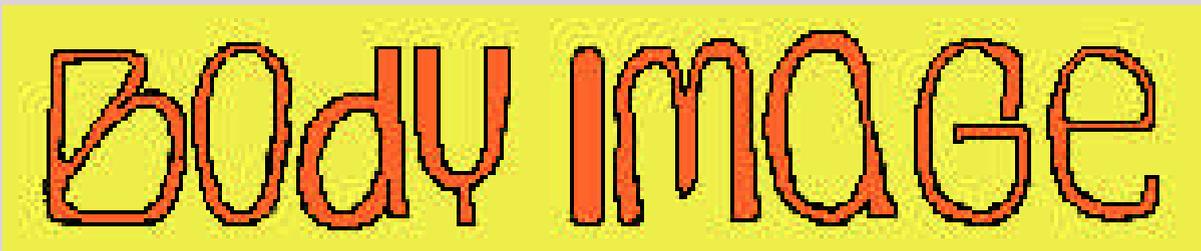
The design success of gURL is a testament for new models of working within a new media. You might be thinking that this is rather heady philosophy and might not apply to the Web designer at large. I would differ, in that case, because in order to be successful at this job, all Web designers need to keep eyes, ears, mind, and heart open to what is new and exciting, both on the level of technology and the level of business. One will lend to the success of the other.

Peer-Based Relationships

You can begin applying the new model/new media concept by studying the environment in which you work, both from a theoretical and physical sense. Cooperatives such as gURL can inspire an examination of the way you and your business operate, and the way the people within it relate to one another. Who is the boss? Is there a sense of strength with each individual's abilities and contributions to the team ideal? How well do you communicate with each other? If you work alone, how honest are you with yourself about the way you do things, and the way you are willing to take serious assessment of the way you communicate with yourself and your clients? New media development *demands* communication. That is your job—and if you are to succeed at it, beginning with your immediate environment creates an incredibly strong foundation.

No company is going to be without its growing pains and challenges, particularly when a group of gifted, driven people all end up in the same room. There will inevitably be differences of opinion and diverse methods of how things are done. Success in peer-based models of business requires everyone in the company to challenge his or her own ideas.

If you're involved in a work relationship with fellow designers, examine your own belief systems and how they operate within your company. Be willing to look at weaknesses, and be ready to celebrate strengths, both in yourself and in those around you. This



enhances opportunity and moves away from the old paradigm of boss-gives-orders/worker-takes-them hierarchy. Instead, hold a roundtable and allow for peer input. Even bosses need constructive criticism, and praise, in order to grow.

Physical Environment

Next, examine the physical environment. What on earth does this have to do with good Web design? Well, this is intense stuff, and the work environment is critical to both high production and creativity. Do you have windows in your work space? Do you have fresh air? What about plants and art? Each of these things can add to the artistic and productive elements of the job.

What is even more critical—how comfortable and ergonomic are your chairs and equipment? Save yourself a world of pain and your employees by providing ergonomic keyboards and supportive chairs, and make sure that computer monitors are placed front and center as you sit, not off to the side or at any dramatic angle where it becomes a strain.

Work with professionals who understand ergonomic methods to help you and the people you work with not only to enhance productivity but to protect against serious physical problems encountered by those who do computer work. Such health problems include carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive motion syndrome, deterioration of vision, other eye problems, neck and back injuries, chronic fatigue, and weight gain.

Engaging

Creating a healthy work environment is one of the best things individual designers and upcoming new media companies can do to succeed. By creating positive communications, individuals become motivated, feel challenged by their work, and bring their enthusiasm to their output. Keeping the environment optimized enables you to maximize health and productivity for you *and* your team members.

Be sure you and your team take plenty of time to do other things. I once came very close to being tossed in a cold pool because I was at a shop at a party! This industry is so exciting and those who work in it tend to be a very focused group. Encourage outside activities and vacations, and be sure to offer positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. Most of all, have fun. When the job becomes a drag, my bets are that your company's output will too.

AEGIS

<http://www.aegis.com/>

Using a variety of communications tools, including Bulletin Board Services and the Internet, AEGIS (AIDS Education Global Information System) is a worldwide provider of information about AIDS and HIV.

Sister Mary Elizabeth of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth of Hungary joined forces with Jamie Jemison, who had started AEGIS as a local electronic Bulletin Board System (BBS) in the Orange County area. The two gathered support and services for their humanitarian goal to reduce the amount of suffering and isolation of people afflicted with HIV and AIDS. The end result is this international outreach center, which is considered to be the largest database of its kind.

The AEGIS Web site is simply but attractively designed, and powerfully easy to use. It provides AIDS Daily Summaries from the U.S. Center for Disease Control, offers "Newline," which is a link to major newswire articles on AIDS and HIV, provides support information, and houses a completely searchable, online library of publications related to the theme.

Font Control with W3C Cascading Style Sheets

One interesting item found on the AEGIS Web site is the use of W3C's (World Wide Web Consortium's) cascading style sheets to control font size and appearance. Unlike the use of font tags and the arguing of attributes within that tag, the style sheet method allows for global control of different attributes of a given page. In this case, the font face, point size, color, and weight have been argued.

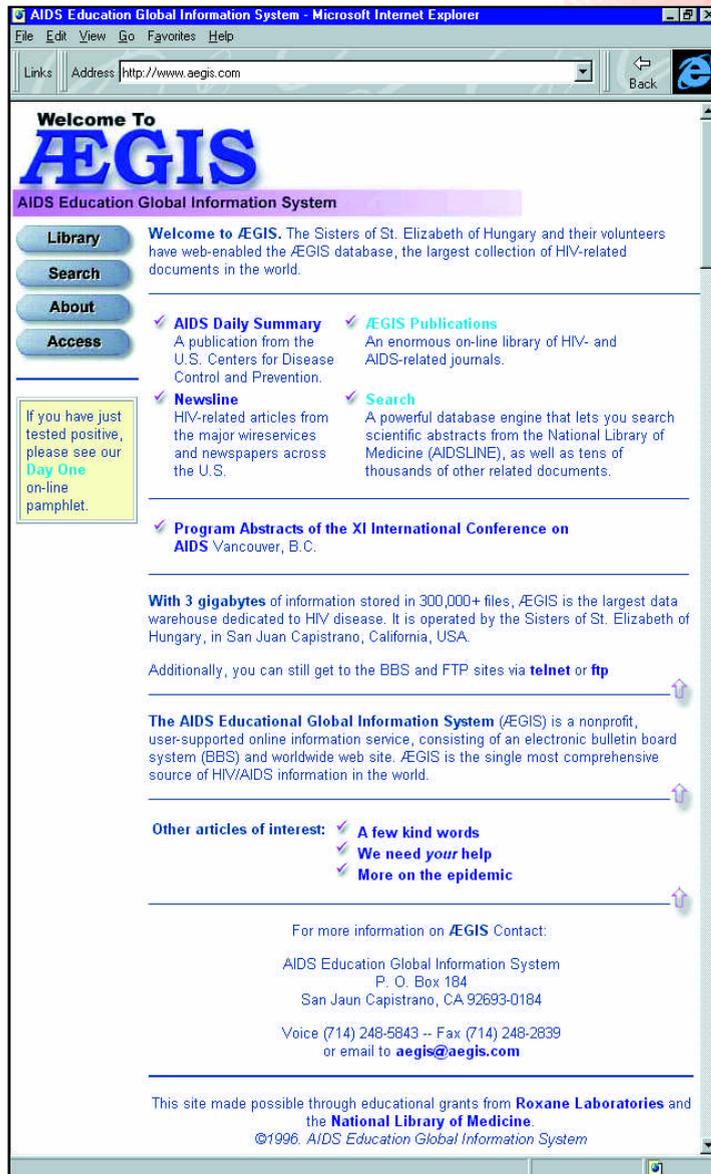


Figure 5.7. AEGIS home page.

Style sheets are very powerful, and, in this case, demonstrate how they address the long-overdue need for better control. Fonts, after all, are a major part of design. Without them, Web designers are at a disadvantage.

The one downside to the use of cascading style sheets is that they are primarily supported by Internet Explorer 3.0. However, Netscape Navigator 4.0 is reported to have support for these style sheets. Furthermore, if a specific font isn't native on the visitor's computer, he or she won't be able to read the font that you, as the designer, have selected. However, browsers and computers without the compatibility for this level of font control will call up the default font, so the site will be readable.

Here is the HTML source code that shows the cascading style sheet request on the AEGIS home page:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE>AIDS Education Global Information System</TITLE>
  <META HTTP-EQUIV="Keywords" CONTENT="HIV AIDS AEGIS">
  <META NAME="Author" CONTENT="Sr. Mary Elizabeth">
  <META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Information on HIV Disease and AIDS">
  <STYLE><! - -
    BODY {font: 10pt Arial; color: 003366}
    A:link {font: 10pt Arial; color: 000066; font-weight:bold}
    A:visited {font: 10pt Arial; color: 0099cc; font-weight:bold}
    STRONG {font: 14pt Arial; color: 003366; text-decoration:none}
    BIG {font: 10pt Arial; background: cccc66}
    H1 {font: 24pt Arial; color: 990000}
  - -></STYLE>
</HEAD>
```

It's important to first notice *where* the style definitions are called. Like the `<title>` and `<meta>` tag, the `<style>` tag is placed within the `</head>` tag. Here you can see the syntax used to set the style for this page. Look at the results through Internet Explorer 3.0, as shown in Figure 5.8. You'll see how the style sheet information is ignored and Netscape 3.0 goes to the default Times font in Figure 5.9.

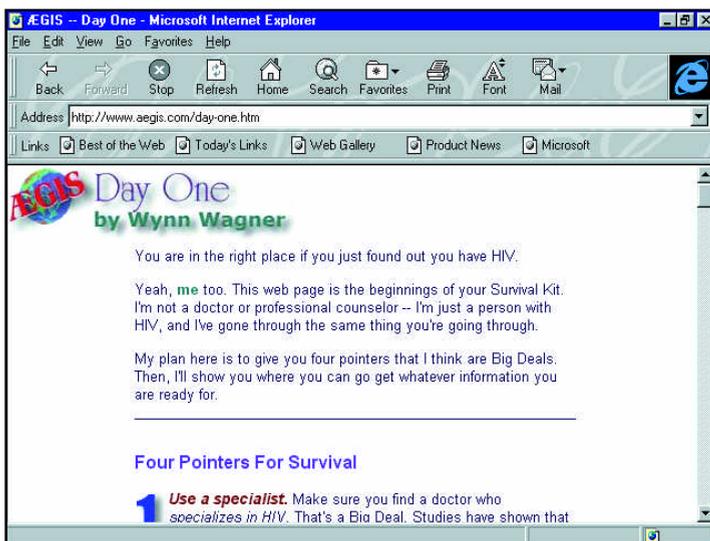


Figure 5.8. Font control with cascading style sheets (Internet Explorer 3.0).



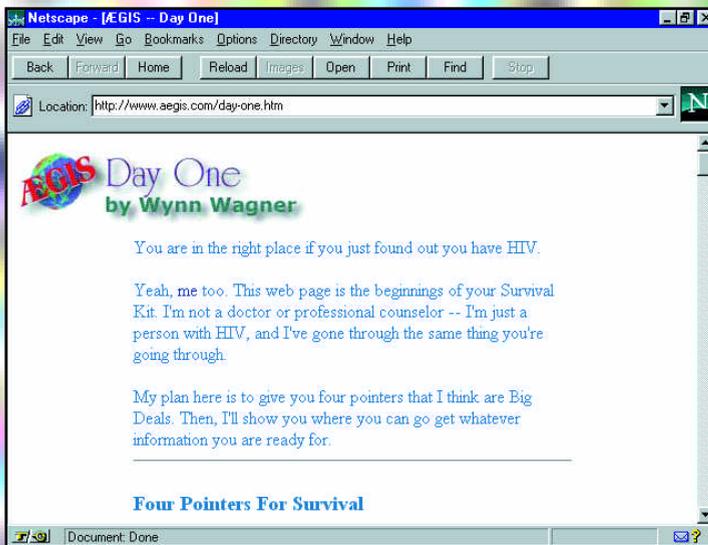


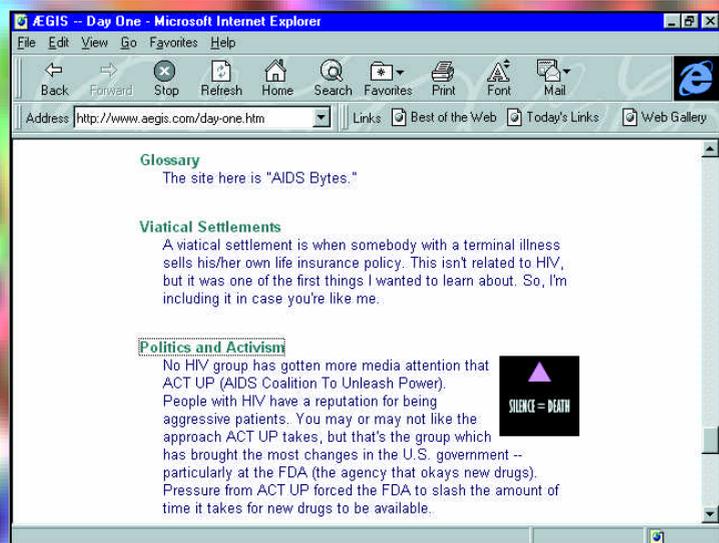
Figure 5.9. Netscape 3.0 ignores the controls set by the style sheets and defaults to a Times font.

There are more than 30 font arguments, and many more style sheet implementations. Visit the following sites for more detailed information on the current and future issues surrounding style sheet implementation:

<http://www.windows.com/workshop/design/des-gen/ss/css-des.htm> will bring you to an article that discusses and demonstrates style sheets for Web designers.

<http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/TR/WD-css1> is the World Wide Web Consortium's entire document on cascading style sheets.

One note for designers using style sheets: Because of the browser incompatibility at this time, test your pages with both popular Web browsers to be sure your overall design is not impacted when a browser cannot interpret style commands.



Buffalo EXCHANGE

Clothing Without Limits

<http://desert.net/buffalo/>

This Web site is geared toward the fashion-conscious folks of a younger, more eclectic set. Featuring "re-used" fashion, the Buffalo Exchange stores have a significant following of enthusiastic customers throughout the Western United States, and a very enthusiastic Web audience as well.

The Buffalo Exchange site is updated regularly, and makes good use of frames, photo styles, extended information, marketing, and animation techniques. In fact, one technique of note used to create the fun animation on the Buffalo Exchange site is the server push style of animation. Also referred to as "run-movie" or a "CGI" animation, as well as "Nanimation" (Netscape Animation), this is one of the earliest ways that animation was introduced to the Web.

Server Push Animation

Server push type of animation combines a technique that is akin to traditional cell animation with CGI (Common Gateway Interface) programming. A script resides on the Web browser, written in Perl or in C, and when called upon, runs inline on compatible browsers.

Because of the interactive relationship between the Web browser and Web server, this type of animation will often appear to run slowly, sometimes with jerking motions and inconsistent speeds. They can be used remarkably well, however, and because of these issues should not be disregarded as a very effective way to serve up an animation to your audience. (See Figure 5.11.)

Figure 5.10. Buffalo Exchange home page (Halloween promotion).

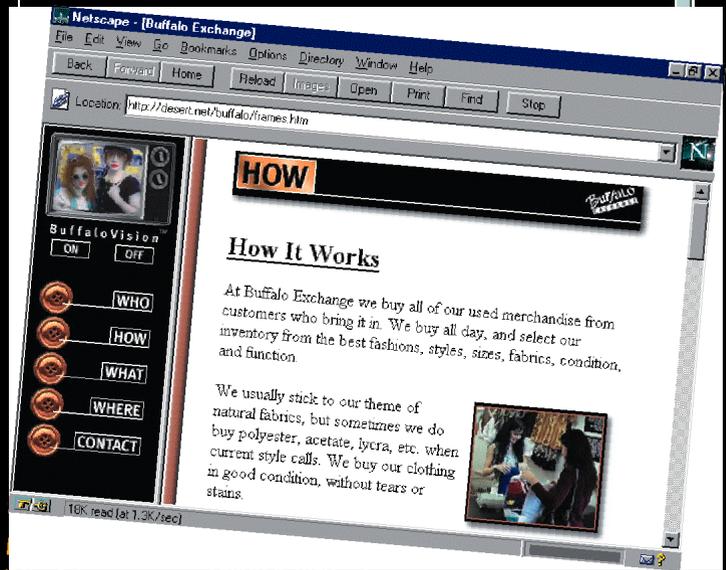


Figure 5.11. A video window is viewed on the TV in the upper-left corner of the site's internal pages.

If such a script program is resident on your Web server, you can create an animation by following the steps discussed here. Consult with your systems administrator for specifics on the type of programs and syntax you'll need to create server push animations.

First, you will create a series of individual graphics, either GIFs or JPGs. Be certain to keep these files relatively small to improve the runtime of the animation.

The next step is to create a list that dictates the order in which these graphics, or cells, will appear. The list for Buffalo Vision looks like the following code, with the first line stating the location of the graphics, the second the number of graphics in the animation, and then the name and sequence of each graphic.

```

disk$ebony:[tw.www.buffalo.flick]
20
buffalo.jpg
frame1.jpg
frame2.jpg
frame3.jpg
frame4.jpg
frame5.jpg
frame6.jpg
frame7.jpg
frame8.jpg
frame9.jpg
frame1.jpg
frame7.jpg
frame3.jpg
frame4.jpg
frame2.jpg
frame8.jpg
frame5.jpg
frame9.jpg
frame6.jpg
buffalo.jpg

```

The list and graphics are then placed on the server, and the proper syntax—dictated by the server’s animation script—is dropped into the HTML. Now, when a browser (Netscape is the one of choice in this case) calls the server for this information, the cells will cycle through the list order, creating the animation.

Here is the syntax that calls Buffalo Vision:

```



```

The image referred to in the `` tag is then called. It knows, from the syntax, to request the server to call up `runmovie.exe` and the corresponding control list `flick.1st`. This information is returned to the browser and placed in a 120×79 pixel field.

In this case, you are looking at a server-push running from an Alpha Web server. UNIX server syntax looks a bit different, depending on the scripts being run. Other servers will vary.

Buffalo
EXCHANGE
Clothing
Without Limits

L'oréal

<http://www.lorealcosmetics.com/>

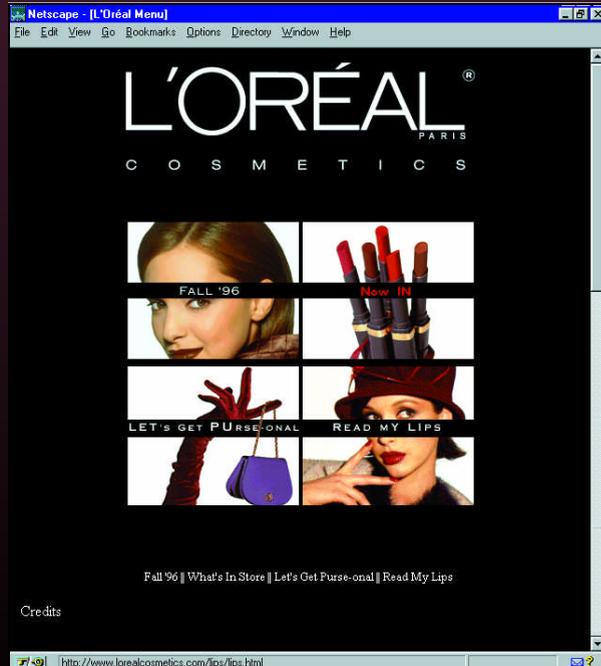


Figure 5.12. L'oréal's home page.

Black on white, white on black, red, red lips. L'oréal is another entry into the usually slick beauty roster of Web sites. There are soft touches here and there, breaking up the hard edges and reminding visitors that they are, indeed, visiting with a cosmetics company.

Each season, L'oréal offers a new cosmetic line, along with a style report on upcoming hot fashion. This keeps a seasonal sense of change, and people come back to see what's new.

Another fun way L'oréal has found to keep visitors involved is with a makeup trivia game. The game has a new question added *daily*, with the answer only available if visitors come back tomorrow, same time, same pretty channel. This visit, I found out that the miniskirt was created in 1965, and I was seriously intrigued by Monday's question: "Wearing lipstick was a dangerous undertaking in 5000 BC. Why?" You can be sure I went back on Tuesday to find the answer! (See Figure 5.13.)

Web designers need to work with clients to make them aware of the importance of keeping users engaged. It's always a challenge to figure out fun

ways to bring people back to the site on a regular basis. L'oréal's might not be particularly innovative, but it's witty and it has a hook. As with a good pop song, finding that hook is part of the Web designer's job.

Games, giveaways, prizes, discounts—these are just a few of the ways to keep visitors engaged. Work with the client to find out what they are doing in their more traditional advertising pursuits to keep people paying attention. Sometimes these campaigns can be extended to the Web with a unique twist.

Make visitors work for prizes! Place a new clue on the site as often as feasible, and make the prize initiative big enough to attract attention. In the U.S., an all-expense-paid, weekend getaway to Las Vegas can be gotten for as little as 500 dollars!

For a large client looking for big results, this isn't at all unreasonable. For those with a smaller budget, tickets to movies or concerts, a romantic dinner at a fine restaurant, books, video rentals, anything that will inspire the competitive fire in people can help stimulate interest, all the while keeping folks interested in the site. Big budget? Big prizes—the sky's the limit. I've seen full home computer systems, cars, and tropical getaways used as lures.

Bait that hook, all the while remembering that this idea is as old as media itself. There are many, many familiar techniques that can be used to keep people coming back to your site again and again, and having a great time in the process.

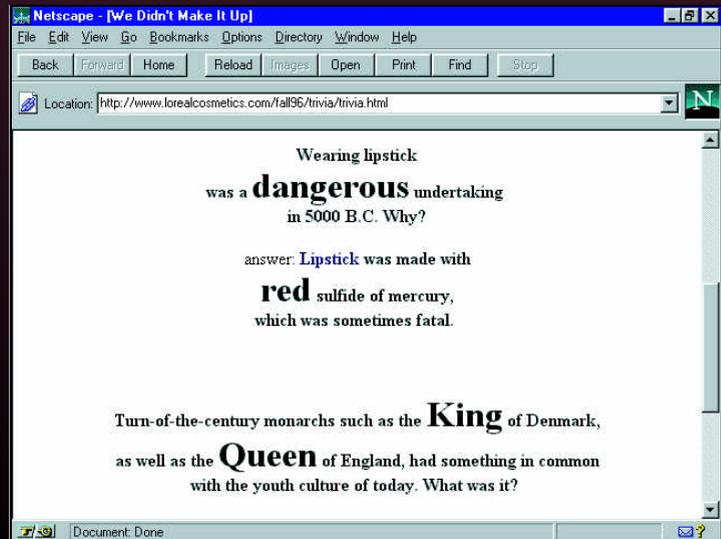
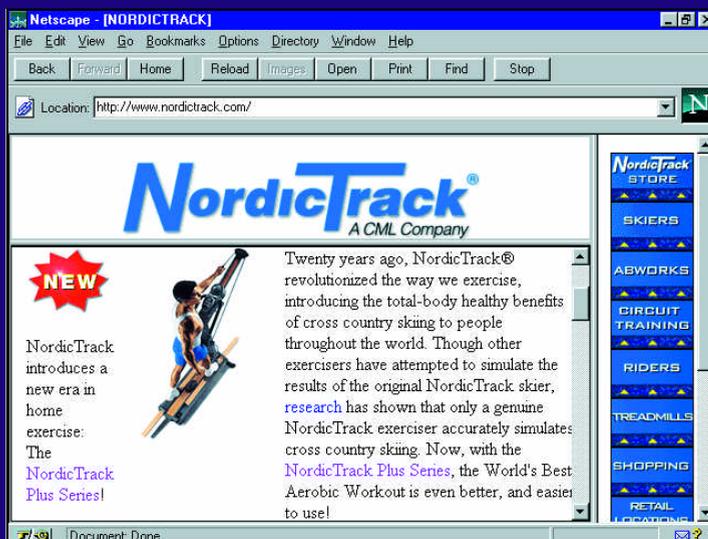


Figure 5.13. L'oréal's trivia game.

Nordic Track

<http://www.nordictrack.com>

Figure 5.14. Nordic Track home page.

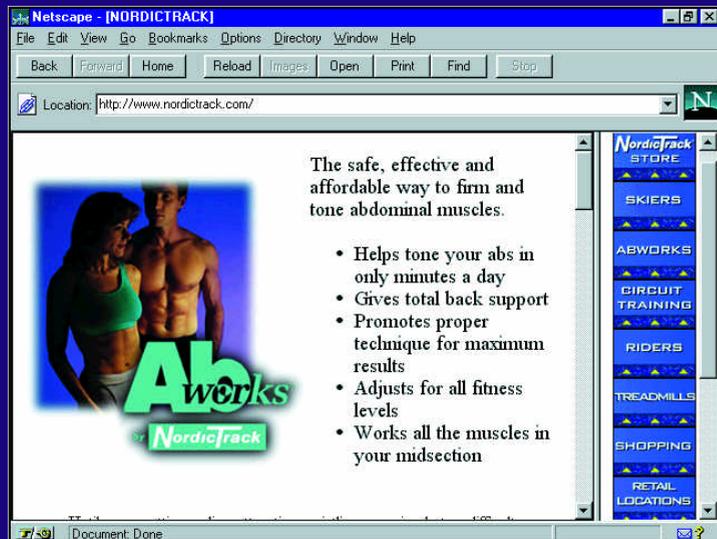


There's nothing like a Nordic Track commercial to remind me how out of shape I am. Still, I've always been fascinated by their seemingly never-ending product line. The Nordic Track Web site gives a comprehensive look at all of the Nordic Track skiers, riders, walkers, and other fitness merchandise for the body of your dreams.

Nordic Track has done a nice job of optimizing graphics. It's refreshing to find a company that made the effort to offer its product in a nice layout, with quality graphic treatment. There is an obvious understanding of how and when to select a specific type of graphic format.

I'd like to look specifically at interlaced GIFs. Interlacing is a technique that allows for progressive rendering. This means that the graphic will load evenly, instead of scrolling slowly downward until the browser has all the graphic data. First you'll see an unclear picture, and then it becomes more and more clear as the information loads.

Any time you choose to use GIF formats, interlacing will be an important choice. To make a GIF interlaced, use the Save As or Export choices in your imaging program of choice. One of these selections should offer GIF with Interlacing.



Paint Shop Pro, a powerful shareware program included on the CD-ROM, allows for saving images in this format. Follow these steps:

1. The image should be open and ready for saving.
2. Select File from the menu bar.
3. Choose Save As from the scroll-down menu.
4. Select GIF CompuServe in the Save As type field.
5. Choose Version 89a Interlaced in the subtype field.
6. Click Save.

You can set up an HTML file that calls the graphic. Open this in a browser and see the results!

G A D A B O U T

<http://www.gadabout.com/spa/>

Slick, sleek, and streamlined could be used to describe the Gadabout Salons Web site. With a palette pulling from bronze, black, and white, color is drawn from the attractive fashion photographs.

But what leads your eye to Gadabout, other than the beautiful models posing throughout? What enables you to enjoy the content and the photos, without ever feeling cramped or eager to leave the site? The answer is *white space*. This is the use of space to break up elements, giving you a moment to relax and absorb the next dose of information.

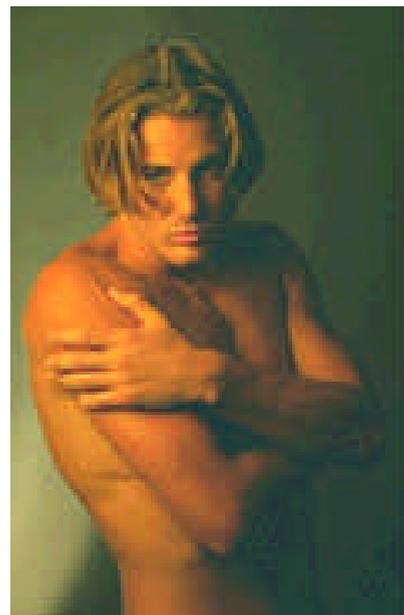
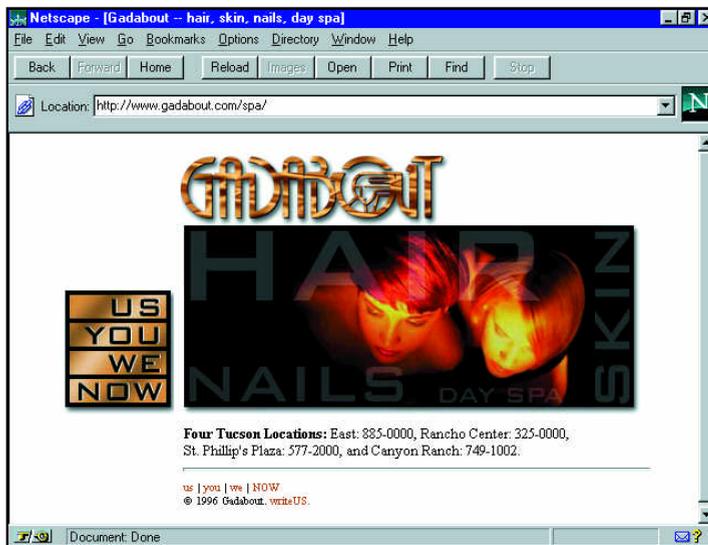


Figure 5.15. Gadabout home page.



There's an old question posed to Media Studies students, and that is: What is *not* in this advertisement? The challenge is to find out what elements are distinctly missing. Do I actually see the milk in a dairy campaign, or am I being shown pictures of farm lands and healthy, big-eyed cows?

This exercise enables the development of a critical eye. White space is a paradox of sorts. It is something that isn't really there, but is absolutely necessary to create a more powerful, effective conveyance of the entirety of a given presentation.

White space, by the way, isn't always white. The reference is to whatever field color elements are engaged with. Two of the most popular on the Web, and in print for that matter, are white and black. These two colors create a dramatic backdrop for elements, with a full range of colors used in other instances for other effects.

The important thing for the designer to remember is that white space isn't a design frivolity—it is a serious necessity. The Web was first seen with a hideous gray as its default field color, and there were very few methods to control graphic file type, much less color and text layout. Just a few years later it's a completely different story, as we see with sites such as Gadabout. (See Figure 5.16.) A designer is now able to think about more traditional approaches to graphic layout, including the use of space, when he or she begins the creation of a design.

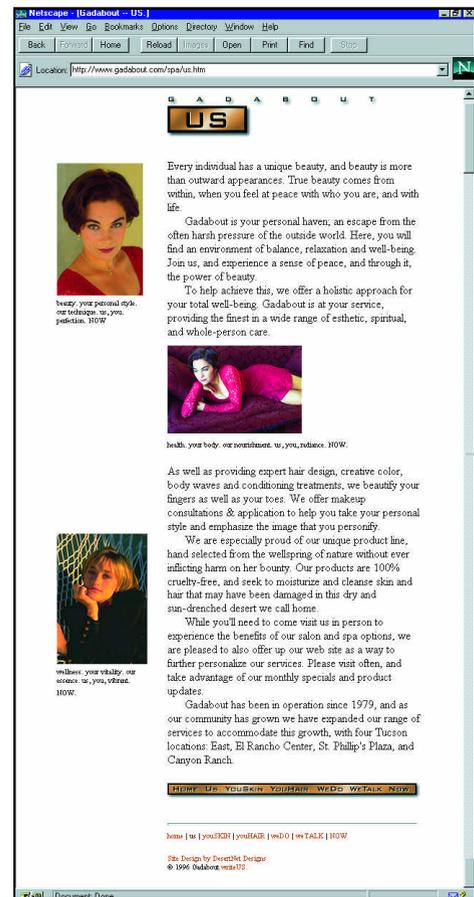


Figure 5.16. Gadabout's exceptional layout and use of white space.

When first sitting down to plan a site, think carefully about the layout, and remember the importance of space. It's very much like a puzzle, and the Web has specific restrictions due to the field constraint of the visual field being quite small—really only 640×480 pixels per screen for most people.

Think about a puzzle, and think about the elements you have—all of the elements, including graphic headers, photographs, animation, forms, and text content—as pieces of the puzzle. If you're oriented toward visual aids, do a quick sketch of your ideas and see what appeals to your design sense and makes good use of what is—and what's not—there.

a man's LIFE

<http://www.manslife.com/>

This popular magazine, offering "Complete Instructions for Health and Wealth," combines its gender-oriented, demographically accurate information into a well-designed, easy-to-use Web package. I would bet a favorite stolen sweater from a boyfriend's wardrobe that this site is a popular place. At least, I hope it is! With tips from everything on how to wear a tux, to all the information on power tools that a guy can dream of, A Man's Life is an enjoyable browse, even for a woman.

One of the tongue-in-cheek snippets of wit on the site is the small sound clip upon arrival. It's a rock 'n' roll, fast guitar, get-in-to-the-groove lick that sets the upbeat tone of the site, and gets guests good to go moving through the site looking for other gems of fun.

Using the `<embed>` tag, this sound clip is, therefore, available to anyone with a compatible browser (Netscape 3.0 or Internet Explorer 2.0 and above).

This tag was created for the embedding of application-specific plug-ins. This definition is perfectly exemplified by the use of audio clips in a variety of common formats such as `.wav`, `.au`, `.aiff`, and `.mid`. The `<embed>` tag allows for a variety of arguments, depending on the type of file and the way the designer would like to use and control its functions.

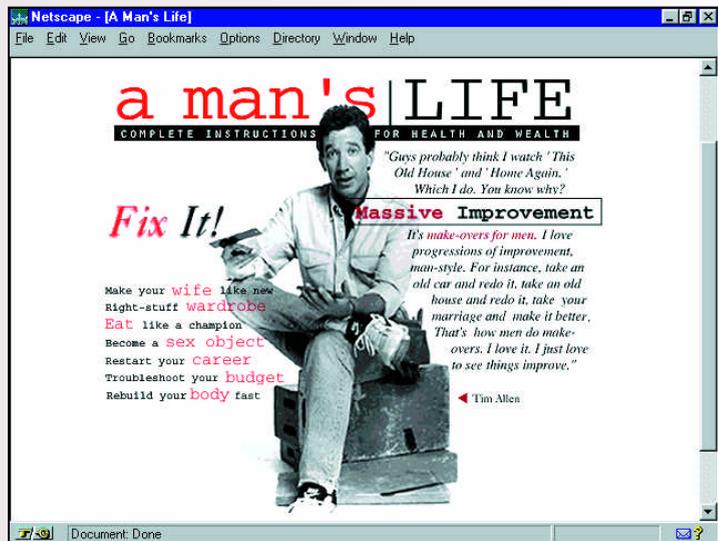


Figure 5.17. A Man's Life home page.

Here is the syntax from A Man's Life embedded sound file:

```
<EMBED SRC="/cgi/random/sounds/" AUTOSTART=TRUE HIDDEN=TRUE>
```

The `<embed>` tag will always carry the `src` argument because this is the pointer to the embedded file. After that, you can see that the coders on A Man's Life chose to argue for a "true" autostart. This means that the clip will automatically play once it has been downloaded to your machine, instead of requiring you to perform any initiating action. The "true" hidden value hides the audio console that will appear without this argument.

To learn more about the arguments available for the `<embed>` tag, visit Ron Woodall's excellent "Compendium of HTML Elements" at <http://www.synapse.net/~wooda11/html.htm> for North American access, and http://www.highway57.co.uk/html_ref/html.htm for European access.

Health Girl

<http://www.nethealthgirl.com.au/>

This boldly colored, in-your-face site is a mix of health, beauty, and well-being served up with snap, verve, and lots of down under attitude. With its fuchsia, purple, red, and lime green backgrounds, frank discussion about sex and safety, and sparkles of elegance and fine art strewn around, the otherwise brazen site Health Girl is an enjoyable, informative ride.

A site this colorful would be walking a fine-edge of acceptance from a wide audience, however. Some people might find the color scheme, much less the candid subject matter, offensive. A designer might enjoy the irreverence, but a general audience might not.

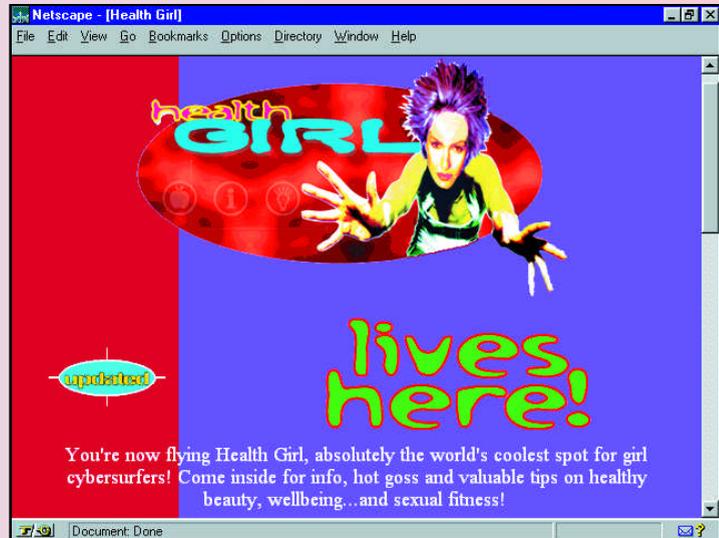


Figure 5.18. Australia's bold and brassy Health Girl.

Health Girl has done a good job of understanding its audience, and playing directly to her. There is a great deal of safety when an audience is as well defined, because then the designer is free to express intent as creatively as possible. If you understand that your audience is conservative, choosing colors and language that are as bold as that on Health Girl is going to be a dangerous choice. However, if you know your audience will enjoy a little more excitement, there's no reason to hold back!

Ask the following questions of a client to gain a strong idea of audience:

- Who is your current audience?
- What audience are you trying to reach with your Web site?
- How is this audience the same or different from your current audience?
- Are there colors, language, and style that you have found to be successful with your current audience? Offensive to your current audience?
- What appeals to you in terms of language and style? Do you envision yourself as cutting-edge? Corporate? Conservative? Wacky and wild?

The preceding questions will help give you good information to begin designing your own site. If a client's audience is currently young adults, and the objective is to draw in an older crowd, these questions will give some guidelines as to direction of design and concept. The client will also give some insight into what to go after. Be on the lookout for inconsistencies, however. And be sure to tackle these inconsistencies early in the process instead of later, especially because you'll invest a lot of time on the project.

Clinique

<http://www.clinique.com/>

This innovative site takes inspiration from its in-store gimmick of customizing skin type with a take-it-while-shopping test. This helps the shopper decide what makeup, cleansers, colors, and other Clinique products are best.

Using a CGI script (a rather more complicated one than seen earlier) with server-push animations, the Clinique computer will walk you through your very own, personal skin type consultation. Then, you will be given the option to browse the product line, provided you fill out a form, select a password, and return to the site later. Once in, you can browse all about, and learn savvy skin care tips.

CGI scripts can be fairly simple, or rather complicated, as seen with the Clinique personal consultation application. It's easy to see how powerful such interactive applications can be, both in providing entertainment as well as security. Clinique does both.

The password protected area keeps my data available only to me. (See Figure 5.20.) This kind of CGI gateway is applicable in many instances, including the creation of private areas for businesses, corporations, and other organizations that want to offer both public information and private, in-house, access. Another very common application is for subscription-only users of a given Internet system or publication.

Remember, however, a password is only as useful as it is private. Although chances are very slim some random hacker will find out your information

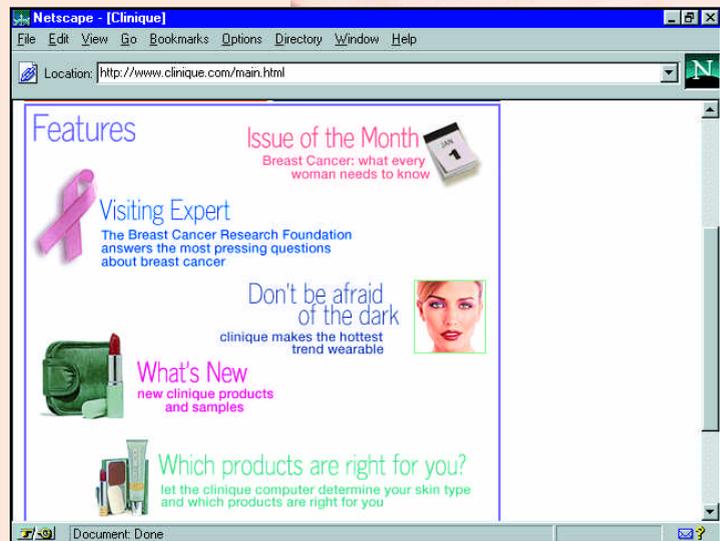


Figure 5.19. The Clinique home page.

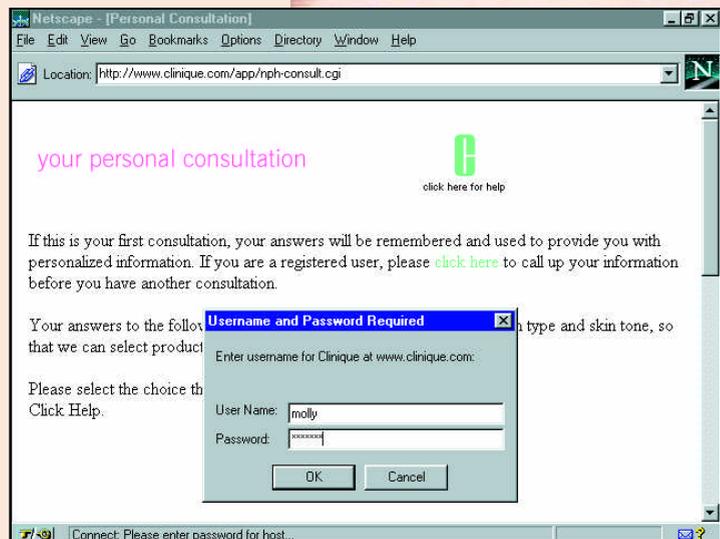


Figure 5.20. Password protection on Clinique.

and hack your accounts, be very wary as to who gets your password information. A casual friend might misuse the privilege, or a child might find themselves in places they ought not go. Keep passwords private!

Because CGI scripting requires extended knowledge of servers, scripts, and programming, I highly recommend those individuals who are interested in creating advanced CGI-based applications to seek out books and resources on the subject. Online, check out <http://www.stars.com/Authoring/CGI/> for a great jumping off place.

Trend Setting

Web designers are sure to always be on the cutting edge of fashion with the Web design tips and tricks featured in this chapter.

- Originality is essential.
- New media and progressive business models can inspire better ways of working and living in the information age.
- Cascading style sheets are powerful tools that Web designers should begin to study and employ.
- Server-push animation is an effective animating technique using CGI scripts.
- Bait your audience with clever games or puzzles to bring them back for more!
- The interlaced GIF is easily created by using a number of tools and helps keep the audience visually engaged while the graphic data loads.
- The importance of white space is a design fundamental.
- The `<embed>` tag can add a variety of interesting elements to your site, including audio.
- Knowing your audience makes for precise and accurate Web sites.
- CGI password protection can assist the Web designer in protecting sensitive or personal material.

I hope these tips will help move designers easily from the fashion runway to the Information Superhighway. Chapter 6, "Sites that Network: Computers, Internet, and the Web," examines sites and lessons learned along the hub of computers and pipes that make up the Internet itself.

Sites that Network

Computers, Internet, and the Web

C|NET

<http://www.cnet.com/>

The Microsoft Network

<http://www.msn.com/>

Microsoft

<http://www.microsoft.com/>

HotWired

<http://www.hotwired.com>

FutureWave

<http://www.FutureWave.com/>

Intel

<http://www.intel.com/>

Lycos

<http://www.lycos.com/>

UKweb

<http://www.ukweb.com/>

The Web Developer's Virtual Library

<http://www.wdvl.com/>

Internet World

<http://www.iworld.com/>

Computer resources on the Web are very extensive. There could be entire books dedicated to the interesting content and often fine design that sites in this category express. For the purposes of this book, I've chosen sites that will be of specific help to the Web designer. These sites offer important content resources for you and the work you perform, as well as practical tips and tricks for the practical design issues at hand.

The hub of the learning network here begins with C|NET. This site is peerless in the breadth and scope of content it creates, both on and off the Web. C|NET has a full staff of writers and journalists who develop the day-to-day content. An examination of some of the finer points of copy writing for the Web will be discussed. The Microsoft Network (MSN) is an aggressive contender in today's market, with bright design that captures a niche market with custom processes. The creation of a "jumping-off" place for a Web site proves to be an extremely effective model for attracting—and keeping—specific individuals and communities involved with a Web site.

MSN is followed by a discussion of its more conservative yet very extensive parent, Microsoft. The Microsoft site has gone through several incarnations of look and feel, currently settling on an effective top bar navigation, a technique that designers might want to consider for their own

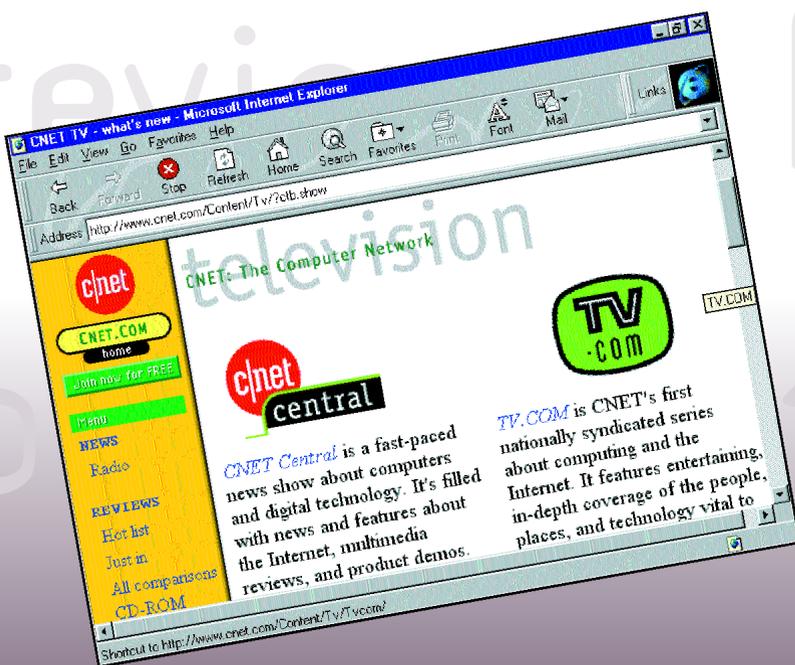
creations. A trick to getting beyond the bandwidth, or "pipe" problems, is offered up by HotWired, one of the Web's first and most popular technology-based 'zines.

Are you ready for the future? I am! Recently, a plug-in application called FutureSplash was unleashed on the Web, and this remarkable, user-friendly development tool helps designers create dynamic animations and navigation sets with ease. A visit to FutureSplash's home site, FutureWave, provides a contemplation of this interesting and effective technology.

Intel has a nice site, although looking under its virtual skirt I found a way to save a few kilobytes by trimming the fat off of the HTML code. If you're looking for something on the Web, there are a wide range of search engines. Lycos will demonstrate the JavaScript Remote Control or Launch Pad style of navigation.

Traveling the big pipe, the next relay is UKweb, where customer service is a primary goal and `mailto:` links are never overlooked. Next up is the Web Developer's Virtual Library, an extremely useful site for Web designers that needs a facelift. Using some of the techniques in this book, I make recommendations on ways of making that happen. Finally, the Internet World Web site gives the data on everything Internet, with a clever use of the `a1t` tag that gives rise to a discussion on the ways this HTML argument can and should be used.

Optimize your drive, dial that modem, and spark up that browser—it's time to network!



Feature Featured Site I

C|NET

http://www.cnet.com/

What doesn't C|NET have? I've found it challenging to come up with an answer to that seemingly easy question. With television shows, a Real Audio radio station, and a seemingly endless selection of online resources, C|NET has every right to call itself *the* computer network. It is my favorite daily resource for up-to-the-day information on issues affecting every aspect of communications technology and beyond.

C|NET's site design isn't shabby, either. The site is clean, bright, and well-organized without being over-bearing. The yellow and green color scheme is more than familiar to millions of Web visitors. C|NET embraces, but does not overuse, current technologies such as Java applets, Real Audio, and cascading style sheets. It also incorporates important features such as RSACi Ratings. The consolidation of these sophisticated elements (see Appendix A, "Site Reference," for references within the book) places C|NET in the running for a Best Web Site Ever commendation.

There is no glimmer, glamour, or commercialism. Instead, C|NET combines intelligent and functional design with remarkable content. The content is the meat of the matter, in fact, and it will come as no surprise that content is driven by a staff of very talented journalists and writers who have learned some critical points of writing for the Web medium.

A description I've drawn from an unusual contributor, the rock band Pink Floyd, in a song called "Us and Them," can be used as a metaphor for Web writing style: a "short, sharp, shock." Precision is paramount, voice is often vociferous, and knowing your audience as well is a global commandment for online writers. These three elements, combined with the fine eye of the editor, make up the mix that will result in successful content creation.



Figure 6.1. C|NET's home page.



Precision Writing

Precision writing means no extra words or ideas should exist on a Web site or in a Web-based article. Consider the fact that a visitor's attention span is condensed on the Web; most are not surfing around looking for general ideas. The typical surfer (if there really is such a thing) is either looking for very specific information or entertainment. In either case, the "short, sharp, shock" method stands firm, with precision mostly being reflected in the "short" part of the concept.

Ask yourself the simple who, what, where, when, and why questions that every good journalist will apply to a job. Answer each, and then throw away what isn't essential. Flesh out what is important; condense what isn't.

Keep information as stream-lined as possible. The best way to do this is to concentrate each idea into a single sentence. You can build from there, adding or changing as needed to make the information appealing.

Practical Exercise: Bertrand's Books

Follow this fictitious example as an exercise in precision:

Who? Bertrand's Books

What? An independent bookseller in Tucson, Arizona, carrying a broad variety of used books, and some new books, with a very strong Science Fiction and Fantasy section. The Web site features a database of hard-to-find titles and a pseudonym directory.

When? Hours of operation are Monday through Saturday, and Sunday by appointment. The Web site will allow for feedback forms and ordering can be done 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

Where? Tucson, Arizona, and the World Wide Web.

How? Come into the store, call the 1-800 number, visit the Web site.

With this information, you can now write an introductory paragraph. Here are two examples: one that is too general, and then one that is precise.

1. Too General

Bertrand's Books is Tucson's finest independent book seller. Bertrand's features a variety of used and new books, available both online and offline, with an emphasis on Science Fiction and Fantasy. Special services include a database of our hard-to-find and rare titles, as well as our unique pseudonym database. The Tucson store is open 7 days a week. Call for special services and appointments. Of course, you may use this Web site at any time, and please feel free to contact Bertrand's at your convenience.

2. Precise

Bertrand's Books features used, rare, and hard-to-find titles with Science Fiction and Fantasy a specialty. The unusual pseudonym database is our Web site's primary attraction, and you can contact us in person, or via e-mail at books@desert.net.

Notice that a lot of extraneous details are pulled, and the most pertinent ideas for the Web site remain. Once

you've reached this stage, you are ready to add the "shock." This is the voice, the punch, vivacity, verve, and hook that will keep the user interested.

Voice

In simple terms, voice is the personality of writing style. Just as there are many personalities, there are many voices. You can have a neutral voice, which is often useful for the dissemination of straight-forward, serious data. Come a little closer and I'll tell you all about the seductive voice, used to entice you to play with my alluring product. Wax up yer surfboard and ride the waves, because the hip and trendy voice is often the way. Other voices might include the sassy, the academic, the philosophical, and the childlike.

Voice must be selectively chosen. An academic approach usually works for information you want to be taken seriously, and a hip and trendy voice for products you'd like to sell to a trendy audience. However, students of media are often taught that juxtaposition of voice can be an effective tool. In other words, making a computer product sexy, or a lingerie ad intelligent, can often be more powerful than the expected presentation.

Here's the Bertrand's Books example written in a sexy voice:

Your fantasy comes true at Bertrand's. We join you with that rare object of your desire, the hottest, hardest-to-find fantasy and fiction around. Is your love shy or sly? Check our pseudonym directory and find out just who's been hiding behind that *nomme-de-plume*. Still frustrated? Call or e-mail us, anytime.

As you see, I've joined precision with voice to create a fun and appealing paragraph that gives the important

information but does so with appeal. Try it out yourself! Apply different voices to this, or your own example, and see what works best. For further discussion on voice, check Chapter 8, "Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web," where the importance of this technique is looked at a little more closely.

C|NET's use of voice is very strong. Appealing to a mass audience, they keep their columns short and sharp. The more trendy voices are used sparingly, and then only in areas where the audience is more distinct.

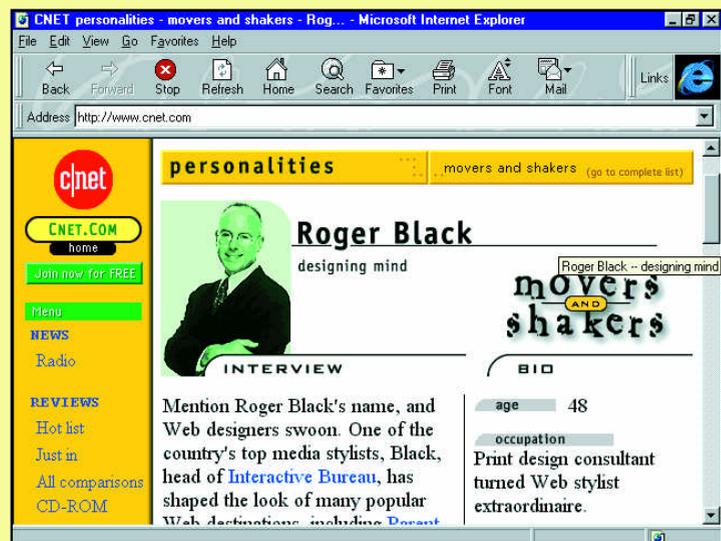
Knowing Audience

The C|NET site is an excellent example of content geared at a broad-range audience. The information is presented quite neutrally, with certain editorial areas, (see Figure 6.2), creating appeal for specific audiences.

For the Web designer creating a site for a specific product, business, or organization, how content is presented is going to rely largely upon who is accessing the material, or who you *want* to access the material.

Defining the audience is really the first thing to do in any given content scenario. However, I wanted to teach the fundamentals of precision and voice first, to demonstrate how they are intimately related to this knowledge. I placed defining the audience last in this discussion so you would have a sense of how important it is. Without a sense of your specific public, the type of information that must be included or cut, and the voice you choose, can literally be your best friend or worst enemy.

Figure 6.2. A C|NET editorial page.



Say that the intent of the Bertrand's site is only to draw a local audience to the physical store. Pushing online databases is then a mistake. Instead, you'll want to focus on the information that will help bring locals in. This might include what's in stock, store hours, directions, and a phone number. If the Bertrand's intended audience is very conservative, a sexy presentation is out-of-line; a more appealing voice might be an academic or philosophical one.

Always consider your audience, both the current and desired public of the future. There is no greater failing of a content creator than to forget this most basic of rules. After you are confident that the understanding is in place, you can then apply the techniques of precision and voice, expanding your content from there.

Featured Site II

The Microsoft Network

<http://www.msn.com/>

Microsoft has a lot of personal reasons for pushing the envelope on content, technology, and online communications. Critics have called the software giant "the evil empire" because of its constant push to dominate every technology it focuses on, whether it does it well or not.

My experience, having worked with Microsoft for a number of years, is that the drive for dominance is met equally with a deep passion for technology and community. This is well represented by The Microsoft Network, which began as a proprietary platform, member-driven service that sought to build a bridge from a commercial environment into the Internet. It is now moving toward a completely different model, one that is unlike anything I've seen on the Web, and one that is filled with idealism and individuality.

With both proprietary and dramatic information behind the member firewall, and plenty of fun on the free-ranges of the public Internet, MSN is doing a great deal to push the edges of technology, always remembering the individual.



Figure 6.3. MSN's home page on the Net.

Microsoft is a registered trademark and MSN is a trademark of Microsoft.

Home on the Free Range

A profound example of this on the free-range, full access site is found with the customization process that MSN offers. In essence, MSN has created a potent and powerful marketing tool by offering their Web address as a personalized starting point for Web surfers.

Using CGI scripts, MSN allows visitors to create a completely customized, fill-in-the-blank page (see Figure 6.4), including daily news, stock quotes, sports, entertainment, science and technology information, and whatever else you'd like to fit into your particular lifestyle needs. My browsers all open to my custom page (see Figure 6.5), and my day typically starts off with a strong cup of coffee and a surf—all from the MSN home page!

Imagine if your Web site used such an intelligent method of giving people this custom service! The major advantage of this type of model for Web site developers involves the advertising base market. With large numbers of visitors, a Web site can fund itself and, in fact, make money by selling high-priced advertising. Other advantages include the opportunity to use the attention to fuel content and push technology, as well as sell other products and ideas you might have to an attentive public.

All of this is embraced by The Microsoft Network's free-range capability to provide both great content and personal service. There are numerous ways that independent designers can make sites function in this fashion, but the highest and most effective is to find a niche market. Brock Meeks of *Wired* magazine once told me that he thought that the Web was "the niche market of niche markets."

This observation can't go unheeded. What market can you provide the best information? Is it a local, regional, national, or international body? Is it for women only? For parents? For book writers, doll collectors, hunting enthusiasts? There are literally thousands of special-interest communities that will respond to well-developed, thought-out, "jumping-off" sites that cater to very specific needs. Web designers can benefit from the large-scale model and success of MSN's custom services by simply applying the concept of narrowing down content to appeal to a certain audience.

Behind the Firewall

Perhaps the most exciting events at MSN are happening for the members of the network. The Microsoft Network is serving up a wide range of

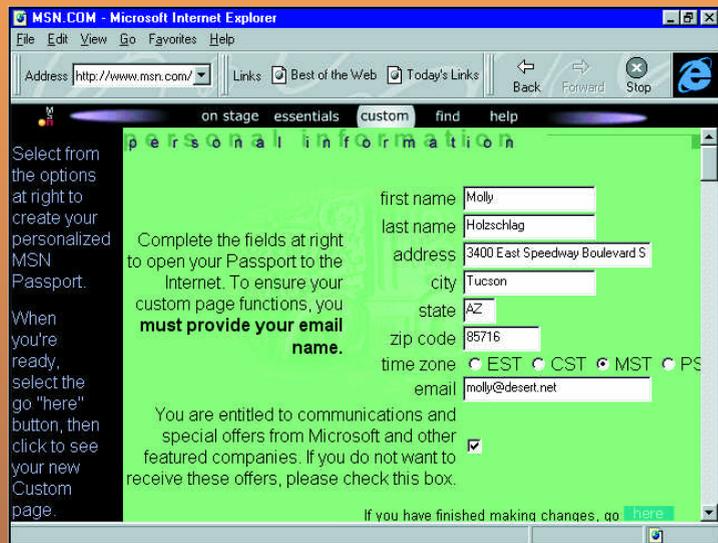


Figure 6.4. Filling out custom features for MSN.

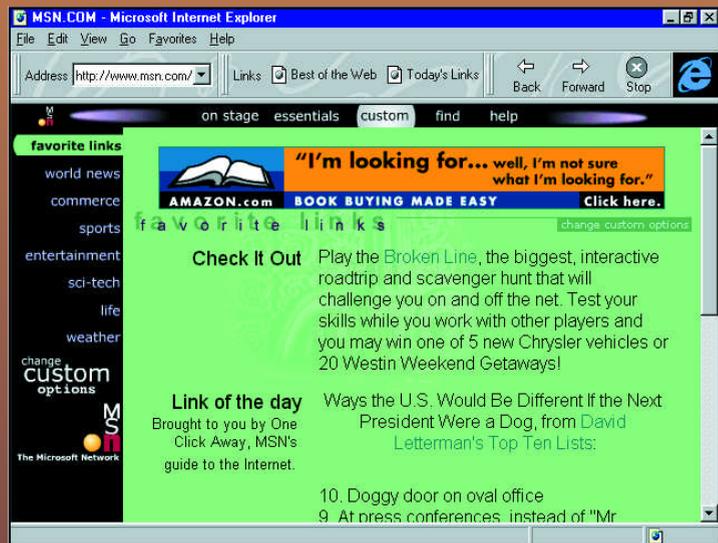


Figure 6.5. The end result.

high-style entertainment, information, and community, all of which serve as a jumping-off point for members who enjoy the comfort of a gated community. (See Chapter 10, "Sites for Kids: Education, Games, Items of Interest with Children in Mind.") It also provides a personal tour guide that brings the chaos of the Internet into a more ordered perspective by leading members to daily events and high-lighted Web sites.

This leading is done by drawing from the more familiar paradigm of television, but with an interactive twist thrown in. MSN, in its newest incarnation, offers up channels (see Figure 6.6) where "shows" take place. These shows are a combination of proprietary and independent Web site productions that fit into definitive niche models such as online magazines or adventures. These productions appeal to

children and teens, or specific topical interests such as news, health, culture, travel, and so on. These shows are actually interactive multimedia that engage and involve the audience with ambitious design, as well as offering specific community issues that involve individual shows.

This show model does not exist elsewhere, and speaks to a very important aspect of what Web sites currently need to remember: New media is interactive media, and the Web is evolving toward a fully integrated multimedia model. The unifying theme between the free-range and the proprietary MSN content is the personalization of the Web—that it is a service and community based on people and their common interests.



Figure 6.6. On the member side: channels on MSN.

Microsoft

<http://www.microsoft.com/>

Microsoft's own home site is nothing to sneer at. It is enormous, with information geared at the promotion of the company's products and interests, as well as the provision of customer service. The information on Microsoft's Web site should never go unnoticed. I check with the site almost daily because the prevalence of information for the Web designer and the emergence of new technology data make it an appetizing visit.

The amount of information on Microsoft's site has often proved a challenge to the designers of the site, who change structure and design quite regularly. It is my opinion that this isn't only done to freshen visual interest, but, rather, to accommodate the vastness of the content. With each incarnation, Microsoft has kept a consistent focus on the content. Not only is the design on the home site attractive, but its intent is to pull the user to the functions Microsoft provides.

One of the constants in the last year has been the navigation bar along the top of the page. Few designers have been as successful in creating a top navigation option as this daddy of all Web sites. The success lies in both the simplicity of the navigation bar and the integration of the bar into the flow of the rest of the site.



Figure 6.7. Microsoft home page.

Top navigation is problematic because it can interfere with other important information that belongs at the top, such as a header for page identification. Microsoft has solved this dilemma by using a thin bar and attaching it to the header data. (Refer to Figure 6.7.) Also, the top navigation delineates the major portions of the site, and individual breakdowns of data are further dealt with using left margin navigation (see Chapter 7, "Sites that Explore: Travel and Adventure"), as well as ample linking within the page itself.

This combination is a sensible approach for the amount of data Microsoft provides. The site has been generally simplified by using the top navigation. Web designers can consider this style of navigation for any site, but the primary caution is to be sure this important area integrates with other information that belongs there, rather than distracting or confusing visitors.

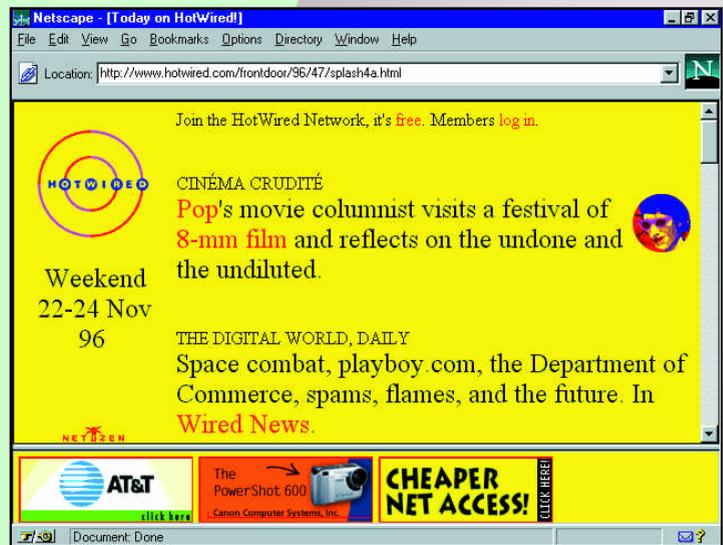
HotWired

<http://www.hotwired.com>

HotWired's site and content are often controversial for the public as well as the Web designer. The same can be said of the 'zine's companion print publication, *Wired* magazine, which has always pushed public buttons regarding its elitist attitude. The public controversy also extends to its design sensibility, with its vivid colors and bizarre approach to shape and continuity.

Despite these controversies, HotWired is a prime example of how to exploit client-sided power for enhancing speed. This is most evident in the use of vivid primary colors throughout the site.

Figure 6.8. HotWired's colorful presence.



Whether the design techniques used on HotWired are found within the use of a background color, a text color, or within graphic renderings, HotWired passes right over a lot of the download time of full-spectrum graphics. The end result is still a memorable, if occasionally headache-inducing, presence by letting browsers do the work rather than servers.

Forcing the browser to do the thinking is smart and fast, and there are many ways Web designers can do this, simply by employing the same elements that HotWired does.

Background Color. Discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10, background colors load from the browser, making the total download time of a site much less intense than the use of background graphics. If speed and bandwidth conservation is a consideration in your Web project, consider using colors from the browser rather than using a graphic texture or design. The major caution here is the "safe" palette, also discussed in Chapter 10, as well as in the color chart appendix in this book. (See Appendix C, "Color Table.") Further information can be found on the CD-ROM, which offers a safe palette that can be loaded directly on to your machine.

Font Faces and Colors. Also browser-dependent, the use of font colors will add life to a site without adding extended time. Discussions of fonts can be found throughout this book. (You can check in the Index for specific points of interest regarding font use.) For the purposes of this discussion, the

exploitation of font face and color enhance speed by relying on the browser's intelligence, rather than using graphics to achieve the same effect. As font faces become more platform-stable, their use is becoming the preference for many Web designers.

Exploitation of Color within Graphics. Remember that the number of colors in a graphic are going to make an enormous difference in the file size of that graphic. By selecting colors very carefully, and then reducing gradations by selecting and replacing any gradations, file sizes are tremendously reduced and download times decreased dramatically.

To sum up this discussion, color is a huge part of design. To keep things hot, think a lot about color and how you can use it to create active and enjoyable viewing. To streamline the wired relationship between server and browser and keep things moving quickly, rely on client-side, browser-dependent features such as background colors, font faces, and colors to fulfill your color needs. The end result can be a vibrant, memorable site that loads very quickly, pleasing even the low-bandwidth visitor.

FUTURE WAVE

<http://www.FutureWave.com/>

Picture an animation program with a user interface that is easy to understand, simple to use, and results in sophisticated Web applications that are compact, can be downloaded to the browser, and run client-side (on your own computer) in a flash?

FutureSplash, a technology developed by FutureWave, offers the application program from its innovative and attractive Web site. The site is designed with a clever use of FutureSplash, including mouse-over animations. The first, as seen in Figure 6.10, causes the button to appear depressed, or punched, upon mouse-over. When you actually click the button, a splash appears. (See Figure 6.11.) A clever, inline animation of a typing seal can be found on the home page, showing off FutureWave's complete animation features. (See Figure 6.12.)

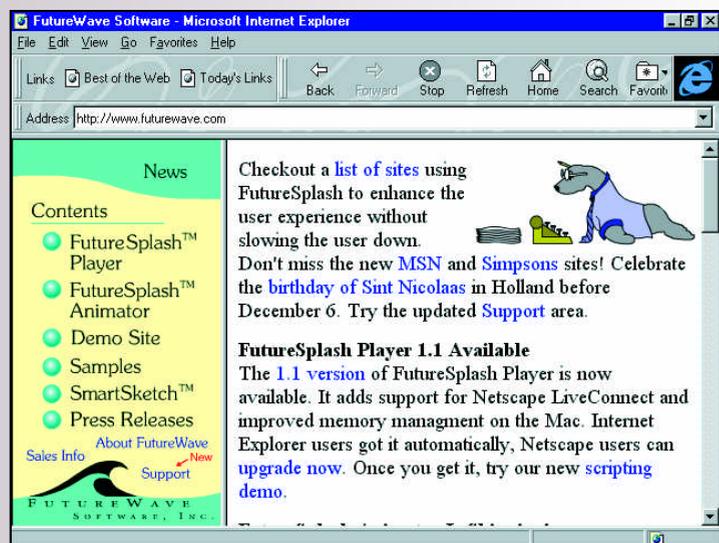


Figure 6.9. FutureWave home page.

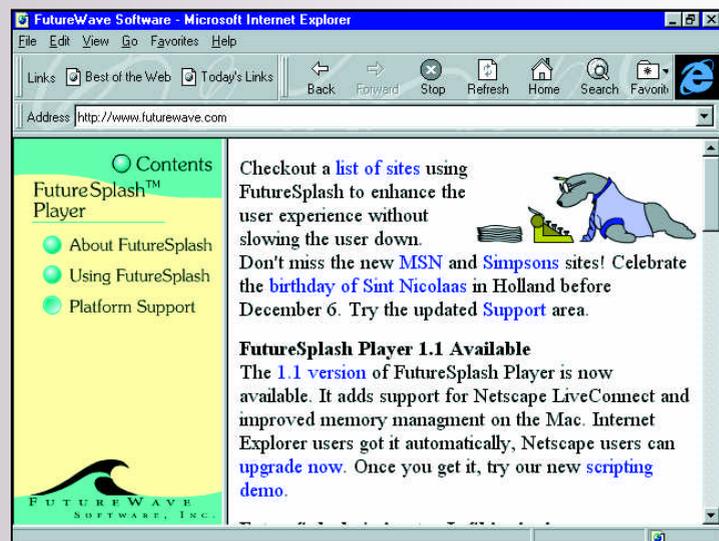


Figure 6.10. Mouse-over on the FutureSplash button depresses the button.

FutureSplash technology is delivered automatically to the Internet Explorer 3.0 browser. Netscape 3.0 handles it well, too, with a quick download of a plug-in.

Animations can be created in a wide variety of formats, including GIF animations, JPEG sequences, QuickTime Movies, AVI formats, and, of course, the FutureSplash format itself. This gives animators a lot of flexibility in terms of creating dynamic as well as high-quality graphic renderings.

Both the tool and the player are available in Windows and Macintosh formats, making the tool very accessible to developers. The animator is also quite inexpensive, with a trial product available for download from the site.

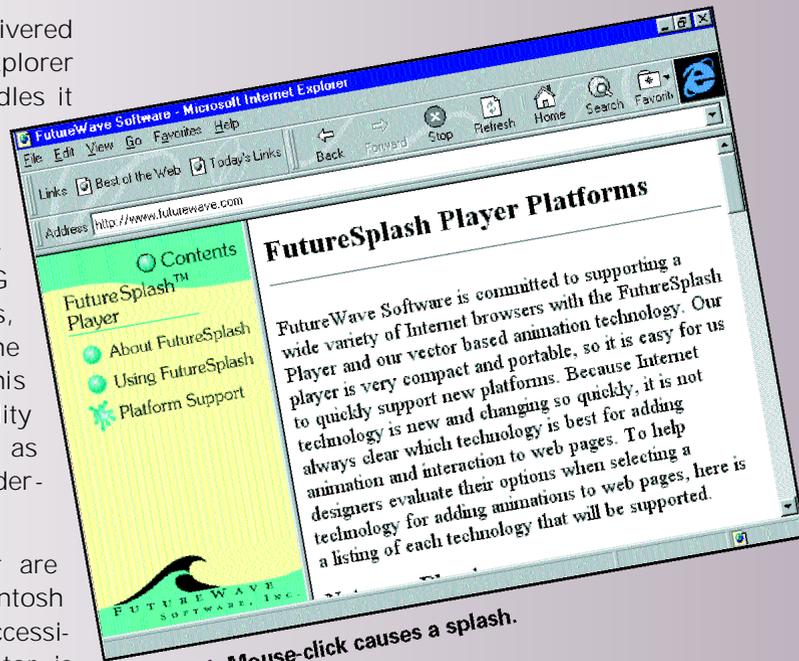


Figure 6.11. Mouse-click causes a splash.

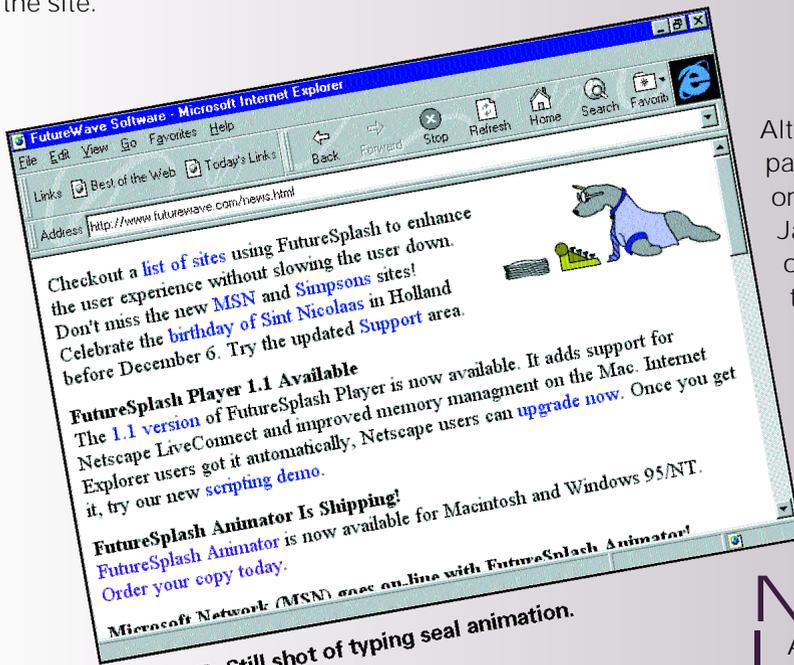


Figure 6.12. Still shot of typing seal animation.

Although FutureSplash doesn't compare with the diversity of a scripting or programming language such as Java or JavaScript, the end results of many of FutureSplash's animations are better than both technologies in terms of ease of use, file formats, and file size. The product is exceptional and allows designers to add immediate dynamic content to Web pages that encourage visitors who use the most up-to-date technologies.

Note:

As of January 1997, FutureSplash has been renamed to Macromedia Flash. The player is now considered a component of Shockwave. For more information, you can visit Macromedia at <http://www.macromedia.com>.



http://www.intel.com/

By now, most of the American public is aware of Intel, primarily because of its mass media advertisement for its processors. The "Intel Inside" insignia appears on a multitude of merchandise that has been built with Intel products.

The Intel Web site is a very nice example of a low-key, attractive layout, graphics, and fonts. Intel has also used the top navigation idea discussed earlier in the Microsoft section, and it is, undeniably, used well here, too, affirming that a large part of the trick with top navigation is that it integrates with other information normally found in the header field of a Web page.

Colors, lines, colored table backgrounds, and GIF animation have been used together to create a dynamic yet subtle look for the home page. The HTML code is technically good, but what surprised me was the amount of extra space in-between each tag.

Because HTML pages are usually small in file size to begin with, most designers pay little attention to thinking about how to reduce the size. However, if every kilobyte counts (and designers are wise to currently operate under the idea that it does), HTML pages are then contributing to those kilobytes.

In the case of Intel's page, a lot of fat could be trimmed by removing the amount of space caused by carriage returns between tags. Here is a brief example of the space to which I am referring:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE>Welcome to Intel</TITLE>
</HEAD>
```

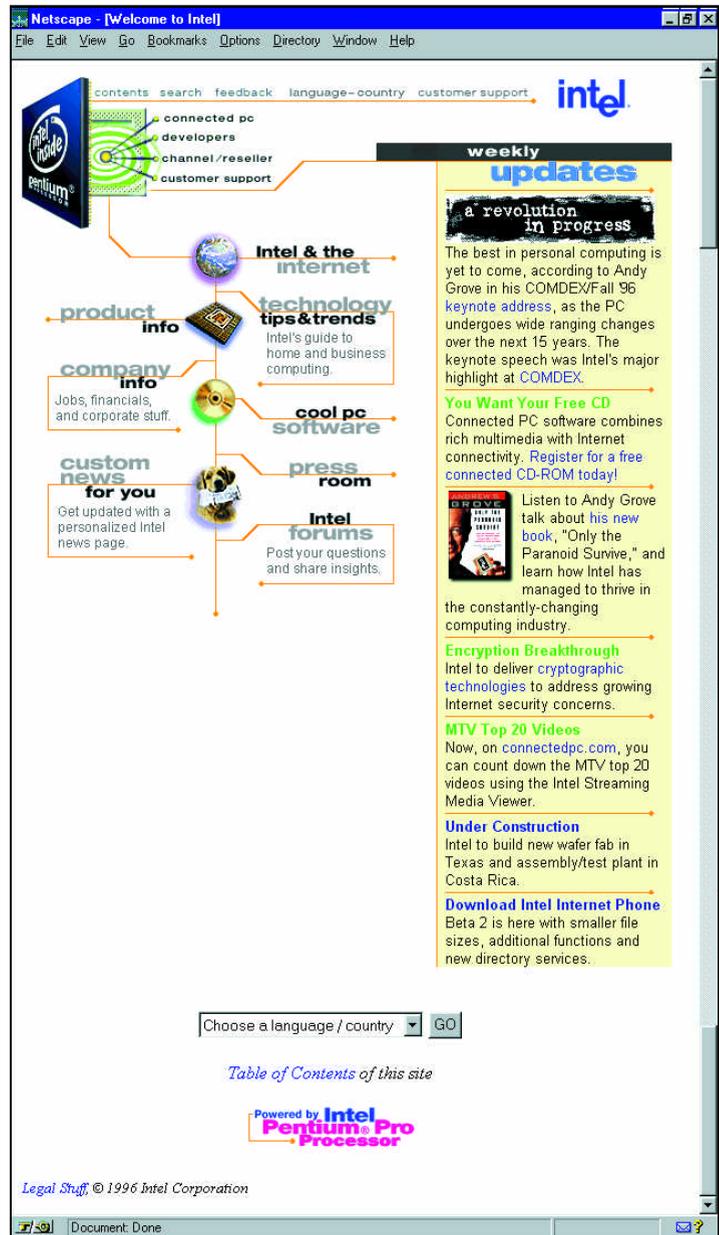


Figure 6.13. Intel's home page.

All told, this sequence takes up 16 separate lines! Some designers put everything on a single line; I have a problem with that as it makes things impossible to find. However, if I apply my personal HTML style to this example, I end up with a total of 5 lines, 9 less than the original:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Welcome to Intel</TITLE>
</HEAD>
```

As an experiment, I took the entire source code off of the Intel's home page and reformatted it in my style. Intel's original code weighed in at 10 kilobytes, my version at 8. Two kilobytes might not seem much, but start adding graphics and it could be the difference between several seconds or more of download time. And, for the bandwidth conservative, every second counts!



Figure 6.14. Lycos home page.

LYCOS

<http://www.lycos.com/>

Popular as a search engine originally developed by a group of computer scientists at Carnegie Mellon, the site is now a fully commercial, ad-revenue project.

Design on this site is decidedly, and necessarily, direct. The most important function, the search engine, is wisely placed in that all-important space—just a few inches from the top and left of center. This way, folks

going to the site just to seek and find won't have to seek the finding tool!

Advertisement banners sit on top. Navigation is primarily a left margin option with various site offerings. There are also graphic, as well as link, options to stories and subcategories within the text.

Lycos offers another navigation option as well: the popular Java applet referred to by Lycos as a "remote control." I've seen similar applets also called "launch pads." The concept is, basically, to create a remote control style navigation that is separate from the browser and is available to people no matter where they are on the site.

Lycos is intelligent to offer this as an *option* for visitors; you must first click the Remote Control icon to get the feature. (Refer to Figure 6.14, in upper-left corner.) This is a whole heck of a lot nicer than some sites, which simply pop the navigation up without regard to the user, who may find this type of navigation a hindrance rather than a help.

Why would such a seemingly concise method of navigation be problematic? Well, for the default population who is viewing the Web on a 15" monitor at 640x480 screen resolution, where do you put this nuisance? First it pops up on top of the browser itself. (See Figure 6.15.) However, if you begin to use the browser and try to read or maneuver within it, the remote is suddenly very remote, as it disappears behind the browser's interface! It then

becomes a nuisance to manage just where this navigation element goes, which is a timely, exasperating project that is truly a waste of time. Furthermore, if you reduce the browser window to accommodate the launch pad at that screen size and resolution, you lose the impact of the Web page itself. (See Figure 6.16.)

For those Web surfers who have larger screens and higher resolution, the launch pad or remote is a nice option because it can be placed elsewhere on the desktop, alongside the browser. The tool, then, makes sense. But I'll give you a nickel if you can find too many people outside the field of computing (especially those on PCs) who understand that a larger monitor and higher screen resolution means placing the browser on the desktop and not expanding it to full screen size! People figure, "Hey, more viewing space! Well, I'll just fill it up with my browser." Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way in the work-a-day world.

So, if you like the idea of a launch pad or remote control, do as Lycos has done, and give it only to the people who will use it. Offer it as an option, but not a necessity.



Figure 6.15. Java remote control pad over browser.



Figure 6.16. Reducing screen size doesn't help on a 15", 640x480 monitor.

Go Get It!

UKweb

<http://www.ukweb.com/>

Located in Leeds, United Kingdom, UKweb specializes in the Apache Web Server as well as several software applications, including the Web conferencing system called "Focus."

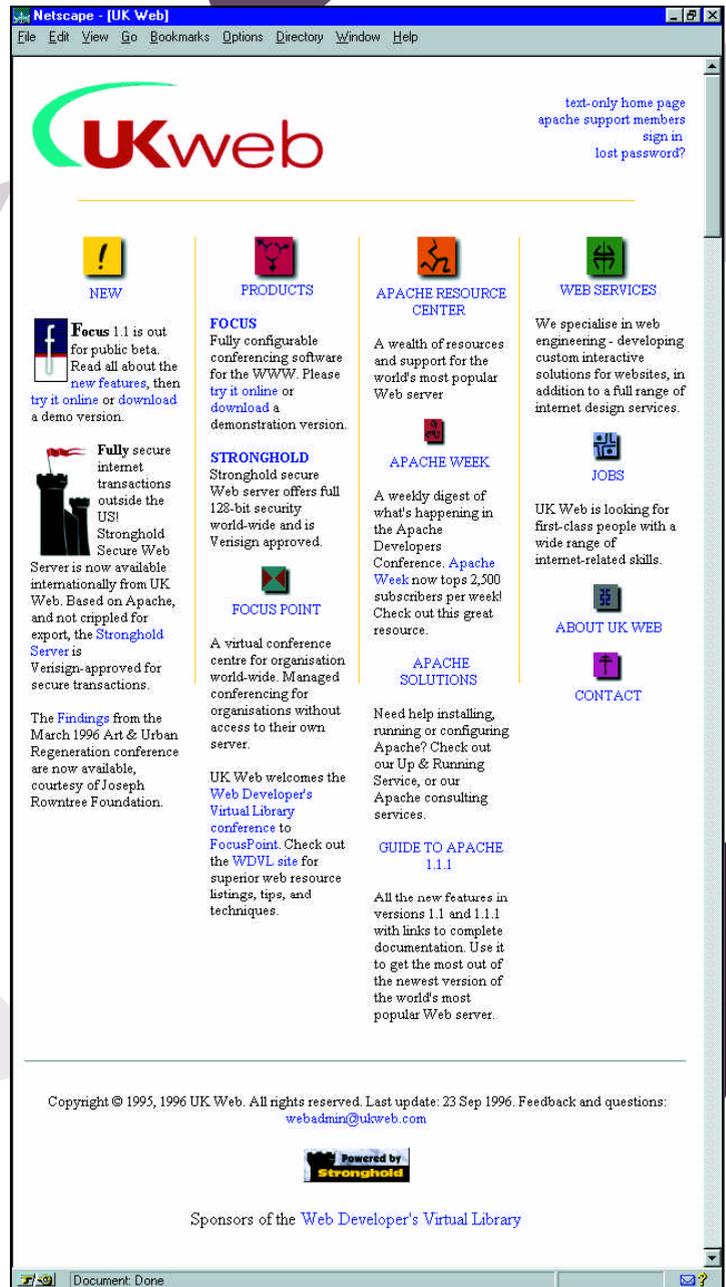
The UKweb Web site relies on bits of color from horizontal and vertical yellow lines, a very neat layout of information offered, and simple but appealing section icons.

Because much of UKweb's services involve customer support, it is wise that the site makes good use of the very simple but often overlooked <mailto:> anchor as a method of keeping people only a click away from being in touch.

Any Web site developed should have a way for visitors to send feedback or comments to at least one person on the site. Contact is imperative for almost all Web sites, and it's easily done. My particular take is to offer at least a hotlinked <mailto:> option as well as physical mailing addresses and phone numbers.

All this can be done very simply and without distracting the viewer from the page's content. UKweb has elected to place a <mailto:> on their pages, always at the bottom of the page, which allows people to simply drop down should there be something they want to write to the company or Webmaster.

Figure 6.17. UKweb home page.



The `mailto:` tag must be one of the most simple things to implement in HTML! Here's the syntax:

```
<a href="mailto:yourname@domain.com">Contact Name Here</a>
```

That's it! Place it on a Web page and replace it with the appropriate mailing address and contact in the correct spots, and voila! An instant mail link literally links your clientele to the persons or people they need to be in contact with.

The Web Developer's Virtual Library

<http://www.wdvl.com/>

The Web Developer's Virtual Library (WDVL) is a site that is extremely information-rich and acts as a powerful gateway to numerous other resources. Ironically, I've never been much impressed with the design, and recently I found out that the maintainers of the site are frustrated with it too. The problem simply is a case of "the painter never painting his house" syndrome: The good folks running the show never have time to get to the design because they are so busy getting the information organized.

Nevertheless, I'm placing it here because it is my top choice for central information for the Web designer. So, what I'm going to do is make some suggestions based on several of the practical tips in this chapter and gently perform a simple redesigning of the page, improving but not changing it too dramatically.

The first thing I've done is to take the six main categories and write them into a top navigation bar as Microsoft has done. This will link the categories to the top-level information, so as not to ruin the continuity. I then removed the detailed sub-lists of these categories; they can be picked up later on individual pages, or, if I had chosen another design style, they could be placed along a left-margin navigation system.

Figure 6.18. The WDVL home page.



Next, I've pulled the featured articles up to the top of the page and dropped the constraining table borders from around them. I like the use of color and contrast, but I have made some font changes to enhance the look and feel and make it a bit more contemporary.

Finally, I've moved advertising below the articles. I made use of alignment principles (see Chapter 9, "Sites that Express: People on the Net—Unique Home Pages") and fixed the centered alignment of contact and page details.

The resulting page allows for the natural dissemination of detailed information to other site sections, an easier to navigate interface, and a clean layout that doesn't appear too constrained. (See Figure 6.19.) The basic integrity of the page is intact, however, showing how the application of a few simple techniques can considerably improve a site.



Figure 6.19. A quick redesign improves some of the WDVL design problems.

Internet World

<http://www.iworld.com/>



Figure 6.20. Internet World home page.

Everything about the Internet can be found at Internet World, Mecklermedia's Web-based contribution of various trade magazines including *Internet World*, *Web Week*, and *Web Developer*, as well as online-only offerings such as software, news, and events information.

Not only do I recommend that Web designers buy subscriptions to the hard copy versions of anything and everything Mecklermedia publishes, but also keep this site bookmarked as a resource that should be visited as often as daily or weekly. The information is often top-line, and always pertinent to the work that designers are engaged in.

The design of the IWorld site is neither overwhelming, nor should it be. It is subtle, with good use of color and layout, and the information is well-organized. This is another example from the less-is-more school of Web design. The message is in the content, and any overdoing of bells and whistles could conceivably get in the way of quick access to the information. In a word, the design is smart.

Many designers caught on to the importance of the alt argument within image tags long ago, but I tend to be astonished at how many designers blow off this not only highly functional, but also very important tool.

The alt tag is a way to provide a text alternative to the image. This means that if there is a descriptive image or link necessary to define for text-only browsers, the alt tag is the way to do it. Using this tag, you can flag that graphic element as important, as well as assign a function to it.



For those individuals who think text browsers are a thing of the past, think again. Not only are they prevalent in colleges and foreign countries, but to this day, they are the easiest way for the blind population to navigate the Net.

How and When to Use the alt Argument

Internet World inspired this teaching because it uses the alt tag as a way to describe the header's function on the main page. By clicking it, you'll get right to the feedback page. However, this is not apparent unless you're using the Internet Explorer browser, which reads alt tag information on mouse-over. Therefore, the first use here is functional.



Other uses for the alt element would be as follows:

- **The graphic is used as a link.** If a graphic element is being used as a link, use a neat description of that link in the alt section of the image tag. Here's an example:

```

```

- **The graphic element provides an important piece of information.** If the graphic is somehow pertinent to the discussion, I would choose to describe it within the alt tag, so individuals with text-only access will understand the reference.

```

```

- **The graphic element is an advertisement.** If the page was sponsored by an advertiser, it is wise to put in the details, as well as alert the non-graphic person that it is a link.

```

```

Is there any time that it is *not* necessary to use the alt argument?

The answer is a simple yes!

The graphic is for visual enhancement only. If you've designed a nice animation that bears no specific weight on the content of the site, there's no need to tell about it.

The graphic element is used for spacing and layout. Say you've chosen to use a clear pixel GIF for spacing. It is not necessary to identify this type of element.

Using alt arguments properly is not only helpful to Web visitors, it also demonstrates a mature use of HTML. Professional designers are highly encouraged to understand and use this element well.

RILD

Network Bottleneck

Before I let you pass through the pipe to the next destination, I'm going to cause a bit of a bottleneck so as to review the primary elements of this chapter. At that point, I'll be sure the administrators of the book get the service back online, and let the data flow begin again.

- Copy writing for the Web involves knowing the audience, precision, and proper voice.
- One model of developing Web sites that bring in revenue is by creating jumping off places for niche markets, as exemplified by The Microsoft Network.
- Top navigation is an option, but must be used carefully.
- Both colorful design and faster download times can be achieved by exploiting browser-dependent, client-side controls such as background color and font faces and size.
- FutureSplash is an exciting, easy-to-use development tool for dynamic Web content.
- If every kilobyte and every second counts, take a close look at how much fat your HTML has, and learn how to trim it!
- JavaScript launch pads or remote controls should be used with caution.
- `mailto:` is one of the most important yet highly overlooked HTML power features.
- Great content for designers doesn't necessarily equal great design. The Web Developer's Virtual Library gets a makeover using lessons learned from its own teachings.
- The `alt` element in the `` tag is an important tool for non-graphic browsers.

Ah—looks like the data is flowing again. The next hub is one of the more adventurous along the way. Chapter 7 will take visitors on a fun-filled journey through the best travel resources on the Web.

Sites that Explore

Travel and Adventure

Excite City.Net

<http://city.net/>

TerraQuest

<http://www.terraquest.com/>

Fodor's

<http://www.fodors.com/>

Travelocity

<http://www.travelocity.com/>

Internet Travel Network

<http://www.itn.net/>

Lonely Planet

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>

Expedia

<http://www.expedia.msn.com>

Walt Disney World

<http://www.disney.com/DisneyWorld/>

Cyberspace World Railroad

<http://www.mcs.com/~dsdawdy/cyberoad.html>

TimeOut Net

<http://www.timeout.co.uk/>

To move about freely is a driving desire for many. There are those who seek the excitement of diverse culture in major metropolitan areas, and others looking for challenges and thrills at the top of nature's peaks. The Web offers the wonderful experience of being able to explore many of the earth's fascinating sites by simply pointing and clicking a mouse. One moment you might find yourself atop Yosemite's famous Half Dome, or suddenly you're in Italy, exploring the Vatican.

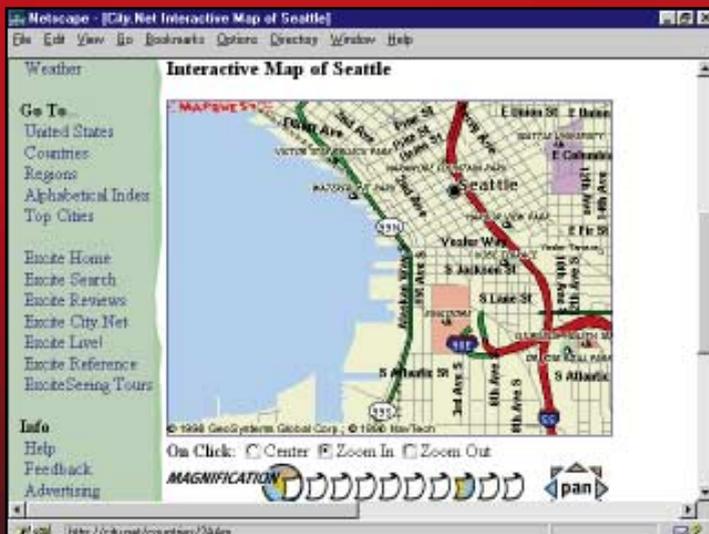
The Web cannot replace the power of travel and adventure, but it can be an opportunity to learn about the world and its points of interest. It can even provide the means to choose travel destinations, book flights, and design itineraries before ever leaving the comfort of your home or office.

Travel on the Web is big business. There are many wonderful sites that offer commendable service, beautiful design, and extensive information. The ten I've chosen to cover in this chapter reflect some of the Web's best efforts in providing service as well as information. As you travel along, you'll also have the opportunity to learn some important Web concepts and techniques.

The first stop is Excite City.Net. This site is jam-packed with information, and I'll examine the way City.Net has used what is rapidly becoming a design standard to manage large amounts of data: the left-margin index. Leaving the cosmopolitan life, the next destination is the breathtaking TerraQuest, an exceptional site that offers a look at adventure travel, and does so with a public broadcasting model of financially driving their Web projects.

Other vistas will include Fodor's, where random header graphics excite the visitor's eye upon every new visit. Travelocity offers up a great example of aligned graphics for visual texture. With Internet Travel Network, issues of copyright on the Net are examined. Lonely Planet uses the modern progressive JPG, and The Microsoft Network's stunning Expedia service is a prime example of RSACi ratings in action. Everyone loves Walt Disney World, and the use of visual repetition is exceptional on this beloved Web site. The Cyberspace World Railroad is an example of content that is so hot and so popular that hiring a graphic designer is in order. Finally, TimeOut is an opportunity to catch your collective breath and learn about iconography as it relates to page identity.

So grab a refreshing drink (maybe even a snack), buckle up, and enjoy the ride!



Featured Site I

Excite City.Net

<http://city.net/>

Excite City.Net is an all-inclusive vacation to the world's best cities. The main page is a variable library desk of vast information, allowing visitors to select one of the listed cities, or search for a city, or any aspect of a city, that he or she might be interested in.

Individual city pages provide a top-level view of the city's features. These include up-to-the-hour weather conditions, a hot-linked list to specific attractions such as arts and entertainment, and an extensive collection of very detailed and often interactive maps.

City.Net's design is light-hearted and upbeat, using a green side margin, inventive header graphics (see Figure 7.2), and fun, hand-drawn style navigation icons. (See Figure 7.3.) The designers have created an attractive and easy-to-use interface, which is no simple task considering the amount of information that is being distributed here. In fact, this is literally City.Net's most significant design feat: the creation of a Web site that is information rich, functional, and logical.

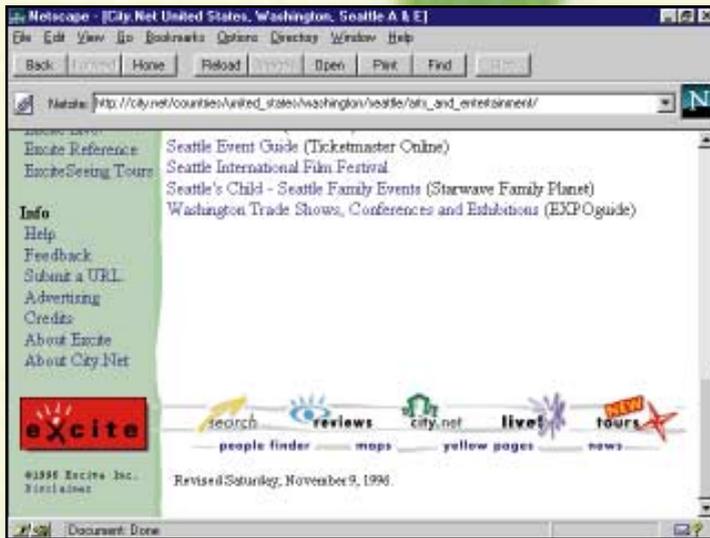


Figure 7.2. Inventive and appealing header graphics.



Figure 7.1. Excite City.Net splash page.

Figure 7.3. Upbeat iconography.



Logic and Order From Chaos

Designers are challenged by navigation on the Web, for many of the reasons discussed in Chapter 3, "Sites that Speak: Newspapers and Magazines," and, specifically are challenged by how to encourage the potential of the Web's non-linear medium but maintain a clear structure. Most people are used to hierarchical or progressive, fixed configurations. Simply think about the last book you read and how it was laid out. Most likely, there was a table of contents first, and then a specific arrangement of information as the teaching or story therein advanced.

There has to be a logical progression in order for material on the Web to make sense. Essentially, the Web is chaotic; there is a growing amount of data available in a multitude of directions, with only successful designers reigning in the powerful hypermedia that allows you to venture onto unfamiliar but potentially illuminating side roads. Chaotic information is a deviation from what most people are familiar with. It can be confusing, difficult, and frustrating. It is also a strength in that every return to a Web site will ideally be a unique experience, and each individual will enjoy the site in a different way.

With Excite City.Net, I haven't visited any given point of interest in the same order yet. Each trip, if you will, is a new look at sights that I might have missed or chosen to pass over on my last visit. This time, I enjoyed reading about Franz Kafka in Prague. From there, I enjoyed coffee house suggestions for my next visit to Seattle.

Your visit is going to be markedly different, because you have the choice to go to the destination that most interests you.

Designers working in this variable medium have to be extremely thoughtful about how to organize information so that it will be logical enough to follow, yet diverse enough to maintain the experience that the random possibilities make available. This is not easily done, but when it is successful, it almost always results in a site that appeals because it becomes easy to use and seems logical in spite of numerous, dynamic options.

The Left-Margin Solution

Excite City.Net has used a common but very effective feature to reign in the chaos and root visitors to a logical structure while they enjoy individual journeys. This feature is the implementation of a left-margin navigation system. While other navigation options exist, including a bottom navigation bar and many links on given pages, it is this sidebar that acts as a virtual tour guide and helps the visitor find his or her way home should the chaos begin to overwhelm.

Consider the following reasons for using the left margin:

- English, the Web's dominant language, is read left-to-right. Most people's eye will naturally fall to the left of the screen, and this then becomes a natural grounding point for pertinent information.
- Left margins scroll with the page. Bottom or top navigation only requires the effort of scrolling every time a navigation selection is required.
- Right margins, although used on occasion, cannot be as easily controlled in terms of width and placement on a page. This is due to the diversity of screen resolutions. The default resolution on most computer screens is currently 640x480 pixels wide. If I place a margin into the right of that field, on a high resolution monitor, that right margin will repeat! If I try to accommodate a different screen width, on the default resolution, I force a horizontal scroll bar. Phooey.
- A clever designer can do something fun with the left margin to give it a unique twist. Excite City.Net did a great job with this: Notice the textured left edge carefully. (See Figure 7.4.) This touch helps create visual flow, subtle color contrast, and gets the visitor away from the more commonly seen rigid lines.

I've heard designers and Web fans alike complain that this left margin system is getting cliché and tired. It certainly is used by a large number of sites, particularly those attempting to maintain extreme amounts of data. As you can see from these comments, there are several reasons why the left margin navigation system ends up being a natural choice. When sitting down to design sites with significant amounts of information, think about using this scheme carefully, and apply good amounts of creativity in order to use it well.

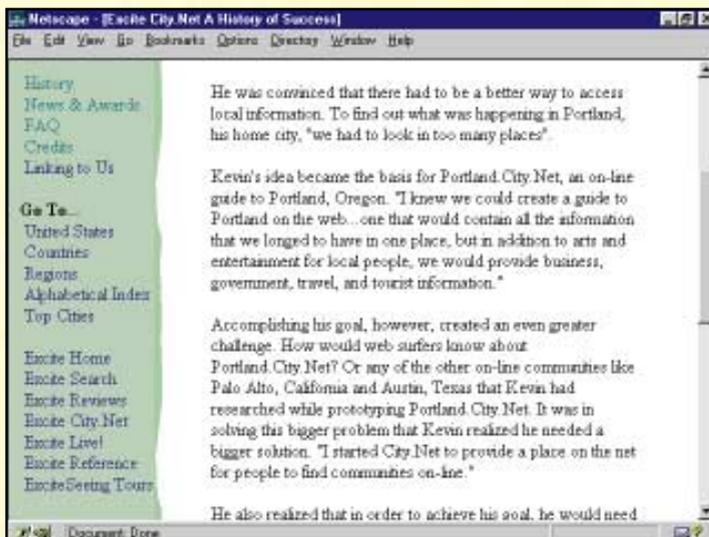


Figure 7.4. A clear look at the textured edge of City.Net's left margin.

Featured Site II

TerraQuest

<http://www.terraquest.com/>

Every so often people have the opportunity to stumble upon something that is so absolutely close to perfection that it knocks the very breath from the body. I believe this is what the word “awesome” originally set out to describe, and, should it appear in a Web site dictionary, TerraQuest will be the graphic definition of the word.

Did I mention I love this site? It's not just the outstanding content, which focuses on virtual expeditions to intriguing points of interest such as Antarctica and the Galapagos Islands. It's not the fact that the site is beautifully designed, precisely coded, and immaculately maintained. Well, it is these things, but it is especially because the vision of TerraQuest extends beyond its components and right back into the heart of what really matters: people.

Yes, you might have noticed at this point in the book that I am an idealist, an optimist, a humanist, and totally sold on the possibility that the Web can change the world for the good. The cynics among you can sneer away. I don't mind; in fact, I think it's a healthy thing for people to be skeptical of such fervor. I do have my down days, I promise. But then along comes a site such as TerraQuest, and my optimism is ignited because I see a Web site working within a much greater, visionary model.

Idealism aside, a Web site of TerraQuest's caliber can be an enormous expense. Certainly there exists a number of companies willing to create a Web page at bargain-basement rates, but those companies are either going to put out a poor product and fail because of inability to generate revenue, or they will ultimately fall into the market model that sells price over quality.

There's a place for that, undeniably. And just as there is a place for both bargain-basement design and top-quality professional presence, there is also a place for what I'm beginning to call the public broadcasting model for the Web. This is what TerraQuest has done, and it seems to be working with enormous grace.

TerraQuest seeks support from select corporate sponsors to fund its expeditions. The result is a Web site with events



Figure 7.5. TerraQuest's home page.

that people can join for adventure. This is best demonstrated by the recent coverage of Erik Weihenmayer's historic climb to the top of Yosemite's famous El Capitan. Why is it historic? Well, Erik is blind.

El Cap, as it's called by those who know it intimately, has actually been a

monumental pinnacle, if you'll pardon the pun, in the lives of several extreme athletes. Paraplegic Mark Wellman's story of his ascent—solely on the strength of his arms—can be read about at <http://ybi.com/wellman/>. To the completely able-bodied, this mountain is no small potato. To those with physical impairments, the effort is multiplied, but, then again, so is the personal and social triumph.

It is this triumph that enraptures me as a visitor to the TerraQuest Web site. I want to learn about these wonderful places, and the phenomenal contribution all individuals involved are making to demonstrate the idea that *anything is possible!* Who can be cynical looking at these stunning photographs (see Figure 7.6), reading the daily diaries, or going along with the climbing team through the different day-to-day emotions as they ascend to greater heights than ever believed possible?

In this case, the corporate sponsors are available to read about, on a common page (see Figure 7.7), and it is undeniable that I want to know who has put their money behind such adventurous and life-enhancing opportunities. This gives me great impetus to find out who they are, buy their products, and thank them for their involvement in not only getting blind hikers to the top of mountains, but bringing that information back into the real world via a fantastic Web site.

But the story isn't over. The message, and the resounding support, goes back into a broader community, in this case, through the works of groups such as the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), which was founded by a group of people that included Helen Keller in 1921. "The theme...is a simple



Figure 7.6. Erik Weihenmayer scaling mountain walls.



Figure 7.7. View of primary sponsor page in the public broadcasting model of Web design.

one," said AFB President Carl R. Augusto. "Let no barrier stand in the way of the goals you set for your life."

This is a model that goes far beyond the practical application of Web design. Although the most apparent learning here is to think about ways corporations can become involved as sponsors for the type of work you are doing, the most important message is that a Web site can be a conduit for human empowerment. I hope that designers never let that basic idea get away. Sites such as TerraQuest prove how important it is to create something that resounds yesterday on the top of El Capitan, today on the Web, and for tomorrow's visionaries who hear that resonance and believe in the power of positive possibilities.

Fodor's

<http://www.fodors.com/>

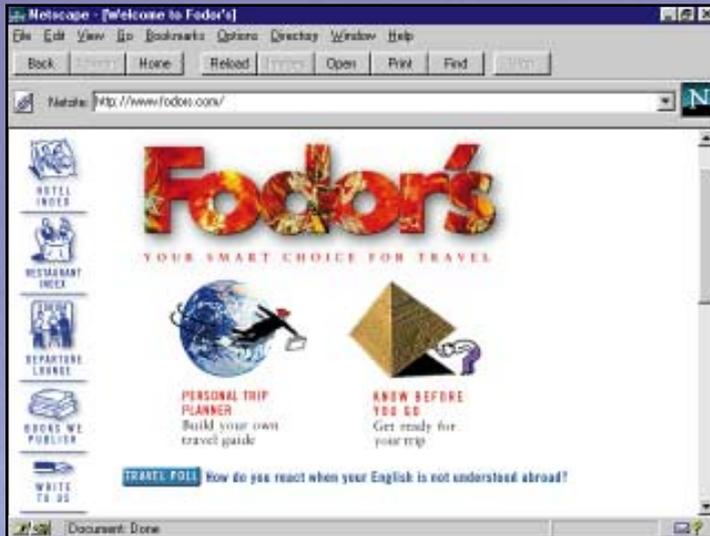


Figure 7.8. Fodor's home page.



Figure 7.9. The first visit to Fodor's shows a golfing scene in the header graphic.

Famous Fodor's, known far and wide for consistent and very comprehensive travel guides, adds to its resources with its clever and very useable Web site. Heavy emphasis is on news, with coverage of destinations, restaurants, sports and adventure, and important facts that every traveler should know before embarking on his or her journey.

The design is intelligent and straightforward, with the splash page being used as a jumping-off spot for articles of interest as well as Fodor's online services. There's a nice blend of iconography and original artwork, particularly in individual page headers, and specifically in Fodor's main header.

Savvy surfers will notice that the main Fodor's header is often different in appearance. Fodor's has chosen to visually carve its name out of a variety of travel photos, and it is these images that change with each visit to Fodor's site, as can be seen in three different return visits. (See Figures 7.9, 7.10, and 7.11.)

How is this done, you might wonder? Is someone changing the graphics every day, or every hour? Of course not! That would not only be awkward, it would be cost-prohibitive. However, because fresh data and changing images on a Web site keep visitors returning and enjoying each subsequent visit, finding techniques to give the illusion of regular change is going to be to a designer's advantage.

One of the most popular of these techniques is referred to as "randomization." This is almost always the exploitation of HTML preprocessor functions and information housed on the Web server.

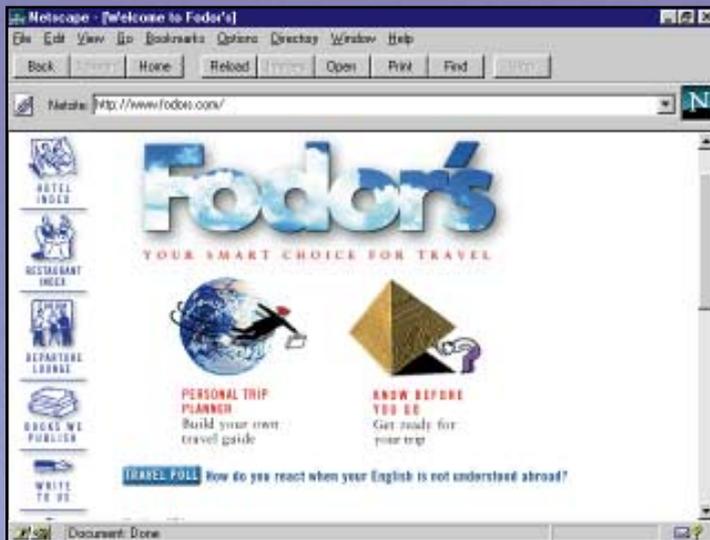


Figure 7.10. My next visit shows a beautiful blue sky with white clouds.



Figure 7.11. Another visit shows a beach scene. I'm captivated! I want to return again to see what comes next.

Basic Randomization Concepts

Randomization is actually very simple, although to the non-technical eye, it can seem almost magical. First, syntax within the HTML document calls a preprocessing script to run on the Web server. The server then takes that input and returns the data requested by the HTML.

In the case of Fodor's, that data is simply a series of graphics that conform in shape and size to one another and can easily be placed in the exact spot within the page. Each time

the script is called, it will randomly select one of the graphics allowed and return it to the server. Magic? Not really. Just a clever use of HTML and Web server technology that can become an essential part of dynamic Web design.

Where to Find More Information on Randomization and Preprocessing

Because of the variety of servers that exist, and the various approaches that each requires to use this type of function, it's impossible to go into detail as to how your given Web server is going to be able to handle a randomized process.

The first way to find more information on what your particular server is capable of doing is to contact the system administrator for details. This is the individual or individuals at your company or the contracting company you hire that houses a given site's data on the Internet. The system administrator either has this information, or has the details regarding the type of server software and hardware that he or she is running. He or she should also be able to provide documentation for the software and hardware, or give you a good reference as to where such information can be found.

With this knowledge in hand, the Web designer is empowered with a technique that is becoming a standard method of keeping sites interesting and fresh. The added advantage is that this can ultimately be done with very little extra effort in terms of programming and preparation.

Travelocity

<http://www.travelocity.com/>

Figure 7.12. Travelocity's reservations page.

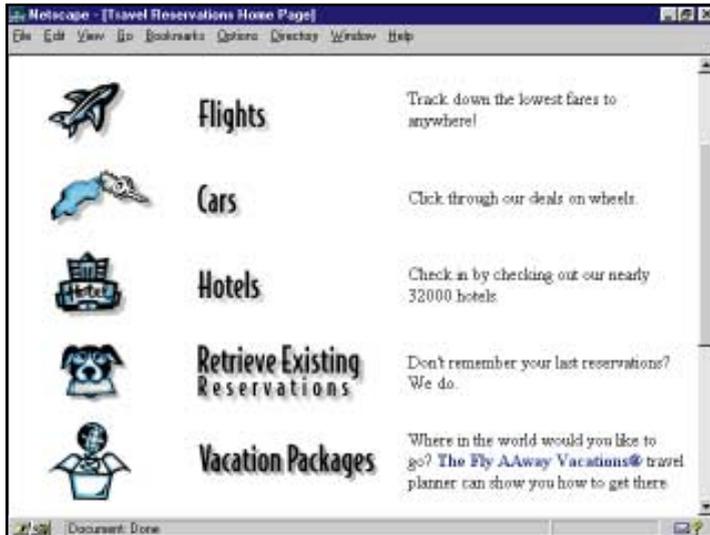
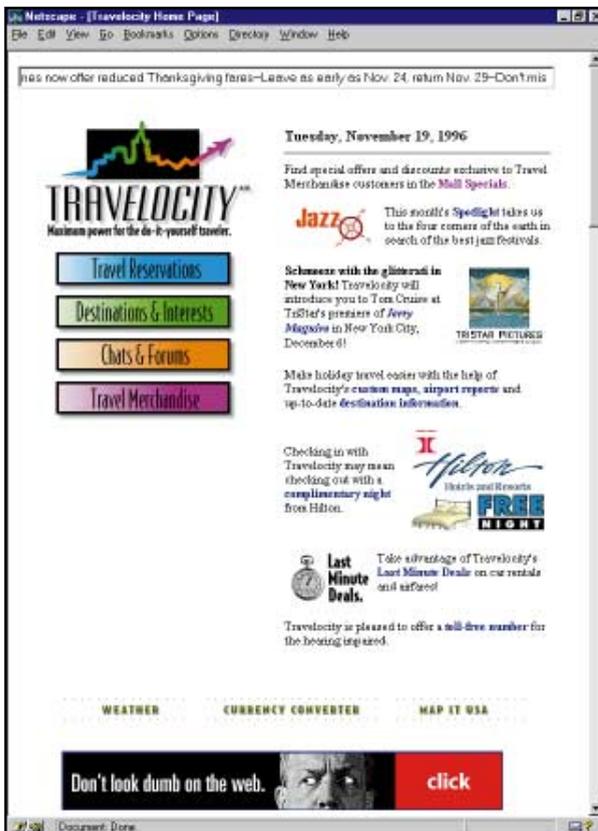


Figure 7.13. Floating images keep information easy to follow.



Travelocity is another great contribution to online travel services. The site is perhaps less broad than Excite or Expedia in terms of content, but, in fact, this is a benefit. There are four main areas, including Travel Reservations, Destinations & Interests, Chats & Forums, and Travel Merchandise.

The logical and attractive design of Travelocity makes it one of my regular bookmarks. It's a very easy-to-use site. I especially like the way the home page is designed, because it has a good deal of information available only a click away, but doesn't overload the page with so much information that it feels like a shopping mall rather than a personal service!

Along with simple but colorful graphics, intelligent layout, and a very functional JavaScript marquee with up-to-date special fares, Travelocity creates nice visual texture by using a very easy graphic alignment technique that immediately makes the page easy to read and follow.

As you can see in Figure 7.13, all of the information along the right is a combination of text and *floating images*. Floating images is a term used to describe the sense that these images allow for text to wrap around them, instead of text and images placed on a page with no apparent relationship to one another.

The designer of Travelocity, in this case, stacked a variety of text information and added three separate graphic images to enhance aspects of the text. These images are staggered, meaning that while the first one is on the left, the next one is on the right, and then the following one is on the left again. This staggering allows for a lovely, smooth flow for both the text as well as the graphics. The eye enjoys the images without being jarred by a sudden, unexpected change, or becoming bored with inappropriate repetition.

Using the align Argument to Float Graphics

The technique of floating images used on Travelocity is easily done by using the `align` and related arguments within the `` tag to float the graphics.

Here is an example of the syntax for the first graphic from Travelocity:

```

```

It's easy to see that the `tristar1.gif` graphic is forced to the left because of the simple syntax in this string that says `align=left`. To continue maintaining an attractive look, there are three other elements that the designer has added to be sure to get the results desired.

<code>valign=top</code>	This argument states that the vertical alignment is at the topmost part of the vertical space.
<code>hspace=5</code>	This argument creates a five pixel-width of background beyond the horizontal space of the graphic.
<code>vspace=5</code>	In this case, the vertical space has five pixels of background beyond the graphic image.

These commands can be used in a variety of ways, depending upon the designer's desired end look and feel. The amount of pixel width of horizontal as well as vertical space can be changed to any number that makes visual sense. The vertical alignment might or might not be necessary, again depending upon the individual designer's ideas.

With the Travelocity site, the designer continued using the `align` argument to help create the graphic staggering, and the extended arguments to allow for plenty of white space between the graphics and the text. The end result? An easy-to-follow grouping of text and graphic information!



Figure 7.14. Internet Travel Network's home page.

The Internet Travel Network is a secure-server, Internet reservation service that books hotel, car, and plane reservations twenty-four hours a day from the comfort of your home or office. There is a discussion forum and a news section, and a "how to get the lowest fares" series of tips. Each is interesting and useful, but the undeniable strength in this network is its focus on travel bookings for Internet users, as well as using agents *in the area* of the specific user, no matter where in the world he or she might be.

I like the design of this site. It's very easy on the eyes, with a textured almond background and a stylized early 20th-century look and feel to the graphics. It's clever without being overbearing.



As with many Web sites, each page on the Internet Travel Network has a copyright notice on the bottom (see the bottom of Figure 7.14), and I felt this would be a good time to discuss some of the realities of copyrighting material on the Net. A quick disclaimer here: Anyone building a Web site that has concerns about the safety of the material they are placing on the Web should check with a qualified attorney who can give specific advice.

The information here is merely a discussion to get Web designers familiar with copyright and what some of its merits and downfalls could be. This information

was obtained through discussions with attorney Linus B. Kafka of the Arizona firm Bowman, Kafka, and Mileff, P.C. Kafka's practice includes copyright and intellectual property issues, and he maintains a personal and active interest in law and the Internet.

Basic Concepts of Copyright

In simple terms, copyright is a form of protection provided by United States law to anyone who creates original works, including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and other intellectual works. It is available to both published and unpublished works.

Copyright is governed by the Copyright Act, which allows the owner of the copyright to reproduce the work, prepare derivative works, distribute or sell copies, perform the work publicly, and display the work publicly.

A copyright automatically exists at the time the work is created in fixed form. For example, the day a book is published, it is copyrighted. The copyright vests immediately in the author, except when the project is considered a work-for-hire, in which case the employer owns the copyright.

Unoriginal works, short phrases, names, ideas, and concepts cannot be copyrighted.

A copyright protects the work for the remainder of the author's life, plus fifty years. In the case where a copyright is owned by two or more people, it follows the last author's term.

Should I Place a Notice on my Web Page?

Copyright notice is optional, but recommended. It informs the public that the work is protected, identifies the owner, and the year of first publication. One need not get permission from or register with the Federal Copyright Office to use a notice.

Registration is a legal formality, but it does have advantages. First, it makes a public record of the basic facts of the copyright. It allows the owner of a page to sue for infringement, which is extremely important. If you've placed notice on your page but failed to register, you might have a very difficult time proving an infringement case.

Again, these are basic considerations. For more detailed information on copyright and intellectual property, please consult a qualified attorney who can evaluate the specific needs of your given Web site.

Lonely Planet

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>

Known as the premier publishers of guides for independent travelers, Lonely Planet has been a grass roots organization, offering up the idea that travelers make an important contribution to the places they visit. The Lonely Planet Web site reflects the earthy aspect of their print publications, offering a variety of travel survival tips, health information, and detailed maps of world destinations.

The look and feel of the site is simple. The emphasis is on text information, and much could be done to make the site more visually exciting, including a more sophisticated use of text alignment (see Chapter 9, "Sites that Express: People on the Net—Unique Home Pages") and consistency in graphic sizing to a 640x480 resolution. However, one intriguing technical choice that the designers have made is the predominant use of the progressive JPG.

JPGs are discussed more specifically in Chapter 8, "Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web," where the JPG discussion involves choosing the JPG format for photo-realistic graphics. JPGs use "lossy" compression as opposed to a 256-color palette, as found in GIFs. What this means is that JPGs will lose colors, reducing the total number of colors, and compress an image file, rather than force a specific palette. In general, JPG is a better choice for any graphic that requires a broad color palette but decent compression. Therefore, JPGs are better for photos and graphics with a lot of light or color gradations, whereas GIFs are better for line-art and iconography.



Figure 7.15. Lonely Planet's home page.

Progressive JPGs are, in the most simple terms, the JPG version of interlaced GIFs. (See Chapter 5, "Sites to Live By: Beauty, Fashion, Health, and Lifestyle.") The idea is that the graphic will render on a page in a progressive fashion—appearing all at once in a very blurry version, and then becoming more clear with each pass the browser makes at the data. The power in progressive rendering is that it captures the viewer's eye and keeps the viewer interested in the page. This is a very effective choice over the standard JPG, which is drawn from top to bottom.

The other advantage to progressive JPGs is that the final product can be smaller and visually more precise than GIF compression. The trick to making sure this occurs is to follow the basic rules for when to choose JPG over GIF. Simply remember that photographic images, or design work with a lot of light and color gradations, require the 24-bit color of JPGs rather than the limited 256 palette for GIFs.

defines what their children will and will not be able to view on the Web. All of Microsoft's sites, including Expedia, use this system.

RSACi (pronounced are-sack-ee) stands for the Recreational Software Advisory Council. This is a non-profit, independent group of software publishers interested in the creation and maintenance of accurate, autonomous, and "non-judgmental" methods of rating Web sites. In simple terms, RSACi has developed a rating string that site developers can place in the `META` tag. (See Chapter 11, "Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web.") This rating string, combined with a browser that supports the string (namely Internet Explorer) makes a powerful tool that is in the hands of the individual parent or teacher, and not a special interest group.

For the Web designer, RSACi ratings are somewhat complex in syntax. However, RSACi has created very acceptable tools to assist the designer in getting the right rating string for the Web site in question. Even more powerful is the "granularity" system that RSACi offers designers.

Granularity

Granularity is the descriptive term for the ability of a Web designer to selectively place different RSACi ratings in different sections of a particular site. For example, the Expedia site might one day want to add a section that features pictures of certain beaches where nudity is commonplace. Although the rest of the Expedia site might be perfectly viewable for all ages, this particular section would require a different rating.

Using degrees of granularity, the Web designer can select a certain rating for that particular area, and when parents set up their browsers to forbid under-age children access to that area, the entire site *except that section* will be viewable.

Granularity allows the RSACi system to be applied to one page within a site, one branch of a site, or an entire site. This is an extremely powerful tool, and one Web designers should take into serious consideration when designing sites. Even though many browsers don't yet support RSACi ratings, the tag will simply go unread by visitors using anything but the Internet Explorer—for now.

Ultimately, this type of rating will be embraced simply because of its combined technical ease of use and the fact that it hands the core of the responsibility to parents and teachers immediately, instead of in the distant future. In the meantime, it also is a major motivation for parents and educational institutions to use Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Again, this is a potentially serious blow to Netscape in the ongoing battle to ultimately dominate the browser market.

How to Implement RSACi Ratings

The easiest way to be sure that your RSACi ratings will be accurate is to allow RSACi to walk you through the process. A visit to <http://www.rsac.org/start.html> will get you started. You will go through a series of questions that ask you to respond with a yes or no to issues involving violence, language, nudity, and sexual content. Once you've completed the series of questions, an RSACi rating will be generated for you. Simply copy this rating into the `META` section of your HTML pages that call for this level of rating. The main page of Expedia has an RSACi rating that looks like this:

```
<META http-equiv="PICS-Label" content='(PICS-1.0
↳"http://www.rsac.org/ratingsv01.html" l gen true comment
↳"RSACi North America Server" by "travel@expedia.com" on
↳"1996.04.04T08:15-0500" exp "1997.01.01T08:15-0500" r
↳(n 0 s 0 v 0 l 0))'>
```

For more ambitious Web designers who want a full understanding of each level of RSACi syntax, the RSACi developer's pages can be reached by pointing your browser to <http://www.rsac.org/dev.html>.

Walt Disney World

<http://www.disney.com/DisneyWorld/>

Figure 7.17. Walt Disney World's home page.



I love Mickey Mouse! I don't know too many people who don't, especially the young and the young at heart. Mickey is your personal guide to Disney World's Web site, which is a specific site (among many other Disney sites) dedicated to various Disney interests at the main Disney site; it is found at <http://www.disney.com/>.

The Disney World Web site is particularly enjoyable, especially because it is featuring the very popular Orlando theme park's 25th Anniversary celebration. It's hard to believe that it's been 25 years; even I remember when it was built! It was an exciting time, especially for those of us on the East Coast who wanted more opportunities to visit with our favorite Disney characters.

It's especially heart-warming to think that children world over can get a taste of the eternal optimism, creativity, and colorful presence that Disney World offers right from home! The site is as light-hearted and sweet as can be expected, with an intelligent design featuring many of the familiar Disney characters and artistic styles. Repetition of color and graphic elements helps tie the site together and keeps the eye subtly but consistently engaged.

Repetition

Repetition is the foundation of design consistency. Repetition is the foundation of design consistency. No, that sentence's duplication is not a typo or an editorial oversight. It's a sledge-hammer commentary about one of the most overlooked aspects of Web design today.

Repetition, in practical terms, is the use of a specific element in a repeated pattern. This element can be any number of things, including a color, a specific graphic, a stylized header, or a custom rule. Whatever the elements chosen, they can be used both multiple times on a page, or, even more importantly, from page to page.

Remember the earlier discussion of the Web's natural state of disorder? Repetition is one of the design techniques that helps bring order to the chaos, influencing whether or not a visitor will stay or leave your site. Visual flow is imperative to keeping people calm and engaged. Certainly, you'll want to have texture, diversity, and dynamic elements, but the need for repetition goes back to the earlier comment of requiring logical foundations from which to expand into the unfamiliar territories of non-linear environments.

This suggests that a designer must deliberately create repetition, and that is precisely true. Notice the pink bar in Figure 7.17? I then travel to the next page, and there it is again. (See Figure 7.18.) This visual continuity consolidates my experience of this site, keeping me grounded and involved. Designers should think very carefully about what elements can naturally be repeated to create this continuity.

When Enough Is Enough

Repetition needs to be done with a careful hand, however. Too much of something is, as they say, not a good thing. If an item is overused, it can actually cause the initial intent to backfire. Instead of creating order, you can actually repeat something so much as to make a design chaotic. Precision is an imperative here.



Figure 7.18. Repetition of pink bar.

I like to think about design guru Robin Williams' metaphor regarding repetition. "Repetition is like accenting your clothes." She adds, "If a woman is wearing a lovely black evening dress with a chic black hat, she might accent her dress with red heels, red lipstick, and a tiny red rose corsage."

Williams then shows how too much is a problem. Add to this effective repetition a red hat, red earrings, a red pocketbook, and a red coat, and suddenly the balance is totally lost.

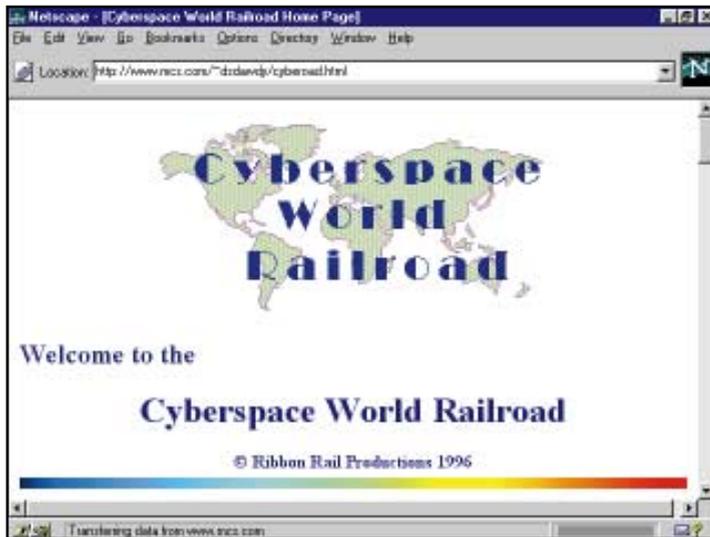
Repetition, incidentally, is not only important in graphic design, although that's the primary place to use it in terms of the Web. When I was studying writing in college, I learned that the repetition of words or phrases was an important element in effective communication. The rule of thumb in that instance was that *three* repetitions would be remembered. Anything less might be ineffective; anything more might be overkill.

I think the same is true for visual elements on an individual Web page. This will change as you start repeating elements on tangential pages of a site. The best rule in this instance is to carefully evaluate the look and feel that results. Are you calmed by the repetition? Is it too busy? When you've fully evaluated your use of repetition, repeat your evaluation!

Cyberspace World Railroad

<http://www.mcs.com/~dsdawdy/cyberoad.html>

Figure 7.19. Cyberspace World Railroad home page.



Rail fans, unite! The Web might seem an unlikely place for train and rail travel fans, but the line community has been online for a long time. With original groups on all of the major commercial services, such as CompuServe and America Online, it's no surprise that the Web would be a natural extension of the rail fan's domain.

There's something invigorating and very independent about this group, who are, in general, extremely enthusiastic and have a palpable passion for everything and anything to do with trains. Daniel S. Dawdy has created a very rich Web site with the Cyberspace World Railroad, a main station for anyone looking for all the electronic information and networking to be found on the subject. Dawdy's dedication is evident; he is devoted to the site in a way that all designers should aspire. There is regularly updated information, humorous bits, history, well-written articles and trivia, and ample links to other train sites 'round the globe.

Dawdy has won several awards for the Global Railroad's content, and I'm going to add his site to the list of all that sizzles, even though the site is not a prime example of technical design. This is an instance, as with many sites on the Web, where the content is just so cool, so extensive, and created with such passion that it simply cannot be ignored.

The design lessons with a site such as this are many, especially the vivacity that someone who loves what he or she is doing is bringing to the site. It's contagious, and it's obvious, especially when page creators are enamored of the project. Another perspective is when content on the Web is just this darned good, the input of professional designers might sincerely benefit the visitors in terms of layout, look and feel, and ease of use.

When Can a Web Site Benefit from a Design Consult?

The following situations suggest it's time for the non-professional designer to seek out a professional's advice:

- The Web site is starting to accumulate large quantities of data.
- Awards have been received by the site for the quality of its content, but not necessarily the design.
- The site is highly trafficked by the general public.
- The site is being trafficked by the critical eye of the media.
- The maintenance and design of the popular, growing site is handled by someone without a background in design.

When a site becomes this popular and has this much data, it's also a good time for the hobbyist to consider getting some input from professional level designers. This is in no way to

suggest that the hard work put in is negated. Rather, it is a logical part of a site's progression. A design consultant can make a few good suggestions to help the site be very well-structured, interactive, intuitive, and visually engaging.

Certainly there are books (such as this one) that can help very serious hobbyists learn some techniques that enable them to keep the site's enthusiasm, yet have design ideas that match the quality of the content. There are also many resources for design consultants and information on the Web.

One such resource that I particularly like is [portfolios.com](http://www.portfolios.com). This extensive list of designers from varied media, such as fashion to graphics, has a special section just for graphic designers, typically ones of very high quality and experience.

http://www.portfolios.com/graphic_designers/ will point those interested in finding a graphic designer whose advice might benefit a given site.



TimeOut Net

<http://www.timeout.co.uk/>



Figure 7.20. TimeOut Net's London page showing descriptive icons.

With a distinctly European focus, England's TimeOut Net is a very handy guide for city travel. Of special interest is the regular focus on political or social situations in a given country, with a feature article or series editorial focusing on the problem and offering assistance in helping travelers to that region stay aware. Arts and entertainment events are high on the list of offerings. Another unique service is TimeOut's free classified advertisements in the city it serves.

Anyone can post a classified ad. Typical ones are for apartment rentals, specialty shops and items, and people trying to connect with other travelers to help share expenses as well as friendship. This is a great feature, and reading the classifieds can itself be a taste of the life and lifestyles of people within the cities from which they are generated.

TimeOut offers simple design, using plenty of white space, simple header graphics, and a navigation system that consists of colored icons to represent each city covered.

This is an interesting approach, which allows a person to jump from city to city using the visual icons with ease. Another little trick that TimeOut has employed is removing the icon of the page you're visiting from the navigation series. This is a clever way of letting you know that you are currently surfing around in that region.

Icons can be very powerful tools for recognition and navigation purposes, and in the case of TimeOut, they've been used with a large degree of success, especially considering the amount of icons they have. Fifteen cities are covered, and if TimeOut wants to begin adding more, this system might get crowded mighty quick.

Web designers selecting iconography as a method of navigation and recognition should be realistic in the planning stages. Will the number of options remain fixed or close to fixed? If not, selecting to use a more advanced, or detailed navigation system, such as the one described in Excite City.Net, might be in order.

Furthermore, the creation of visual icons is a complex art. TimeOut has done an admirable job representing most of the fifteen cities they are servicing with simple visual guides, such as a windmill for Amsterdam, the Statue of Liberty for New York, and the Eiffel Tower for Paris. There are a few I'm slightly unsure of, such as Barcelona and Prague, which might have more to do with my lack of familiarity than with what might be common symbols to a European eye. Still, in an international arena, it's important to consider such issues.

Travel Is Good for the Appetite!

I hope this guided tour of Web sites fits your travel as well as Web design needs. Before taking off into Chapter 8, a quick review of the lessons learned are in order.

- Left-margin indexing can be a powerful tool in the management of large amounts of data.
- Public broadcasting models of Web sites can be extremely efficacious in that corporate sponsors assist in bringing important and dynamic social information to a world-wide audience.
- Randomization techniques help keep the visitor's eye fresh and engaged.
- Alignment of graphic elements can help create the visual texture and flow necessary for ease of access to material.
- Copyright of Web-based material is an involved issue that individual Web designers and companies with Web sites should investigate thoroughly.
- Progressive JPGs offer progressive rendering and small file size for specific graphic applications.
- RSACi ratings are becoming a very valued way to put the issue of appropriate access to certain information for children in the hands of parents and educational institutions.
- Repetition is a critical design element that should invariably be used with caution.
- There might come a time when a hobbyist's site becomes so notorious it is appropriate to bring in the expertise of a designer. It's only a few simple steps to knowing when one is necessary and how to find a qualified consultant.
- Iconography is a specialized art that can be applied to navigation as well as recognition.

Are you wearing comfortable clothing? I hope so! The next stop is "M&M's"®, which are sure to please the sweet tooth, melt in the mouth, and fill the tummy!

Sites with Spice

Food and Beverage on the Web



"M&M's"

<http://www.m-ms.com/>

Cocktail

<http://www.hotwired.com/cocktail/>

Border Grill

<http://bordergrill.com/>

Blue Note Restaurant

<http://www.interjazz.com/bluenote.html>

Guinness Brewing Company

<http://www.guinness.ie/>

Penelope's Restaurant

<http://desert.net/penelopes/>

7UP:

<http://www.7up.com/>

Wilde Rose Coffee Company:

<http://desert.net/wilderose/>

Ragú

<http://www.eat.com/>

alt.coffee

<http://www.altdotcoffee.com/>

Sites with

Some like it hot, others sweet, and still others like flavors with subtle bitter or sour overtones. Everyone's palette is different, and this is true of the Web, too.

I'll start out with sweet, with that famous colorful candy known as "M&M's". The "M&M's" Web site is a delight, with charming use of voice, an important element in creating a Web site's personality.

Mixology is a fine art, as is creating consistent HTML. I'll introduce the idea of HTML style conventions while you sip on your favorite beverage from Cocktail, an enjoyable and relaxing Web site from the folks at the Wired Network. After a drink, the Border Grill serves up some of the most delicious food in the West, and I'll look at the concept of *consistent design*.

If you like music while you work or eat, the Blue Note Restaurant has just the ticket. Marvelous jazz from some of the world's best players can be enjoyed as I show you how to add color and pizzazz to Web sites by using the `bgcolor` argument within tables.

The Irish brew up the best stout, and the Guinness site is a bubbly

brew most fit to sip while examining the use of graphic treatments to solve the font dilemma on the Web. From Ireland, this gastronomical surf lands in France, where the GIF transparency is studied at Penelope's Restaurant.

For the decaffeinated among you, 7UP's site is a refreshing look at community sponsorships, showing Web designers how to offer philanthropy along with a product. For those who like their caffeine unadulterated, Wilde Rose Coffee Company brews up a fine cup, as well as an excellent example of how to effectively scan, size, and treat photos and graphics.

Mama's Kitchen is pasta perfection, and Web designers can get their complex carbohydrates while learning the not-so-complex but important background color/background image tricks that help keep loading visually smooth and quick.

For those who want the joy without the calories, Virtual Reality is the perfect solution. Enjoy a tour of alt.coffee's VRML, have your computer fixed, and find out where to get more information on VRML all at one sitting!

Enjoy!

Food and Beverage on the Web



Featured Site I



Figure 8.1. "M&M's"® Splash Page.



Melts in your mouth—not on your keyboard! This site is designed and maintained by InterActive 8, Inc. (www.interactive8.com), with the guidance of the marketing gurus from M&M's/Mars. It's a kick, opening with an animated "M&M's" character criticizing my screen, telling me it's filthy and dusty! Move to the "official" site guide for more fun and Web site details. Done in a newspaper style, this area is aptly named "The Hard Shell." (See Figure 8.2.)

There is so much humor here, and literal animations aside, the most impressive aspect of the site is how animated it is. It has a lively, palpable presence, which makes it fun to visit, and it completely exemplifies how important strong voice is in creating smashing Web sites.

Voice

Voice is the tone you take with your audience. It can make or break the effectiveness of a site. The first step is to identify who your audience is, so you can speak to them in the appropriate language. Sometimes it's going to be safe to be in-your-face, all-out crazy and funny, other times your audience will require a professional, even-paced tone.

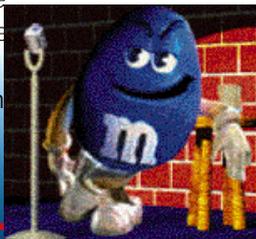
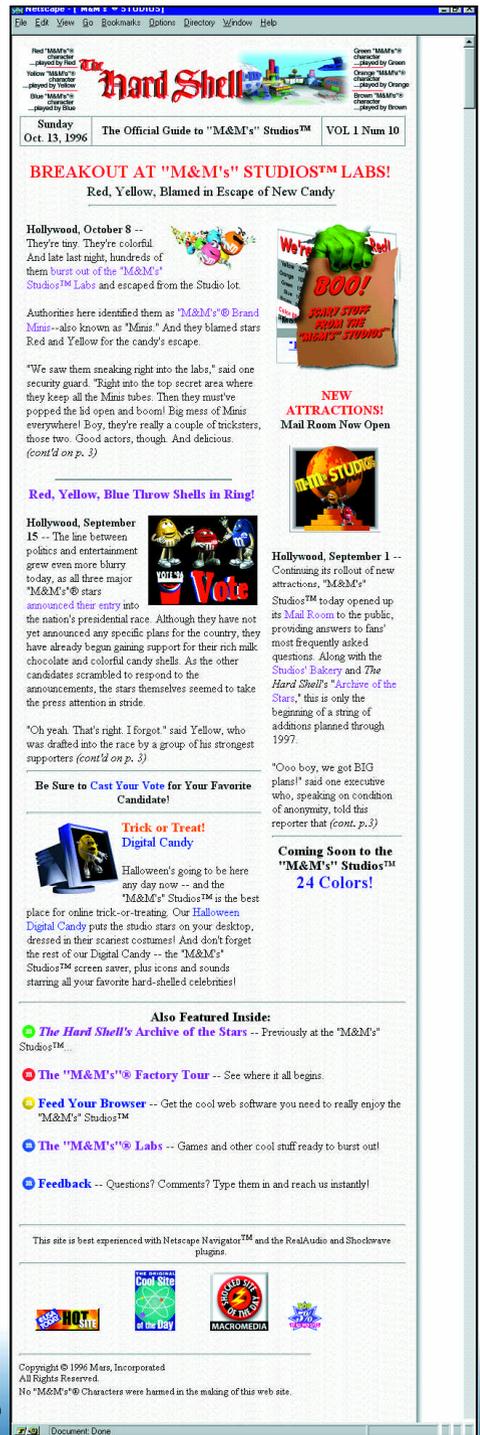


Figure 8.2. The "Hard Shell."



"M&M's" is obviously a case where fun goes hand-in-hand with the product. The authors of this Web site not only understood the audience, but understood the necessity to make the voice strong and witty, with no apologies.

Experimenting with Voice

I like to play a little game when deciding what tone to take with certain audiences. The game involves taking some text for the site and writing it in different voices. Here's the text from the Mail Room (see Figure 8.3):

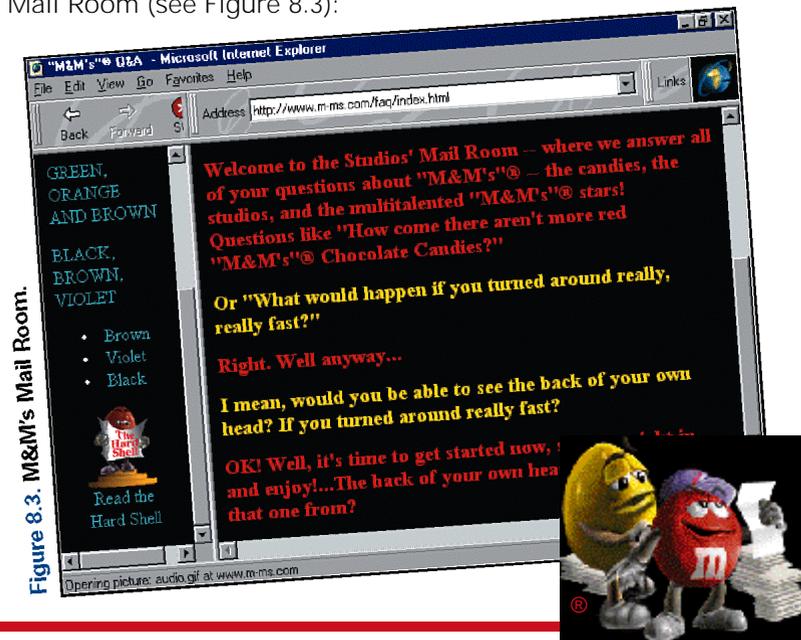


Figure 8.3. M&M's Mail Room.

Welcome to the Studios' Mail Room—where we answer all of your questions about “M&M’s” —the candies, the studios, and the multitalented “M&M’s” stars! Questions like “How come there aren’t more red “M&M’s” Chocolate Candies?”

Or “What would happen if you turned around really, really fast?”
Right. Well, anyway...

I mean, would you be able to see the back of your own head? If you turned around really fast?

OK! Well, it’s time to get started now, so jump right in and enjoy!...The back of your own head! Where’d you get that one from?

Now I’m going to write this in a drier, more corporate tone:

The Studio mail room provides customer service for queries regarding our “M&M’s” products, facilities, and employees. One example of a commonly asked question is “Why doesn’t your company produce more red “M&M’s” chocolate candies?”

Please use our convenient forms to submit your questions, and we will be with you as soon as possible.

Now, I’ll write it in a more personal voice:

Thank you for visiting our Mail Room. We hope you will feel comfortable here. It is our goal at M&M/Mars to provide you

with the best service available. To this end, we’d like you to use our forms, and we promise a personal response as quickly as possible!

There are no limits to the types of questions you can ask. We encourage you to be creative, direct—whatever you need, we are here to deliver.

We hope you’ve enjoyed your visit to our Web site, and please let us know if there is ever anything we can do for you—our most valued visitor.

And, finally, I’ll write it in a cybersurf voice:

Hey, cybersurfers! We totally dig e-mail, so why don’t you fill out our most-excellent feedback forms, and send ‘em on. And just WHY don’t we produce more red “M&M’s” Chocolate Candies? Haven’t you heard that red is dead and blue is cool? Get with it, dude. Maybe you spent too much time spinning around or looking at the back of yer head. This site rocks, and the whole Webverse knows it.

Remember these few handy points:

- Identify your audience! This will enable you to hone in on the most appropriate voice.
- Experiment. Try a conservative take, a personal take, and a creative approach.
- Re-examine your approaches in the context of your determined audience. Will a given approach serve them? Get them involved with the material? Offend?

Yes, playing with voice can be fun. It is an excellent exercise in exploring ideas and coming up with creative approaches to the ideas within a Web site.

Featured Site II

<http://www.hotwired.com/cocktail/>

Cocktail

Figure 8.4. Cocktail's home on Hotwired.



Hotwired, the online extension of the popular *Wired* magazine, has long been known for its high-style and uniquely expressive Web site. Enjoy a highball in the Hotwired cocktail lounge, where the recipe calls for history, cocktail protocol, links of interest, and variations on your mixed-drink theme.

Always eloquent, ever humorous, the site is both delightful to read and view. Designed with classy graphics that are a bit easier on the eyes than other Hotwired sections, the emphasis here is (as the site itself claims) on "an uninhibited celebration of potent potables."

The Web designers at Hot-wired have kept to a tradition of having fun with technology while keeping pace with the importance of good, clean, HTML code. When browsing through the site, however, I noticed a few odd technique calls and the occasional code oversight. It got me to thinking how style on the Web means much more than what you see on the outside; it's what's on the inside that counts as well.

Why Style Conventions?

Each design group will naturally fall into a rhythm of coding that is most appropriate for its needs. It's good to set

style conventions for your company. But, why the reason to set conventions? It's akin to dressing for success: You'll win a potential employer over to your side with a neat, precise appearance and presentation, as well as quality experience.

The challenge begins when you walk through the virtual door and you start checking your HTML code from browser to browser and find dramatic inconsistencies with the way code is handled. To extend the metaphor, a neat presentation is going to be appropriate regardless of who you are interviewing with, whether that's a concern or not. With browsers, it is inconsistent. Netscape used to be very forgiving, but now it's not; Internet Explorer, however, is now forgiving. Lynx, the common Web text interface, isn't forgiving at all. In other words, if my code is inconsistent, so might be the way my pages are being viewed.

So, developing a set of standards keeps the critics impressed, and those of us deciding whether you're the best candidate for the job will know you took the extra time to look good as well.

Some HTML Style Conventions

Now take a look at the code from Cocktail in Figure 8.5.

I'll break down parts of the code to see some of the style conventions

Appendix A, "Site Reference," for specific chapter locations.

Then you come to a curious style call, the `<p>` placed at the beginning of a paragraph. I find this very awkward, but again, it's style, not law:

```
<p>Early on in his experimentation, Mr. Chell merely called this drink the Caesar. But one afternoon he had an Englishman sample his work. After hearing the man exclaim, "Walter, that's a damn good bloody Caesar," Mr. Chell extended the name to Bloody Caesar. It may be a direct quote, but we still don't buy the story. Besides, adding the word "bloody" only confuses the Caesar with its competition, and we have enough trouble getting this drink at <a href="/cgi-bin/back.cgi/cocktail/links/nondivebar.html?cocktail/96/40/index4a.html">bars</a> more than two states south of the Canadian border.
```

The `<p>`, or paragraph tag, is one of the HTML exceptions to the rules. Unlike most common tags, which require an open `<>` and a closed `</>`, the `<p>` tag stands alone. Although it *looks* like an opening tag, it argues an action that takes place after it *without* necessitating a close tag. A paragraph tag forces a line break plus adds a line after the break, offering a visual space for placement between paragraphs or objects.

In this case, the `<p>` tag has been placed in front of the new paragraph, which does the same thing as if you placed it at the end of the preceding paragraph. This is how I would have placed the tags:

```
Early on in his experimentation, Mr. Chell merely called this drink the Caesar. But one afternoon he had an Englishman sample his work. After hearing the man exclaim, "Walter, that's a damn good bloody Caesar," Mr. Chell extended the name to Bloody Caesar. It may be a direct quote, but we still don't buy the story. Besides, adding the word "bloody" only confuses the Caesar with its competition, and we have enough trouble getting this drink at <a href="/cgi-bin/back.cgi/cocktail/links/nondivebar.html?cocktail/96/40/index4a.html">bars</a> more than two states south of the Canadian border.
<p>According to well-documented legend, Mr. Chell spent three months developing the Caesar recipe. From what we gather, mashing fresh clams into what Mr. Chell optimistically called "nectar" is no easy task. But his thinking demanded that the drink complement a menu of Italian foods made with vongole, tomato sauce, and clams. He rationalized that
```

```
if it's
good to eat, it's good to drink.
<p>
```

This performs the same function, but the advantage, at least for my logic, is that I know that after every paragraph I'm going to find that `<p>`, and if I don't, I need to place it. That it sits on a line by itself is a critical part of my coding style because it is easy to see and quickly changed or added, without disturbing the body of text. Furthermore, it creates consistency. Examine the following:

```
<pre>
</pre>
<dl><dd>
<!-- start local exec -->
<p>
<p>
<a href="/cocktail/archive/index.html"
target="sidebar">
</a><p>
```

Note all the paragraph tags. There are three of them, but I wouldn't have noticed the third too easily. I'm also not too convinced that the use of two `<p>` tags to force extra space is any better or different from using the `<pre>` `</pre>` tags that do the same thing. Again, these are style calls, and people go with what works best for their particular environment and tastes. My choice for this passage would be the following:

```
<p>
<dl>
<dd>
<!-- start local exec -->
<p>
<a href="/cocktail/archive/index.html"
target="sidebar">
</a>
<p>
```

As you can see, I'm flushing as many tags as possible to the left margin, where my eye will naturally fall while scrolling code down to examine, edit, and update.

The major point necessary to make is that coders should decide what rules function for the type of work they do. The need that I see for consistency is essential in aiding coders to increase productivity, lower strain on the eyes and mind, and create neat and clean HTML documents.

There is an outstanding no-no found on the first visit to this page—no `</body>` tag. The wary code-watchers at Hotwired caught it shortly thereafter, much to their credit. An important HTML rule, exceptions aside, and something Granny taught: what you open, close!

Border Grill

<http://bordergrill.com/>

I absolutely adore the design of the Border Grill's main page. It's classy, the graphics are fun and witty, the layout intelligent, the content choices interesting—the entire look and feel suggests that I'm going to be treated to this style throughout.

But then I click on a link, and I'm taken to a page that could be all the things the main page is but falls short. Each subsequent link is the same, great graphics, strong content, but something is lost.

That something is visual continuity. Although the graphics remain high-caliber, the layout suddenly changes to a more simple look and feel. Where I found graphics as a consistent, smooth, and continuous part of the main page, I now see them laid squarely on top of a variety of background colors (see Figure 8.7), and sometimes even grid-locked within a table frame. Where I enjoyed a more sophisticated, tabled layout, giving the eye plenty of “white” space to rest, relax, and enjoy, text now goes from edge-to-edge, with no use of margins.

The challenge, then, is to take all the superior elements that are here and smooth out some of the design inconsistencies, moving this site

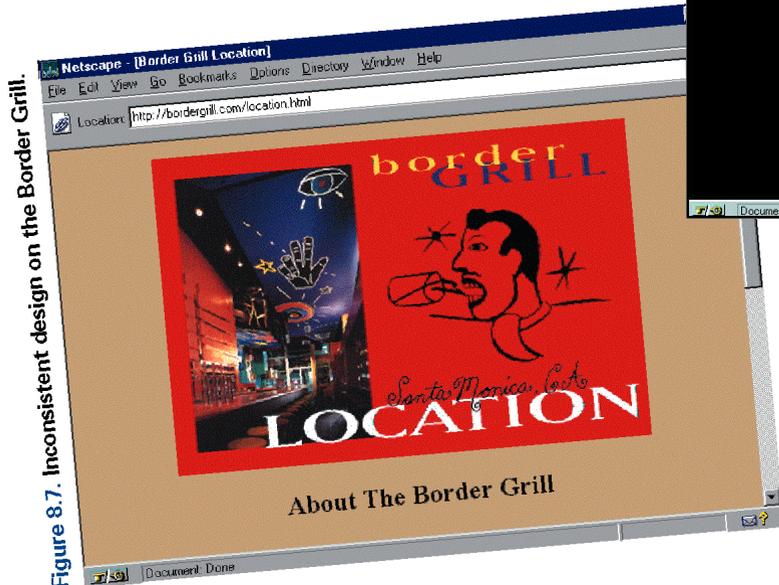


Figure 8.7. Inconsistent design on the Border Grill.



Figure 8.6. Border Grill's classy home page.

from sizzling to seriously sizzling. The graphics and content are undeniably great! So why not put the pieces of the puzzle together a little differently? Here are a few tips that the designers might think about for the site, and that Web designers in general can think about when reaching for continuity within their own designs:

- Make sure graphic elements blend with the background or have a stylized rather than contained environment. Compare Figure 8.6 and Figure 8.7 to see the visual difference!
- Choose background colors that complement. This doesn't mean all your pages need be the same color or texture, but it will really help continuity if you gradually introduce concepts rather than move directly from black to pastel, as can be seen in this case.
- Select only a few background colors rather than many in order to maintain consistency. The idea is to create an environment,

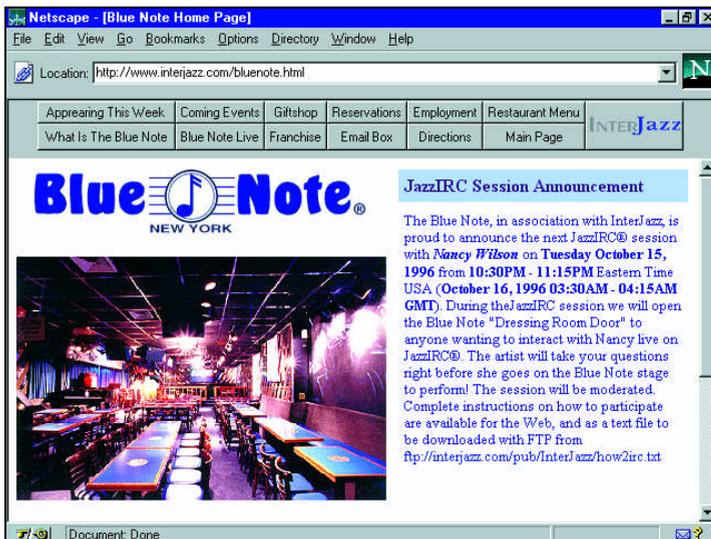
not confuse visitors into thinking they've left the great site they've just visited!

- Note what is strongest about the visual elements for your site and play off of that. In this case, there are truly great graphics with a lot of vibrant color. I would have chosen to use the black, white, red, blue, and yellow for the visual elements of this site instead of pastels. It would complement the graphics ever so much more!
- Use the color selections to colorize text headers and links. This adds a lot of dynamic elements to the visual design in a subtle, yet notable, fashion.

Blue Note Restaurant

<http://www.interjazz.com/bluenote.html>

Figure 8.8. Blue Note on InterJazz, the Internet's premier Jazz site.



Noted not only as one of the top-rated jazz clubs in the world, but as a fabulous restaurant as well, the Blue Note has great presence on the Web. It features information about its various activities, upcoming concerts, new clubs opening worldwide, gift shop information, live, interactive chats with featured artists, and, of course, a menu!

There are a few clever uses of design within this otherwise utilitarian site that make it quite interesting. One that especially caught my eye is the nice use of splashed colors

throughout the site, enhancing text without relying on a graphic to do so.

The technique used to create these splashes was made popular with an Internet Explorer extension, with Netscape following quickly behind with the implementation of background color options for table cells. This has allowed for the creation of colored fields defined and controlled by the designer.

It's a simple, logical feature. The HTML coder need only argue the background color he or she wants in a given field with standard color syntax. Note in Figure 8.8 the blue field to the right. It looks like a graphic header, yes? Well, it's a colorized table data field. Here's the syntax:

```
<tr><td valign=top width=50%
  ↪ bgcolor="BDD8FF"><font
  ↪ color="#400040">
  ↪<font size=3><strong>JazzIRC Session
  ↪ Announc1
  ↪ cement</strong></font></td></tr>
```

Notice the `bgcolor="BDD8FF"`? That's the command that forces the color. You can now add this feature to any table data tag, and compatible browsers will interpret it. It's a helpful way to add color and reduce load-time.

A few notes on the code here:

It's a good idea to remember the pound (#) sign in front of color commands. For example, it's more stable to code with the pound sign (bgcolor="#BDD8FF") than without (bgcolor="BDD8FF").

Note that the pound sign appears in the next color argument. This is inconsistent—remember the style lesson? This is a prime example of why it can be so important.

There is a double font tag that is not necessary. Font arguments can be enclosed in a single tag. An improvement would be

```
<font color="#400040" size="3"> text here </font>
```

Please be sure to check Appendix C, "Color Table," for a handy hexadecimal chart with the safe palette colors.

Guinness Brewing Company

<http://www.guinness.ie/>

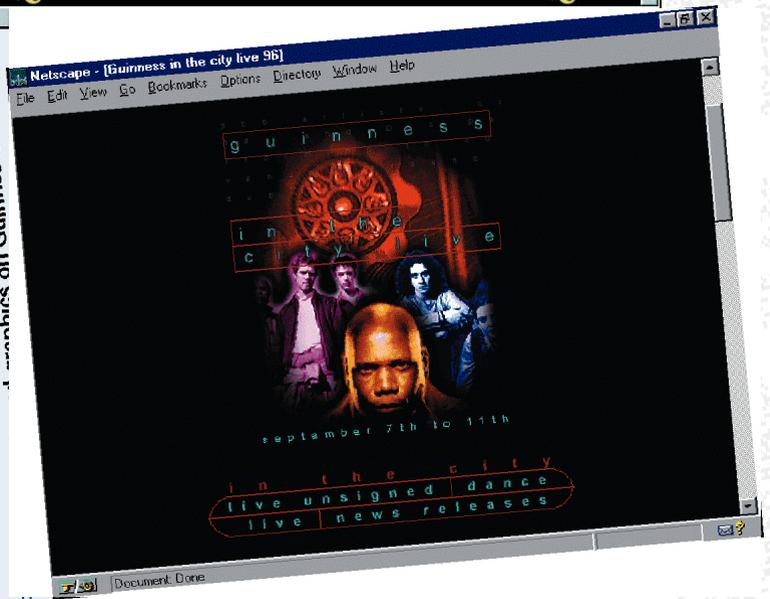
From the makers of the finest stout about comes this sturdy Web site, straight from the heart of Ireland. There are fun things here: a multimedia tour (done with Shockwave) of how the beer is brewed, a virtual stumble through the Green Isle herself, and a pub-like, hip hangout done in stark black and white. There are some nice, if inconsistent, graphic designs on the site, and an especially attractive use of graphics that make good use of fonts. (See Figure 8.10.)

Fonts are a Web designer's challenge. Graphic artists spend formidable amounts of time learning and appreciating the fine art of fonts, and the Web really has yet to honor this in a complete way. HTML, and browsers, are giving designers more control over font faces, sizes, and colors, but it is still quite limited. So, in order to gain control over fonts and their relationship to design, Web graphic artists use images.

Figure 8.9. Shocked bubbles on Guinness.



Figure 8.10. Guinness in the city.



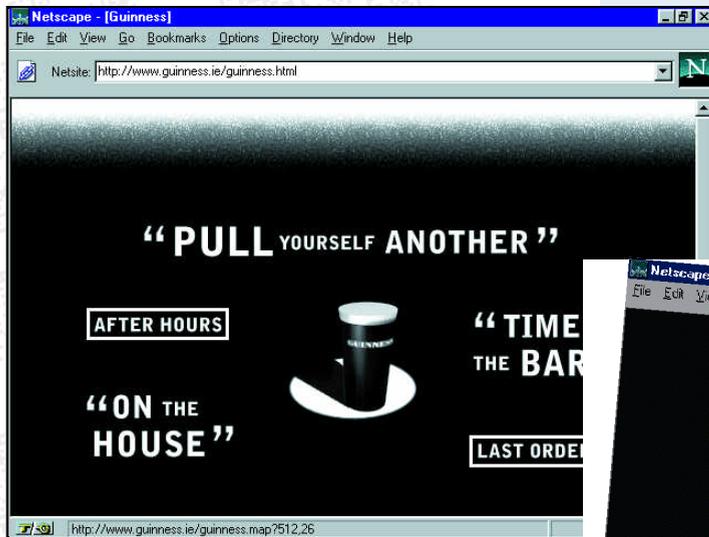
Some Font Basics

There are two major font families, *serif* and *sans serif*. Serif fonts have horizontal strokes on the letters; sans serif fonts have no such marks:

This is `courier`, a serif font
This is `helvetica`, a sans serif font

Interestingly, studies show that serif fonts are *the* choice for bodies of text (probably because the lines of type tend to create horizon bands and make locating your place on a page easy). Sans serif fonts are thought to be good for headers, short bursts of text, and signs because they are easy to recognize. Because Web graphics are typically small, sans serif fonts are common on graphic headers.

Another important piece of font readability is a technique called *antialiasing*. This is basically the shading of pixels around the edges of a font character. The end result is a smoother and less jagged font face.



Font Tricks

Here are some tips for creating graphic-based fonts:

- In Photoshop, or your preferred graphics program, prepare the image in RGB color, and select the anti-alias text option.
- Font faces should be easy to read. Choose clean lines. I recommend using sans-serif fonts for headers and serif fonts for long passages of text.
- Font colors should also be easy to read.
- Avoid too-thin fonts or very elaborate scripts. Both are notoriously difficult and usually not appropriate for the Web environment.
- When optimizing the image, test carefully before saving. Indexing sometimes creates loss of clarity. Reducing quality levels with JPGs can cause a fuzziness around text. Play with the image until you are satisfied that it not only looks good, but reads well.
- Always, always be sure to argue image size in the corresponding HTML. Make no mistakes here, because forcing a width and height that doesn't match the original image will make the text unreadable.

For a variety of techniques used for font control, please see Appendix A in this book, which references where various font tips can be found.



Penelope's Restaurant

<http://desert.net/penelopes/>

This oh-so-very French restaurant pleases the eye with yellow floral wallpaper and Matisse-like navigation. It's an unusual Web site, very feminine, and a fine example of the continuity I discussed earlier. Designer Laura Valentino created the look that captures the sense of the country French feel of this restored house nestled in the very un-French mesquite beds along Arizona's Tanque Verde River.

In order to obtain the graphic continuity of the site, the use of transparent GIFs came into play. Transparency is akin to painting an image in clear adhesive tape. When placed on a stucco wall, the image appears to be painted on the stucco rather than on a piece of tape, as the clear parts allow the texture to come through.

Transparency becomes necessary whenever you have a graphic image that needs to be placed over a texture and still allow that texture to come through—right up to the edges of the graphic. This technique became available with the GIF89 specification, and GIF is still the only type of graphic image that can be made transparent.

To make a transparency, it's helpful to have a tool such as LView Pro, a marvelous, compact graphics management program that you can find on the CD-ROM.

Begin with an image that requires transparency. In Figure 8.12, there's a header placed on a textured background. Notice the white block around the banner design? Transparency will get rid of that white field. To do so, follow these steps:

1. Open LView Pro, and then open the image.
2. Click Retouch.

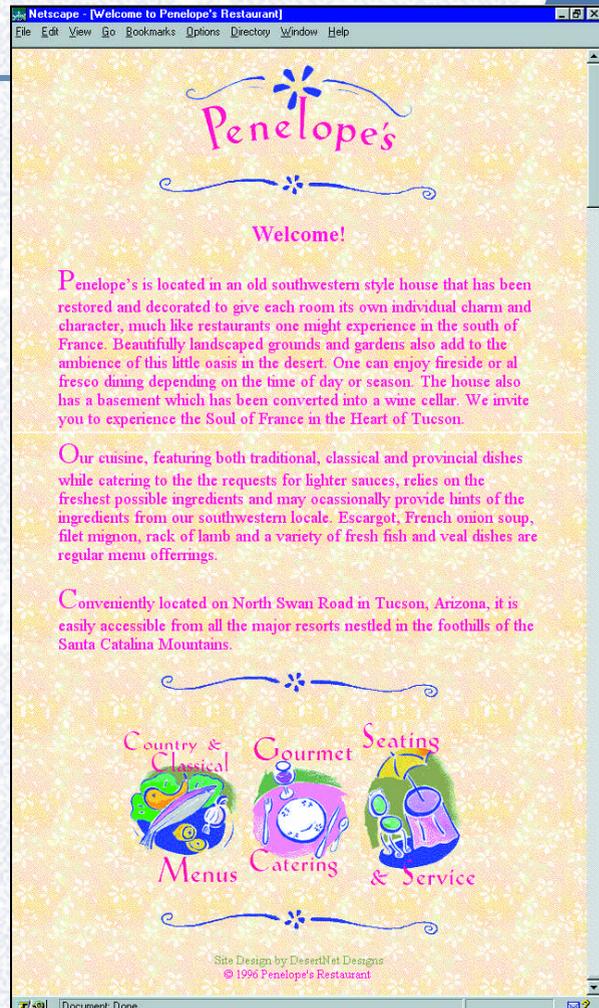


Figure 8.11. Oh, so very French Penelope's.

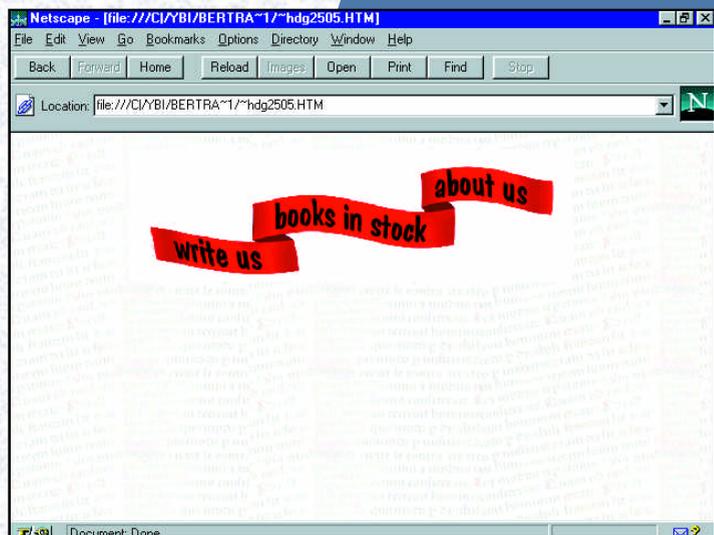


Figure 8.12. Header graphic with no transparency.

3. Toward the very bottom of the pull-down menu, select background color. Be certain the mask selection using white is marked.
4. Click the dropper button
5. Now use the dropper to choose the color you want transparent. In Figure 8.12, I use the white color around the red banner.
6. Choose Save As and be sure that GIF89a is in the Save As Type field.
7. Save the image, and load into your HTML file—Voilà! (See Figure 8.13.)

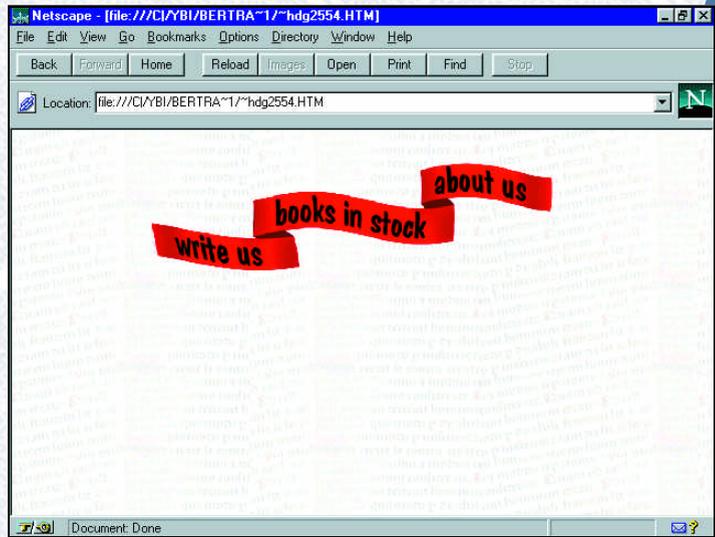


Figure 8.13: Same header with transparency.

7UP

<http://www.7up.com/>

The Un-cola is alive and well and bubbling away in chartreuse on the Net. This rather bright Web site has a lot of fun with clever 7UP can animations and other “up” themes. But, what stands out most about this Web site is its definitive lack of commercialism. You’re neither taught about the product, nor are you exposed to hard-sell of any kind. 7UP is a product that, like Kleenex or Xerox, has integrated into our experience as a familiar name for light sodas. Surely, this is part of the reason for the lack of self-promotion on the site, but that alone doesn’t keep other major media promoters away from the hypersell.

It’s a choice, part of the Un-cola way of life, and it’s a wise lesson for commercial Web designers to take home. The idea of Web-based advertising relies on what I’ve always called the “point-of-presence,” rather than a point-of-

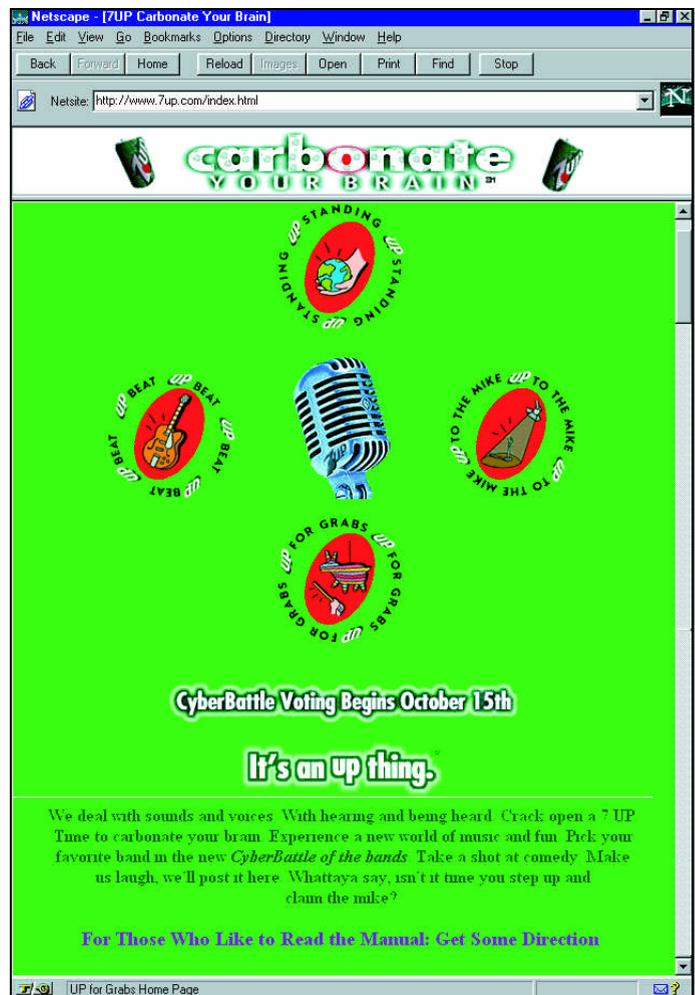


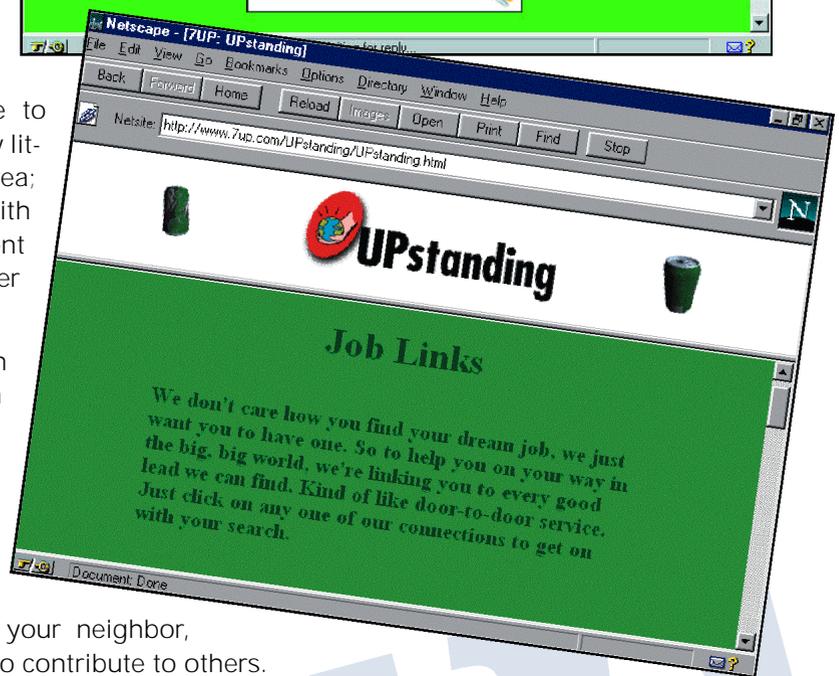
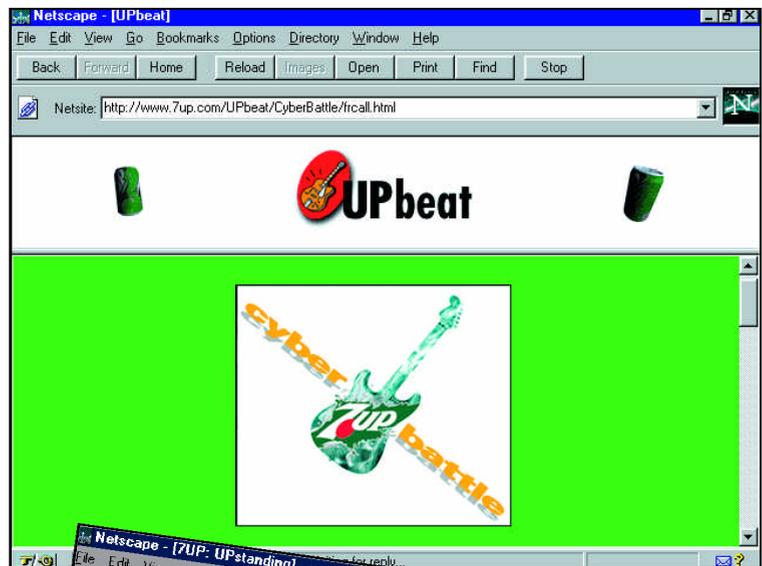
Figure 8.14: 7UP’s chartreuse home page.

sales model. Presence is about creating image, awareness, and a palpable sense of a given product or company's existence. It's much more than a "here's my product, buy it" opportunity. What better place to do this than on the Web? And what better way to ensure that people come back to your Web site by providing them with something that is useable, interesting, and helpful?

Power Up

7UP has dedicated each area to some special interest, including the support of alternative music, with a "cyberbattle of the bands" event; an opportunity for visitors to the site to speak their mind about any and every little thing; a community interest area; and (my favorite) a job pool page with offers of internships and employment opportunities, as well as links to other employment-related Web sites.

But you don't have to have your own stock listing to be a philanthropist. In fact, almost everyone has some community or goal-oriented interest. Whether it's working with a church or synagogue on community activities, feeding the homeless, donating money to Public Television, or simply looking after your neighbor, there's something unique you have to contribute to others.



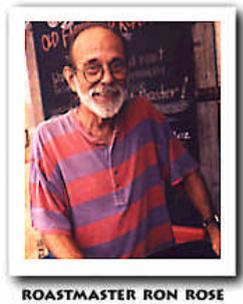
Philanthropy in Cyberspace

Let's enjoy this new model of media as demonstrated by the 7UP Web site, and work to make it a way of being. Yes, there is *always* the objective of selling a product, that's fine. In a capitalist culture, that's part of what one has to do in order to survive, and there's nothing wrong with striving to be good at it. But that does not preclude or negate what a person or organization can give back to his or her community.

Clients are inevitably the same. Find out what it is they are involved and interested in, and use that as a part of their product or organization's presence on the Web. It's a great way to embrace the idealistic, humanistic, and technologic aspects of this technology while making money at the same time!

Wilde Rose Coffee Company

<http://desert.net/wilderose/>



ROASTMASTER RON ROSE

Figure 8.15. Wilde Rose's home page.



awareness of design treatments each lead to the general belief that images can't be done well in restricted bandwidth conditions. Not so, as you see here with Wilde Rose. The total size of this image is 9KB.

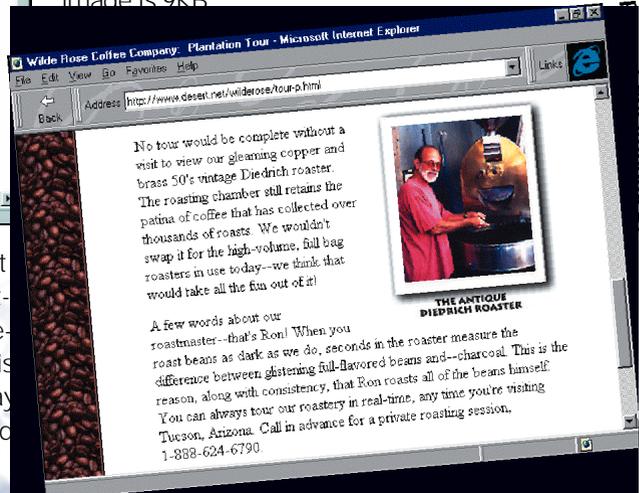


Figure 8.16. Roastmaster Ron Rose's Antique Diedrich Roaster.

What computer geek doesn't love coffee? Not too many that I know. It seems that computers and coffee somehow go together—something about being wired, I suppose. In fact, it is said that Microsoft programmers don't say something is "cool" or "excellent," instead they say, "it's caffeinated, man."

Well, I'm caffeinated, too! I'm a coffee lover. I take it hot or cold, very strong, with a splash of whole milk. 2% or less is like adding water. Half and half is pure fat. I add no sugar. For me, that's part of coffee's delight: its bitter yet earthy reminder of what consciousness is truly like.

Wilde Rose is what is being referred to as a "micro-roastery." Along the lines of micro-brewed beers that have become so popular in recent years, micro-roasteries are usually small businesses that serve up big flavor. In this case, the Rose's roast their famous dark coffee in an antique roaster, as you see in Figure 8.16.

Take a good look at that photo. It's clear, it's colorful, and it has its own identity within the page without being separate from the design. The way that photos are usually treated on the Web are second on the "what's awful" list with the way images are treated being the first.

Poor quality, lack of understanding of the simple rules that create quality, but small, file-sized images, and complete neglect of the

The Five S's of Image Production

I like to remember how to process images with the following series of words: start, scan, size, select, and save.

- Start with quality. Remember GIGO—Garbage In, Garbage Out.
- Scan at 300 dpi, and then reduce to 72 dpi.
- Size images appropriately for the page.
- Select attractive treatments, including matting, specialized borders, and effects. Please, at all costs, avoid using table borders to frame pictures. This is totally amateur and completely unattractive.
- Save photographic images as JPGs. This rule should rarely, if ever, be deviated from. You can play with the JPG quality. Try medium and high settings, as well as maximum, to see what kind of quality and file size variations you can get.

Always keep those five S's in mind when producing images, and you'll ensure a very high quality and consistency of image production for your sites.

RAGÙ

<http://www.eat.com/>

Mama mia, this site is *delizioso*, *meraviglioso*, and *fantastico*! Mama offers up recipes, goodies, glossaries, and plenty of pasta. There's even a section where you can learn special Italian phrases from Professore Antonio, such as what to say to your husband in romantic moments, or how to praise Mama at her next feast.

Mama has chosen a kitchen-till background (see Figure 8.18) with plates for navigational icons and header elements. It's kitschy, if you pardon the pun, but humorous and enjoyable. Although I love Mama's warmth and Professore Antonio's humor, I didn't like the way the background popped in rather dramatically after the text.

There are two tricks that will help pace a page's load-time, making sure page elements load as smoothly as possible. By loading a background color behind a background image, you can avoid that unsightly visual "pop." By arguing your width and height tags in images, you can be sure that your HTML is recommending that your browser prepare for specific image sizes.



Figure 8.17. Ragù: Mama's Cucina.



Figure 8.18. Tiled background on Mama's Kitchen.



Background Color and Image

When selecting to use a background image, as Mama did with the tile background `italy.gif`, you can also find a color within the image that can be matched to a safe palette color. Apply this color in the `<body>` tag, arguing for both the loading of a color *and* a background image.

The following is the body tag from Mama's Kitchen:

```
<BODY BACKGROUND="../images/bkgnds/italy.gif">
```

The following is the body tag with an added argument to load a safe palette color:

```
<body bgcolor="#FFFF9c"
background="../images/bkgnds/italy.gif">
```

The preceding tag now commands the background color, a pale yellow, to also load. Colors are going to load faster than a graphic. Why? Well, colors are managed by the browser and the individual computer. Unlike images, they are not dependent on retrieving data from the server.



Therefore, the color will load first, and then the background image. This creates a *much* smoother transition.

Width and Height Arguments for Even Load Times

Another extension of load-time pacing is to find the width and height of your images and argue them. This prepares the browser to size a field for the image, holding its place until the image information is received by the browser. This helps smooth out page loading as well.

The following is the image tag from Mama's Kitchen:

```
<IMG ALIGN=bottom
SRC="../images/icons/learn-italian.gif"
ALT="Learn Italian">
```

The following is the image tag with width and height arguments:

```
img src="../images/icons/learn-italian.gif" align=bottom alt="Learn Italian" width=360 height=158>
```

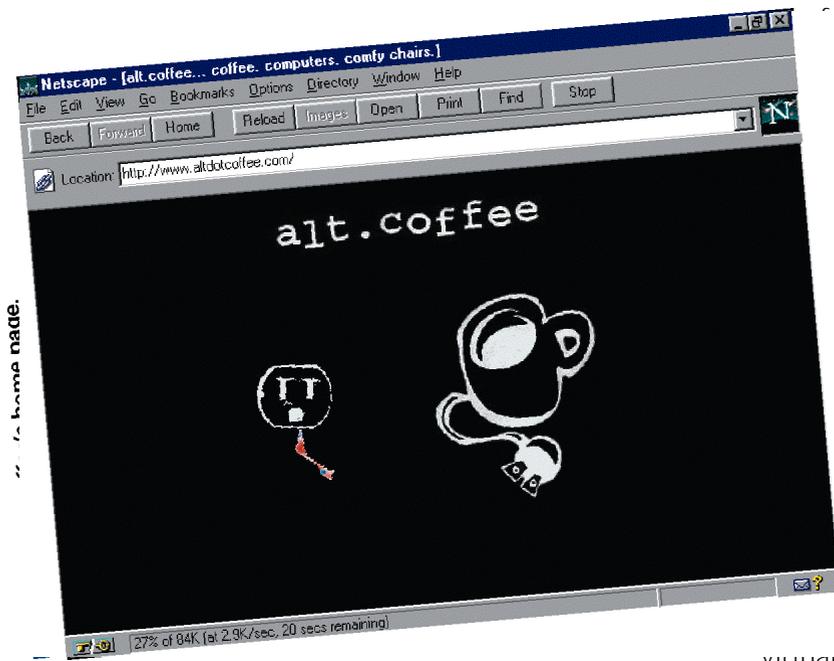
Scouts among you have probably noticed that I've changed the order of a few items. Again, this relates back to style, and my own preferences. In the preceding code example, having the `align=bottom` before the `src` argument is not necessarily *wrong*, I just prefer to argue my image first, and then its various attributes.

For complete references regarding image control, check Appendix A. Safe palette colors and their hexadecimal equivalent can be found in Appendix C.



alt.coffee

<http://www.altdotcoffee.com/>



Did I say coffee and computers were inseparable? Well, to support my thesis, I suggest a surf over to alt.coffee. This Web site won't sell you any food or java per se, but it is a pure expression of what one of New York City's more unique coffee houses offers up—both on and off the Web.

Back in the '50s, the East Village was known for Beat. Jack Kerouac could be found drinking beer in its bars, and poets, musicians, students, and curious types snapped to new rhythms in its smoky coffee houses, inspired by espresso and au lait.

alt.coffee is no throwback, although New Beat musicians play their jazz-inspired-surf-techno music while the children (I shudder to think that even the grandchildren) of those '50s Beats drink even better coffee and hang in front of computer terminals powered by a smoking T1 pipe—in other words, a really fast connection to the Net.

The Web site is as hip as those making the scene. It's well-designed, with great graphics, nice use of

games, some Java (of course), and a really cool Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) area. In fact, VRML is so popular with those most on the edge that the New York City VRML Special Interest group makes alt.coffee its home on a regular basis.

VRML

VRML is the language of virtual worlds. It is, according to one of its founding fathers, Mark Pesce, "...a three-dimensional equivalent of HTML." VRML is an evolving programming language that uses logic and objects to create a

virtual object you can, through a special browser, move up, down, side to side, spin around, move in closer, and explore, all with simple mouse movements.

Currently, VRML is in its second draft, and is evolving through participation of its authors and fans. VRML's primary present use on the Web is artistic or experimental in nature. That it is interactive—it requires the viewer to actively engage with it—is a definitive strength. Moreover, VRML allows links to be embedded within the code. So, if you're spinning through a virtual room and encounter a link, you can click on it and go to an attached Web technology. The potential future for VRML lies in the creation of games, fantasy environments, and scientific modeling, as well as some uncharted possibilities for the commercial realm.

VRML for the Web Designer

A great deal of information on VRML is available, both on the Web and in books. It's not something that can be taught in a short overview, but for those Web designers with a little bit of time and a good deal of curiosity, VRML is undeniably an exciting language to check out.

Figure 8.20 shows alt.coffee's VRML. Because the VRML atmosphere is very visually rich and its interactive elements are highly compelling, Web designers can use it to showcase both products and environments. alt.coffee's example is a virtual coffee house, allowing the visitor to get a feel for the atmosphere of the real place via a virtual, imaginative creation.

Mixing It All Up

If you're like me, you love to eat, drink, and be merry. One way to keep an irascible Web critic from making snide comments about otherwise beautiful sites is to make sure she's had her recommended daily dose of coffee. Other ways include

- Selecting appropriate voice for your Web site.
- Creating style conventions for HTML code and sticking to them.
- Designing Web sites that are consistent in design.
- Finding fun uses for the table cell background color argument.
- Have fun with fonts.
- Learn the art of the transparent GIF.
- Think about the philanthropic offerings your clients might have for their audiences.
- Remember that part of fine design is the way images are treated. Use clever photo treatments and follow simple steps to keep quality high but file size moderate to low.

- Place safe palette background colors in body tags whenever arguing a background color. Always argue width and height in image tags for smooth loads.
- Explore brave new virtual worlds with VRML.

Now, move onward to some of the most unique personal home pages on the Net.

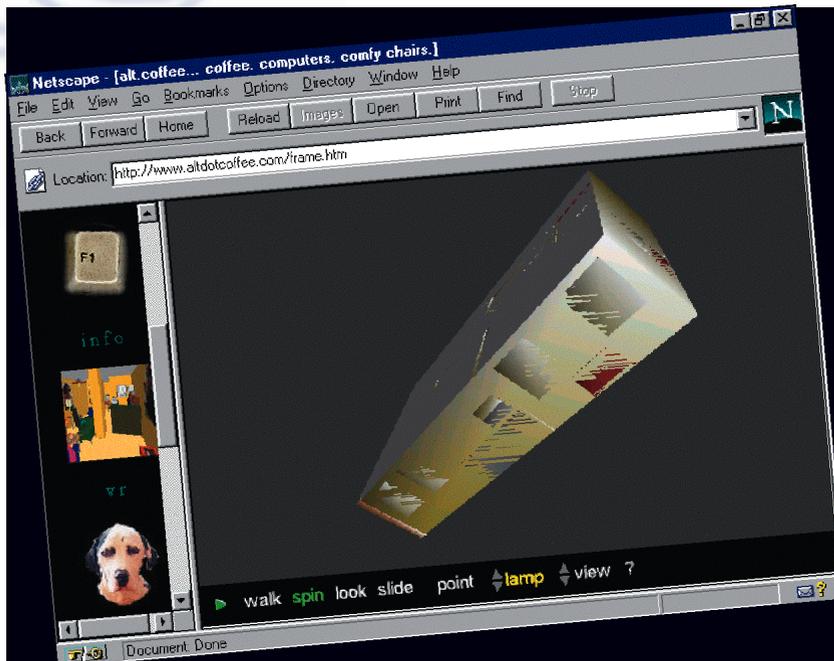
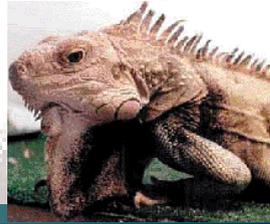


Figure 8.20. VRML on alt.coffee.

Sites that Express

People on the Net—Unique Home Pages



The Internet Squeegee Guy

<http://www.website1.com/squeegee>

Escape Artist Mathew Cooper

<http://www.loop.com/~straitjacket/>

Jennifer Ringley

<http://amazing.netaxs.com/jennifer/>

The United Kitty Front

<http://www.inet-images.com/exalted/cat/kfront.html>

Tales of Four Iguanas

<http://www.mcp.com/people/igtales/index.html>

Adrienne Dailey

<http://www.speakeasy.org/~adrienne/>

Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm

<http://www.bungalow.com/>

Shoel Perelman

<http://shoel.cscmicro.com/>

Eve Andersson

<http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~eveander/>

Roberto Ochoa

<http://www-leland.stanford.edu/~raskal/>

This is perhaps the most difficult chapter, because not only are there many stunning personal sites on the Web, but there are also sites with elements that might make a designer's eye cringe. You'll find both within this group.

One need only look past bad design, or respond in awe to non-designers creating brilliance in both visual and human content, to understand how personal pages can be used as inspiration for the Web designer. The Web is a place of self-expression and, as such, offers more opportunities for professionals to learn about people—who they are, what they want, and what they need.

The lessons in this chapter are as diverse as the people within. I begin with a discussion of humor and parody, and how important these are for day-to-day enjoyment as well as within the commercial realm. This is summed up by the Squeegee Guy, who appears to want to help us all have clearer Web viewing by washing the insides of our monitors. Mat Cooper then offers up a nice use of frames for navigation. Here, you'll look at some of what it takes to create simple framed sites that work, both in form and function.

You will also look at the use of the horizontal rule with a page from Jennifer Ringley. Fresh treatments for old ideas (such as pets on the Net) are served up by the very creative Amy Martin. Kim Scott helps teach how designers can keep up-to-date with the ever-changing Web technologies. Adrienne Dailey's Web explorations fuel a discussion for creating and working with background images. Typo-graphy is the issue of the day with Heather and Selene, a site that inspires a discussion of the elements of font control.

Shoel Perelman shows off the streets of New York as the learning leans toward a more philosophical view of the humanization of the Web. Closely following Perelman's site is a look at text alignment, and the need to move away from centered text, which the Web seems to have so much of. This can be seen on Eve Andersson's pi page. Finally, landing in Los Angeles, get in Roberto Ocha's Low Rider and cruise the streets checking out graffiti, Latino Hip Hop and Rap Music, and Chicano slang. The learning here is how to set images free from table borders and look at other ways to organize information that separates it intelligently without jarring the eye.

Most importantly, you'll meet people here. And, hopefully, that will encourage you to use the Web to meet other people. The world is truly small, and the Web is, literally, a backdrop for humanity's many faces.

Featured Site I

The Internet Squeegee Guy

<http://www.website1.com/squeegee>



Home pages have to catch the eye, the heart, or some aspect of humanity in order to be a lasting experience and not just another stop along the virtual roadway. The Internet Squeegee Guy captures the funny bone, wrestles it down to the ground, and leaves visitors chuckling at the simple but effective humor.

Using the road metaphor, the Internet Squeegee Guy site, copyright by WMR Creative Services, visually accosts you, the visitor, with squeegee in hand,

ready to clean your monitor for some of that spare change hanging out on the desk. Of course, you can choose to push him away, as seen in Figure 9.2. It's such a clever idea, rendered in a witty fashion; the site stands as a perfect example of how humor can be a major part of both personal pages, and, when thought about in detail, can be an effective part of commercial media as well.

Parody and humor are extremely effective devices, and are used in advertising, sometimes to great success. Conversely, they can also be easily misinterpreted or perceived as a cruel trick, and some media masters have used both to throw mud in competitors' faces.

Learning the art of parody and humor is a good thing for a Web designer who seeks to create pages that have diverse approaches. However, humor is not to be taken lightly in the professional world. It's one thing to create a personal home page using mimicry, but a professional advertising campaign that seeks to be funny must be *very* well thought out.

One example of effective application where parody and humor is used effectively is in Web publishing. With more and more Web designers becoming involved with the emergence of magazines and newspapers on the Internet, learning to design comical visual and content treatments is becoming part of the daily job.

The following are some thoughts for Web designers looking at humor as a design tool:

- Parody is mimicking a traditional or well-known icon. Select something familiar such as the computer nerd, and build from there.
- Finding a paradox creates effective parody—a conservative political figure in a death-metal rock and roll outfit, or Arnold Schwarzenegger in a dress.
- When writing humor, use familiar plots. How many people who use computers *haven't* had the experience of someone wanting to squeegee their car windows along the road? It happens, and it is this familiarity that makes the pun in this site all the more effective.
- Check with an attorney about libel and slander. Your site might seem funny, but with the legal instability of the Net, you need to be sure that you're not walking on shaky ground using parody or off-color humor as a content technique.
- Web designers should be particularly thoughtful about how global participants might interact with humor and parody. What's apparently funny to one culture might be completely offensive to another. Consider your audience very carefully.
- What's funny to you might not be funny to others, and sometimes can actually turn a potential customer away. I have sworn to never use certain products because I've been offended by their advertising campaigns. Test market humor first, finding a cross-section of a population and seeing the reaction.

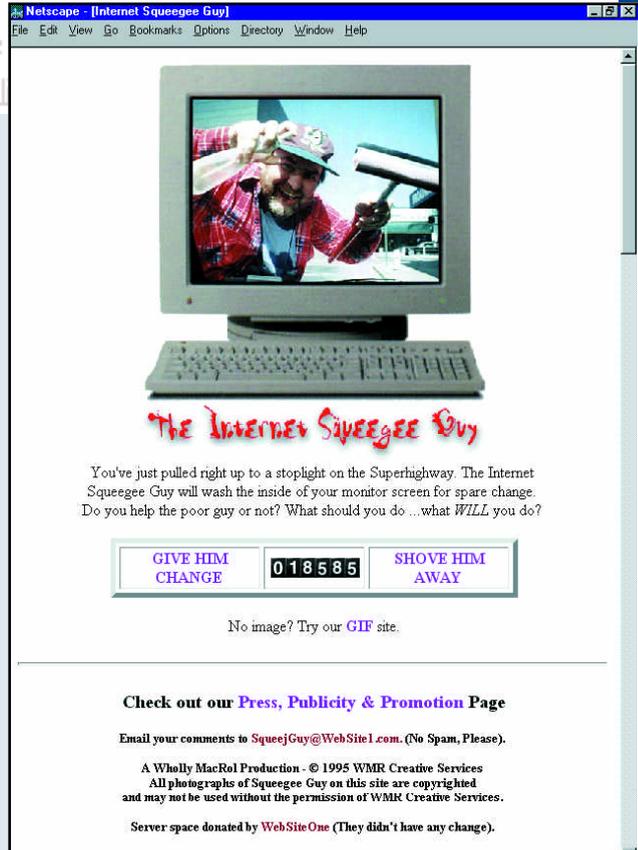


Figure 9.1. The Internet Squeegee Guy.



Figure 9.2. The Internet Squeegee Guy rebuffed.

Featured Site II



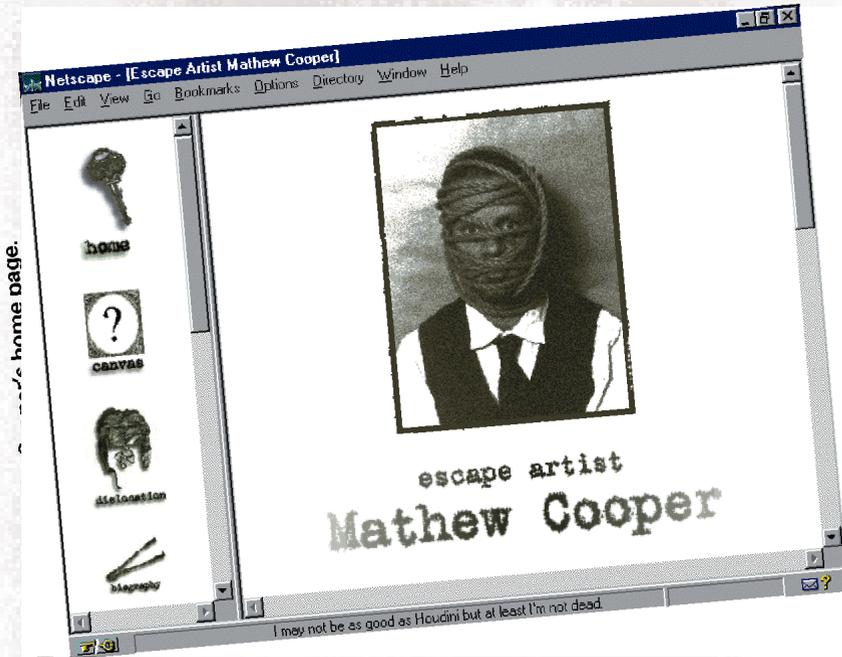
escape artist Mathew Cooper

<http://www.loop.com/~straitjacket/>

I am particularly fond of the fact that he chose to use frames as a navigational method on the site. He does so in a very logical fashion, not impinging upon the space necessary to express his art, but, in fact, defining that space.

The left frame is used for navigation, and the information loads into the right frame. This is a common use of frames, but remains one of the more intelligent uses. Some sites, even really great ones, can go overboard with frames, almost as if the designers are trying to break up the space as much as possible without taking into account design sensibility. Very rarely does more equal less in a situation such as this, and, in fact, it's a good rule of thumb to avoid using frames unless the design you have in mind really will be enhanced by this technique rather than distracted by it.

Frames tend to be fairly complicated. For a simple set up, like what you see throughout this Web site,



This terrific site is a combination of personal art, “shameless” self-promotion, and a fish-eye view of what it’s like to be a modern escape artist.

This is no joke! Mat Cooper regularly ties himself up in chains and dislocates his shoulders to get out of the chains—whether he’s submerged in a fish tank or locked in a Houdini-style crate. “I may not be as good as Houdini” he says, “but at least I’m not dead.”

Mat’s site is really exceptional in quite a lot of ways. The concept is fun, he’s an interesting guy with a great style, he’s obviously a top-notch artist—there’s a gallery of some of his oil paintings (see Figure 9.4)—and he’s done a very fine job of designing a Web site that truly sizzle:

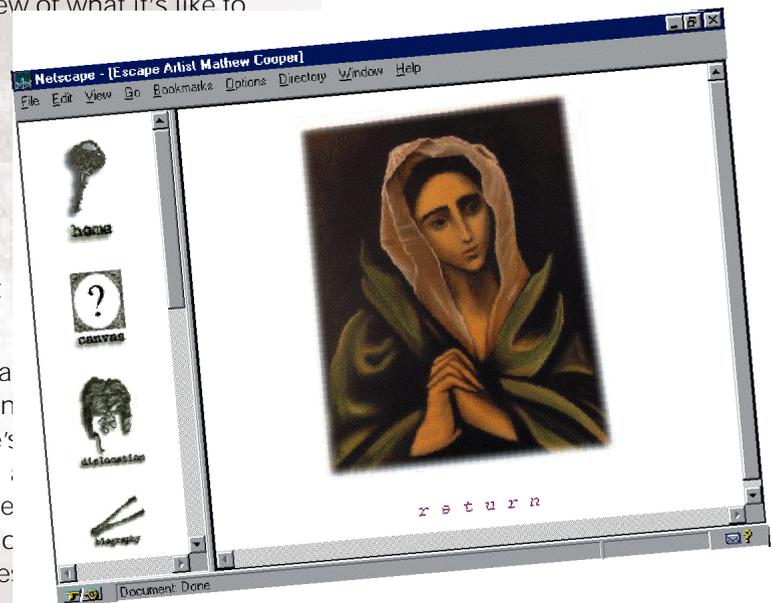


Figure 9.4. A painting by Mathew Cooper

it's a bit more straight-forward. You'll need to create three primary files for a framed home page. The first primary file is the frame's file. This file will hold the commands for the frame creation, as well as the opportunity to offer a no-frames option for those unfortunates with browsers that do not support frames, or for people who simply dislike them (and many do).

Next on the list is the HTML that controls the data to appear in the left frame. I tend to call this the "menu" file, and in this example (as in most instances), it is the file for the navigation. Then, there's the HTML for the data in the right frame, which, for your main page purpose, is the index file.

The following shows the general syntax for each of these items:

- Frames file. Aside from all of the other values a typical HTML page requires, the frames file will need the following:


```
<FRAMESET COLS="140,*">
<FRAME SRC="iconbar.html"
NAME="bar" SCROLLING=YES>
<FRAME SRC="home.html"
NAME="stayhere" SCROLLING=YES>
</FRAMESET>
```

The frameset defines how many columns, in this case two: one with a pixel width of 140, and the * to equal the rest of the natural space.

The frame arguments within the frameset are first defining the name of the file to be placed in the left frame ("iconbar.html"), and the name of that to be placed in the right field. The scrolling argument allows for the placement of a scrolling rather than fixed bar.

<NOFRAME>

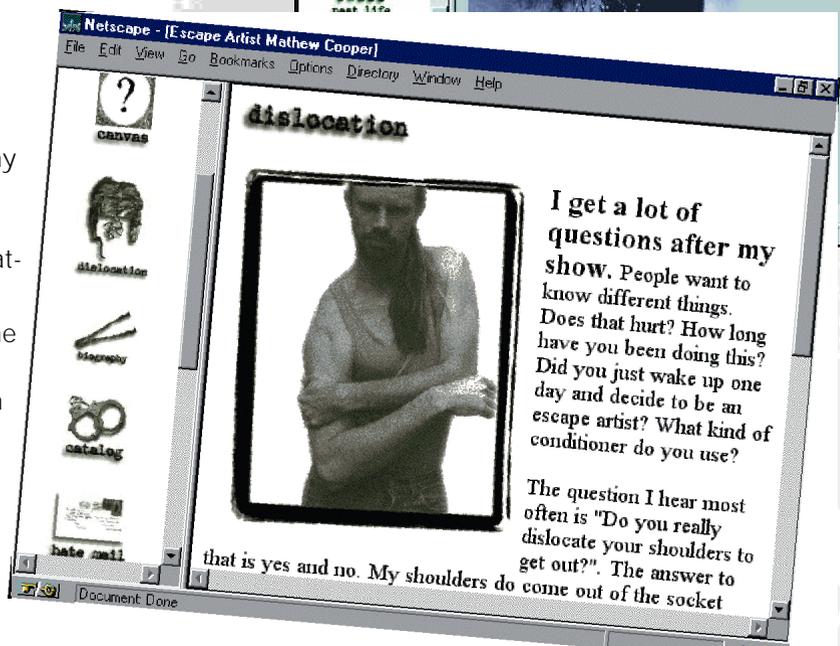
Within these tags, you will place any information that will appear as a non-framed page for people who cannot or do not wish to view the page with frames.

For example, if someone reaches your site with a browser that does not support frames, he or she can read a message, provided by you and placed within the <noframe> tags, that tells a frames-browser is required.

</NOFRAME>

- What I'm calling the menu file, in Mat's case, is named iconbar.html. It is a straight-forward HTML file that calls on the data for the navigational icons Mat has created. This information is fixed. In other words, this frame will not change. It remains static throughout the site, although clicking on various navigation options will call pages to the right frame.
- The index file, what Mat has named home.html, is the information for the right frame, or, in this case, the first page of the site. This page will change based on the information contained within the navigation or map file.

If you get all entangled in this, might I suggest an e-mail to Mat for advice on how to escape?



"I may not be as good as Houdini" he says, "but at least I'm not dead."

Jennifer

Ringley

<http://amazing.netaxs.com/jennifer/>

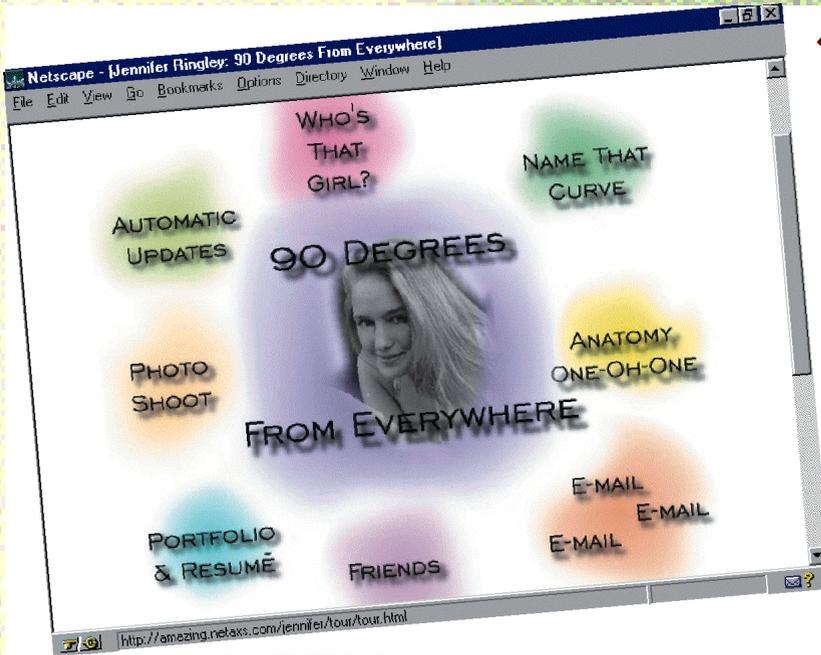


Figure 9.5. Jennifer Ringley's home page

Jennifer Ringley has created a warm and intimate journey through her life and art. Her artistic talents are quite obvious in the varied and attractive pages she has placed on the Web. A particular treat is her portfolio section, with a collection of her artwork for viewing. Another favorite section is Anatomy One-Oh-One, which is a humorous and poignant look at human anatomy through Jennifer's experience of her own body.

Jennifer's home page is very sophisticated, with pastel swatches coloring the navigation options. The one confusing element is the use of horizontal rules at the top of the page. This is such a common oddity that I felt it would be beneficial to discuss it from a design perspective.

Horizontal rules are easily created with the `<hr>` tag, which places a rule across the page. I'm sure you've seen them; they are used to death, and rather inappropriately. Horizontal rules have actually come a long way in terms of the arguments available. I'll look a little more closely at the horizontal rule tag in a bit, but first I'd like to talk about when to use them effectively.

Basically, a designer will want to use horizontal rules rarely, if ever. It's that simple! A very skilled designer will be able to employ the horizontal rule and control its elements with the following arguments, but most of the time, horizontal lines within text create unnatural breaks. This is especially true when a line comes immediately under a title and between the body of text:

MY HOME PAGE

Sed tamen sine me loqui apud misericordiam tuam, me terram et cinerem, sine tamen loqui, quoniam ecce misericordia tua est, non homo, inrisor meus, cui loquor.

et tu fortasse inrides me, sed conversus misereberis mei.

The horizontal rule between the title and the body of text breaks up the natural flow of title to contents. The following treatment, without the rule between the title and contents, is more appropriate:

MY HOME PAGE

Sed tamen sine me loqui apud misericordiam tuam, me ter-
ram et cinerem, sine tamen loqui, quoniam ecce misericordia tua
est, non homo, inrisor meus, cui loquor.

et tu fortasse inrides me, sed conversus misereberis mei.

I *think* that the apparent rule convention became popular on the Web because people were using it as a way of underlining a title before underline tags were widely available. Whatever the reason, the long line break is unnatural.

But, this type of line break is much less a Web no-no than the use of horizontal rules to break up every paragraph or page. This is not only unattractive, it unnecessary, and in a word, boring. When I see multiple horizontal rules on what is supposed to be a professional site, I'm tempted to just bail out and leave the page thinking, "amateur!"

So, the simple tip is don't use the horizontal rules unless you're absolutely sure you know how to integrate them well into a design, or the desire to use them overrides any wisdom I have to offer! Or, be inspired by Jennifer Ringley, and use graphic images or horizontal rules that are used as *part* of the design work, rather than only to break up space. (See Figure 9.6.)

Here are some arguments to play with to see if you can disprove my point:

- Size. This will argue the thickness of the line in pixels (Netscape-centric tag). `<hr size=15>` will create a horizontal rule 15 pixels in width.
- Width. This will size the horizontal width of the rule by percentage—`<hr width=50%>`.
- Align. Controls rule alignment — `<hr align=center>`.
- No shade. Eliminates a horizontal rule's default shading—`<hr noshade>`.

Note that Netscape and Internet Explorer treat rules differently—another argument that using them very judiciously is in order.

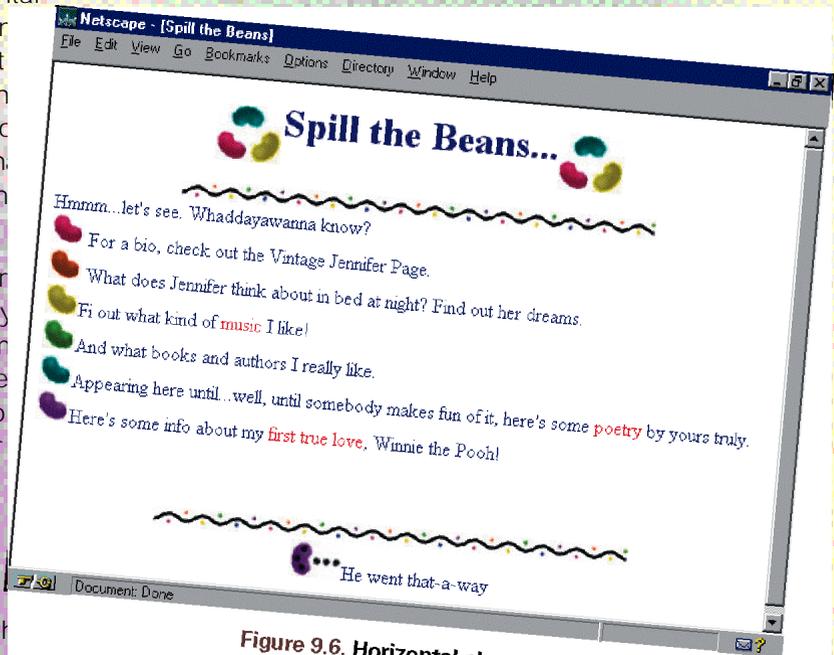
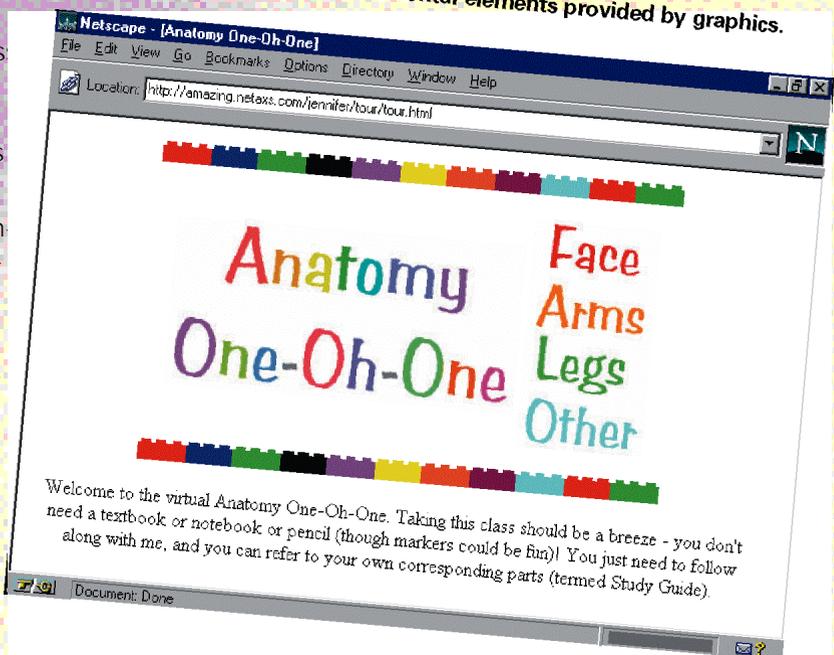


Figure 9.6. Horizontal elements provided by graphics.



the United Kitty Front

The lesson here is that old ideas can be injected with new treatments. Amy Martin has done just that with her very well-designed site. But instead of the tired "this is a picture of my pet" page, Amy offers an entire environment based on her cat, Mina (or maybe Mina has based the site on Amy?), including a personal home page, from which Mina, among other things, runs the official United Kitty Front terrorist page.

The challenge to designers and, in fact, to the hobbyist home page creator is if you're going to fall into the traps that other people fall into, such as talking about hobbies, habits, and pets, fall with unique style.

For some, this might come easily. For others, departing from a norm is a little bit difficult. But, here's the crux of the Web: There's room for all kinds of things. Both the professional and hobbyist should approach the Web as a dare. What do you offer that no one else does? What do you know about yourself or your product that no one else does, but that is unusual or interesting?

Most people have unusual interests or habits, and sometimes these come in different ways. I have studied biology, particularly genetics, with great enthusiasm for many years, and have always been academically oriented. So, imagine the shock when people come to visit me at home and I'm watching a soap opera on TV instead of playing with a microscope! I believe that the celebration of dichotomies is very potent; in a global arena such as the Web, what could be more appropriate?

This is a strong message for corporate image because many large companies are thought of as destructive, or even evil. Many people hate Microsoft and Bill Gates, but, whatever the reasons, the fact that Microsoft employs people world-over and has boosted global economy while being profitable for its CEO is important!

Use the pet model as an example, but extend that to your product. For instance, many people like cats and dogs, and I for one want to share my cat's antics with the world. I think she's unique and special, and she is. But instead of choosing to say "here's a picture of my cat," like so many do (and, trust me, once upon a time in Web history I did just that—and it's still out there on a server for the unsuspecting to stumble upon), ask yourself what way can I approach this that is *completely different* from what others have done?

Amy Martin might not be attempting to create a major Web industry like Bill Gates has, but Mina the Cat certainly reigns her domain like a corporate magnate, in full control of her corner of the Web. (See Figure 9.8.)

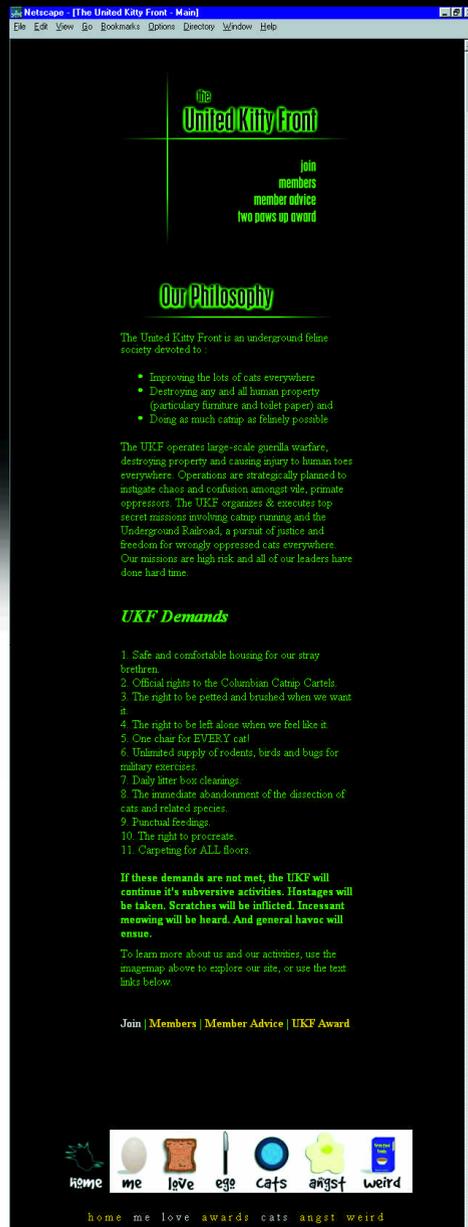
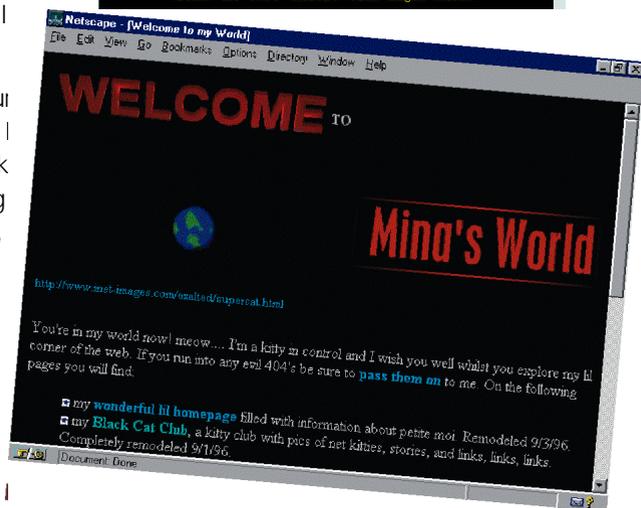


Figure 9.7. United Kitty Front.



the cat's home page.



Tales of 4 IGUANAS

<http://www.mcp.com/people/igtales/index.html>



Figure 9.9. The 4 Iguanas home page.

Following in the paw-prints of Mina the Cat comes the tales (tails?) of four iguanas: Guana, Hopper, Brownie, and Bumpy. Vital statistics on these unusual critters are provided, along with biographies, how-to care for iguanas, and a nice list of online resources about reptiles from Kim Scott's home page.

Especially impressive is the overall design and clarity of Kim's work. (See Figure 9.10.) It's no surprise that she is a graphic designer by trade, although this personal home page entry into the Web comes off looking like a design that came right out of one of the best new media groups going. A good graphic designer does not always make a good Web designer, for a number of reasons. One such reason is because graphic designers are typically used to working with large, high resolution images, which are not appropriate in size or graphic quality for the Web. Also, Web graphic optimization is a technical skill that must be learned, not assumed.

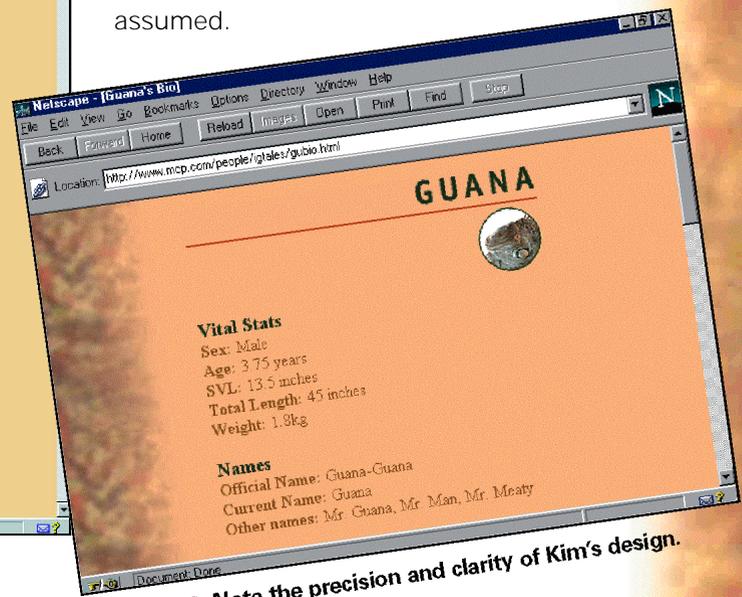


Figure 9.10. Note the precision and clarity of Kim's design.



I had the chance to chat in e-mail with Kim about the challenges faced by a traditional graphic designer who seeks to work in the Web medium. I asked her how she was able to incorporate such sophisticated design elements into her first personal Web project successfully. Her response was that she read several important books, as well as asking people that have done Web projects just how they did the work. Most interestingly, she discussed how she had been surfing the Web for a time before beginning to work on a design.

This speaks to an important element of Web design: the study of the Web itself. I cannot impress the importance of this lesson on Web designers enough; you must spend time *every* working day simply surfing the Web. Seeing what is out there, what has been successful from both a design and popular perspective, and, as Kim puts it, knowing “what people expect, what they hate,” puts the designer in a much better position to compete and excel at the art.

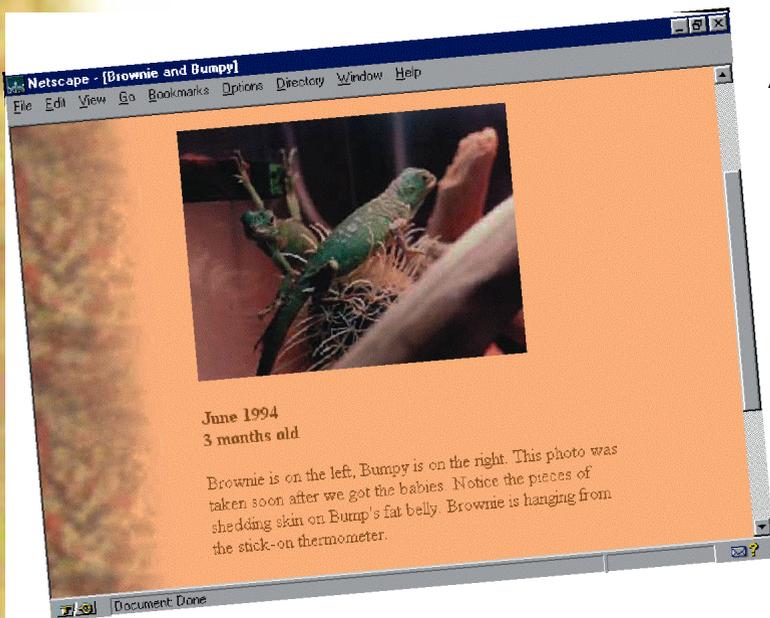
Another interesting point is where to go for information. There are several excellent Web

sites, as well as countless books, magazines, newsgroups and other resources that Web designers need to be aware of. Obviously, it is impossible to keep up with everything, or for me to list every resource available to you here. Appendix D, “Resource Reference,” includes a detailed listing of resources for the Web designer, and you can pick and choose what works for you.

There are specific Web sites that must be on a designer’s daily routine, and they include

- C|NET. Up-to-date news on everything in the industry: <http://www.cnet.com/>
- Microsoft. Very comprehensive resources for general computer industry news, Internet Explorer browser information, as well as excellent Web development information in the developer’s areas: <http://www.microsoft.com/>
- The Microsoft Network. Progressive design in action, with customized links options—an excellent jumping-off point to start the work day: <http://www.msn.com/>
- Netscape. The latest in Netscape technology: <http://home.netscape.com/>

And, I’ll say it once again—surf the Web. That’s the best teacher of all!



Adrienne Dailey



<http://www.speakeasy.org/~adrienne/>

Adrienne is an artist who shows a lot of promise as a Web designer. Her resume page is especially well laid out with good use of space, interesting GIF animations, and links to more information about her and her various projects. Some of those projects include other Web design offerings; many of them are quite strong and impressive.

Although her best work is definitely found deeper in the site, her initial pages don't show off her more mature artistry. In fact, some of the backgrounds she uses don't mesh well with other graphic elements, and they are entirely too dark, even if they are original and interesting. (See Figure 9.12.)

It is extremely important that Web designers understand that the viewing area of a Web page must be visually treated as a whole. Graphics, text, and other elements should have a natural flow, not be separate elements

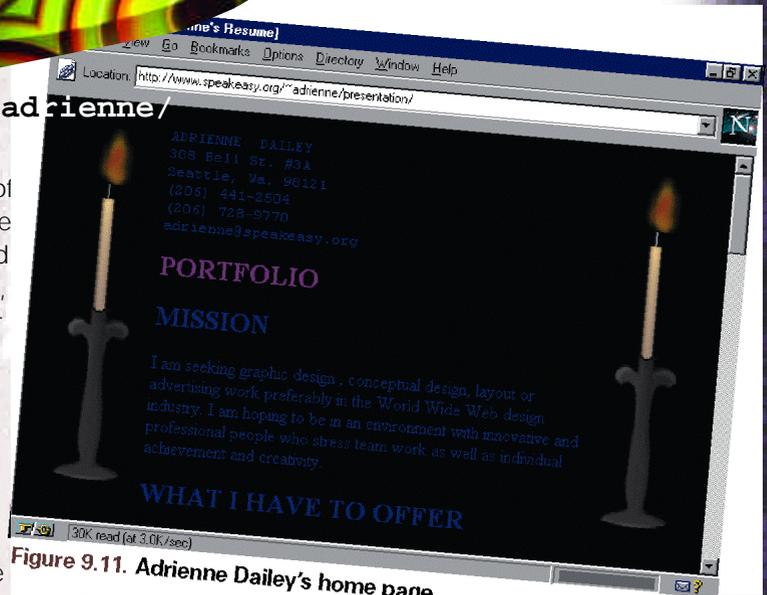


Figure 9.11. Adrienne Dailey's home page.

that are randomly placed without regard to other objects in the space. This is *integration*, and it can begin with background images.

I want to again blame the evolution of the Web, because I really think this is why people don't have a better grasp of how things should blend. Background image support didn't come along until it was introduced by Netscape in late 1995. So, it really hasn't been very long that this image

support has been around. As such, Web sites often began with a gray background. Then, along comes background support and wow! Everyone had to go get a background just to enjoy the textures and colors.

But now, all designers need to move toward a more sophisticated touch. Whether they have been doing this for a while or for a short while, the integration of backgrounds is important. This integration shouldn't be random textures or designs, too dark or too light, and it's time to put away those repeating watermark style backgrounds.

Figure 9.12. Adrienne Dailey's backgrounds.



Some Background Image Approaches

Here are some ways to think about and create effective background images:

- Select a background the same as you would choose wallpaper or carpeting for a finely decorated room. Use textures, styles, and colors that enhance the *other* elements of the room yet maintain an elegance and distinction of their own.
- All background images are either small squares or long, thin strips of a pattern or color. The more adventuresome are getting into larger tiles, or panels, of color to create a single set image. (See the Lumière



home page in Chapter 5, "Sites to Live By: Beauty, Fashion, Health, and Lifestyle," for an example.)

- Margin styles have a strip of color or pattern at either the left or the right (sometimes both) of the screen, with a single-color text area. The use of margin style backgrounds requires a good knowledge of how to use tables in order to control text layout.
- Smooth patterns can be created on small tiles. Be certain that the edges of individual tiles are smooth so that visitors can't see any seam lines between the tiles.
- Make sure text is readable over your backgrounds! This is an absolute must. You can achieve a nice background image and simply lighten in enough so that the image is effective without taking over the entire page.

Heather and Selene's

Mystical Realm

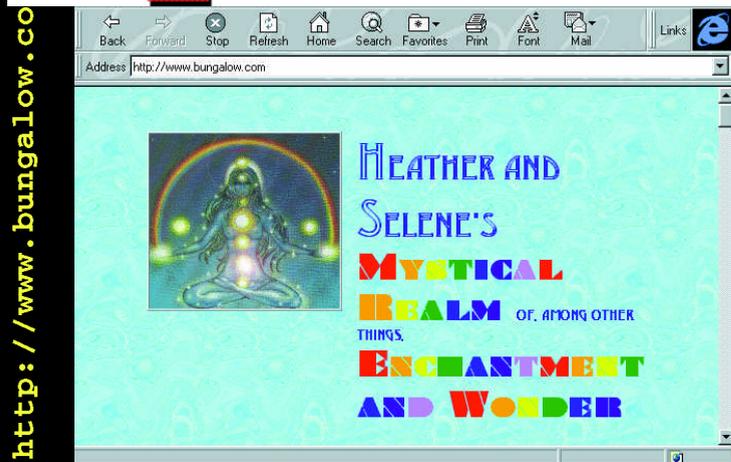


Figure 9.13. Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm.

page that offers something unique and fun to visitors. Become one with their Web site, or so they tell us, in a tongue-in-cheek fashion. They serve virtual donuts and snugly teddy bears, too, so how can you miss?

I enjoy Heather and Selene's personalities; they boldly state that they are out to have some fun. They have created a colorful, wacky page. However, I'm having a hard time reading their stuff, even *with* Netscape 3.0. Why? Font mixing!

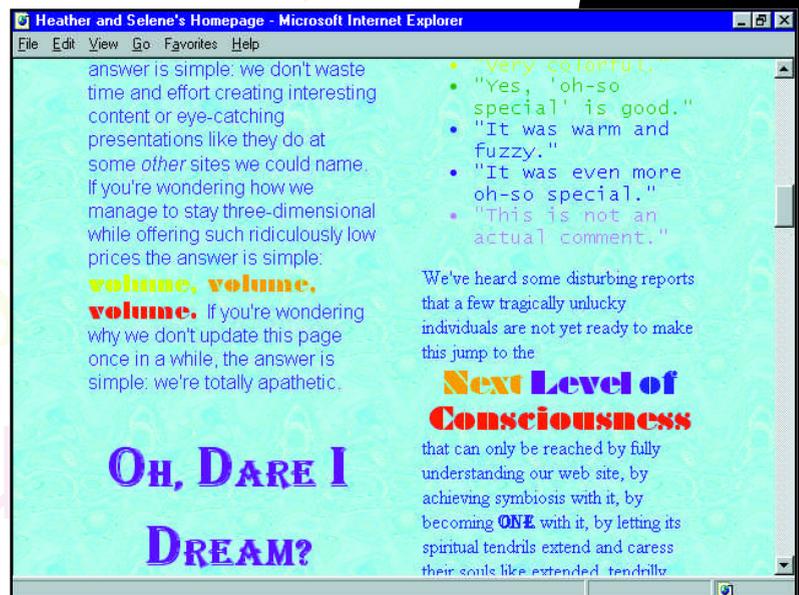
The `` tag and its arguments in HTML 3.0 are wonderful things, and I'm really happy that fonts and some font control have finally been introduced to the Web. It's long overdue, and has an even longer way to go. I'm not qualified to tell you how to mix fonts appropriately, but I am qualified to tell you that using *every* font face available on one single page is a bad choice for Web designers seeking to create commercially viable sites.

Certainly Heather and Selene have had a great time playing with fonts (see Figure 9.14), but for the serious commercial designer, fonts are a major part of artistry. Font mixing is itself an art. It's so much an art that graphic designers and typographers spend major chunks of their lives in an effort to esthetically create, use, and mix, fonts.

I'll examine three font elements that designers can use to begin playing with type, again with a reminder that for commercial development, knowing how to use these elements is a key ingredient in creating successfully rendered typography on the Web.

- **Size.** Font size determines the points, more or less. It's not a very scientific approach; hopefully, though, this will be a problem solved rather than a problem. Until such time, a sized font syntax would look like this: ``. Play with font sizes under different browsers to get a feel for what works best in a given design.
- **Color.** This is a nice attribute and allows a hexadecimal value to be given to the font to color match it to your design. You can read about how to get a hexadecimal value in Chapter 11, "Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web." Colors from the standard spectrum may also have their names placed in the argument field. `` would give you a size +1 font in red. It's that simple; but again, use it judiciously.
- **Face.** Face is the font name, or style. This works between a browser that supports the font face argument, and a machine that has called the font. If you're missing any one of these components, the font will default to whatever is set in the browser. A really nice aspect of font face tags is that you can stack faces by order of preference. A simple argument would look like this: ``. The stacked argument `` would ask the browser to look for each of these in sequence. If the visitor's machine has the Arial font, that's what they will see. If not, the browser will look for the next, and the next, until it either finds a useable font or default.

Figure 9.14. Heather and Selene have had fun mixing fonts, but for commercial design, font mixing is best left in the hands of pros.



Shoel

P E R E L M A N

<http://shoel.cscmicro.com/>

The most fascinating aspects of Shoel's page are the links from it to his work as a photographer. The New York street scenes photographs (see Figure 9.16) are a testament to the Web as a free space for artists. Philosophically speaking, the recording of history has, as a result, become increasingly easier. And, if the ether-based space of the Web lasts, it will be, among an advertising or marketing venue, a vast time capsule of human experience.

Even for the commercial Web designer, the heart-based message of humanity cannot be overlooked. I remember as a child hearing about the glories of technology. Oddly, my schoolteachers, the books I read, the comments I heard from adults all around me regarding the advancement of computers and related technologies, although optimistic, were also tinged with fear. It was a paradoxical message for a young mind, and I believe that many of my generation share that fascination and fear of technology.

The fear, I believe, comes from the feeling that humanity will be lost in the vast fiber and impulses that make up technology. Jobs will be taken away from people and given to computers. A greater split between those that have and those that have not will be seen throughout the world. In some ways, the negatives have indeed come to light

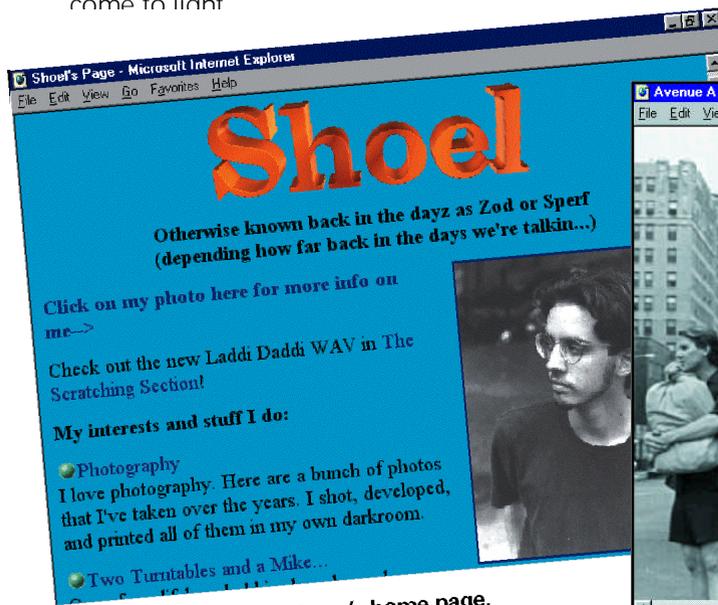


Figure 9.15. Shoel Perelman's home page.



Figure 9.16. Shoel Perelman's New York street scenes.



But, what few could foresee was the way that communications and computer science would blend. That this technology would be combined with telephony was perhaps anticipated by some, but never really expressed as a future enhancement to life and living. Instead, the general sense was always that computers were separate—either functional tools or machines that could think on their own.

What now exists is quite different. There is, in fact, an unequalled opportunity for people to express themselves, for information exchange, and for rapid, intimate global communication. Certainly these things can be used (and are sometimes) for less than altruistic purposes. But, in these early days of the Web, there still persists a sense of optimism about how the tool can be used as a place for personal expression.

What Shoel Perlman's page shows us is not only a glimpse into an individual, but into the art of that individual and what that art expresses. The street scenes of New York series allows an unadulterated, non-commercial, human view of life beyond the screen. The one comment I have to make it more effective is to focus on the power of the photography, and place it in a forward section of the site, perhaps adding thumbnail options. (See Chapter 4, "Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities," for details.)

An incredible opportunity exists for designers to continue to stretch the possibilities of the Web, creating much more than hard data. The quest is to be able to take a personal story and make it global, take a global issue and make it personal, take a product and make it important and necessary.

Practically speaking, though, you need to consider when it is appropriate and powerful to add a sense of *people* to Web sites. Staff pages, biographies of industry leaders, humorous stories from salespeople, and pictures of real human beings in action are all examples of how to add a sense of individuals to Web sites. The humanization of the Internet is an important tool to keeping the Internet interesting. This provides a fantastic, effective way of providing something worthy to the expansive collage of individual expression.

Eve Andersson

<http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~eveander/>



Figure 9.17. Eve Andersson's home page.

She did it for the love of pi. Not cherry, not blueberry, not homemade apple cinnamon with vanilla ice cream on top, but pi, that 3.14159, and so on, line of digits that according to Eve are “absolute beauty.”

There are several poems to pi, and a pi trivia game (which I was almost completely unable to play due to a personal fear of pi). Eve is famous, too. Magazines, newspapers, and Web watchers are all familiar with her homage paid to pi and her page's long-term residence on the Web.

People interested in math should have no problem catching on to the following, simple equation, and the professional Web designer should study this one very hard. There will be a test later for design folk. This is a pop quiz, when least you expect it. I promise not to ask any questions about pi, though. But, I do hope you will learn and remember the following:

Text that is centered without

any real purpose = a design problem

Centered text feels like a departure from the dominant left-aligned written page. It seems to look better, at first glance.

(See Figure 9.17.) There's a perfectly natural desire to want to center text, but unless it's being done as part of a sophisticated, flowing design, it doesn't function well, and is actually more difficult to read and follow.

Text alignment is also part of the graphic designer and typographer's domain. Lessons taken home from the best designers will teach that there are four types of alignment: left, where each line of text begins flush left; right, with each line of text ends on the right margin; centered text, where both edges are ragged; and justified text, which forces text to expand or contract to meet a flush left and right.

For the purposes of Web design, understand the first three. Justified text is generally used in print and has an entire set of problems all its own. But left aligned, right aligned, and centered text all play important roles in designing Web sites, and should be studied carefully.

Creating pages that use a variety of alignments can aid in creating an elegant, high-style look, as well as providing some white space, which is needed to rest and lead the eye. Centered text should be used minimally. After playing with alignments, you will begin to get a feel for when and why it will be necessary to use.

How to Justify Text

There are three common ways to force justification of text. The opening *and* closing `<p>` `</p>` paragraph tag (which is still rarely used because of the way that browsers handle the pre-HTML 3.0 revision usage of paragraphs) comes in especially handy for this design feature. Here is the syntax:

```
<p align=left>
Will left justify
any text
</p>
<p align=right>
will right justify
any text
</p>
```

The same thing can be done with the `<div>` tag, which is used to create individual divisions and to center text.

```
<div align=left>
Left justifies
the text
</div>
```

```
<div align=right>
right justifies
the text
</div>
```

```
<div align=center>
Centers the text, just as using the
<center> tag </center>
would
</div>
```

Finally, tables can be used to break up text areas, and alignment arguments are placed within the table data `<td>` fields. For example, the following syntax would render a table with two columns, the first column text will be left aligned, the second, right.

```
<table border=1 cellpadding=10 cellspacing=10
width=500>
```

```
<tr>
```

```
<td align=left>
```

Here is the left aligned text.

```
</td>
```

```
<td align=right>
```

Here is the right aligned text.

```
</td>
```

```
</tr>
```

```
</table>
```

You will find that using a variety of text alignments, rather than continually centering text, adds to a page's visual texture, readability, and attractive look.

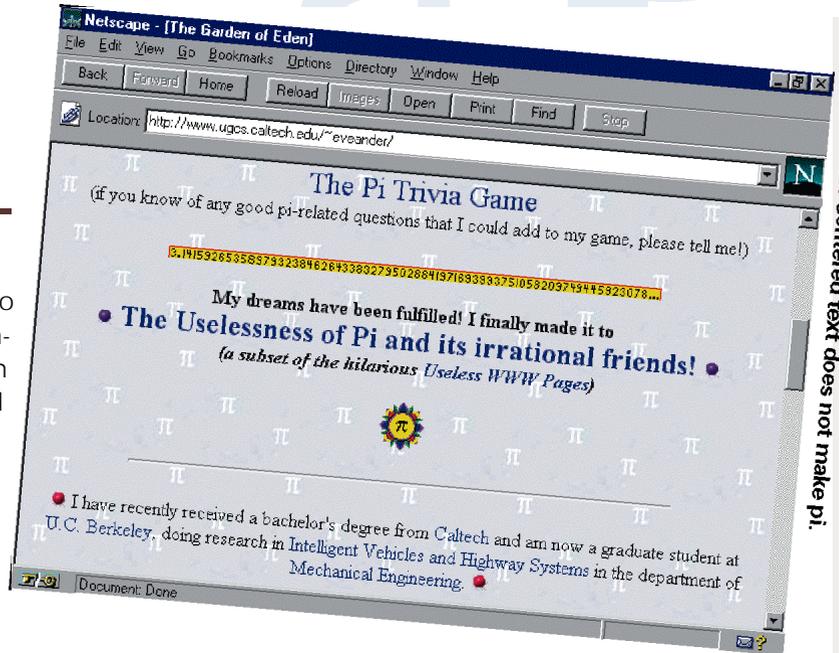


Figure 9.18. Centered text does not make pi.

Roberto Ochoa

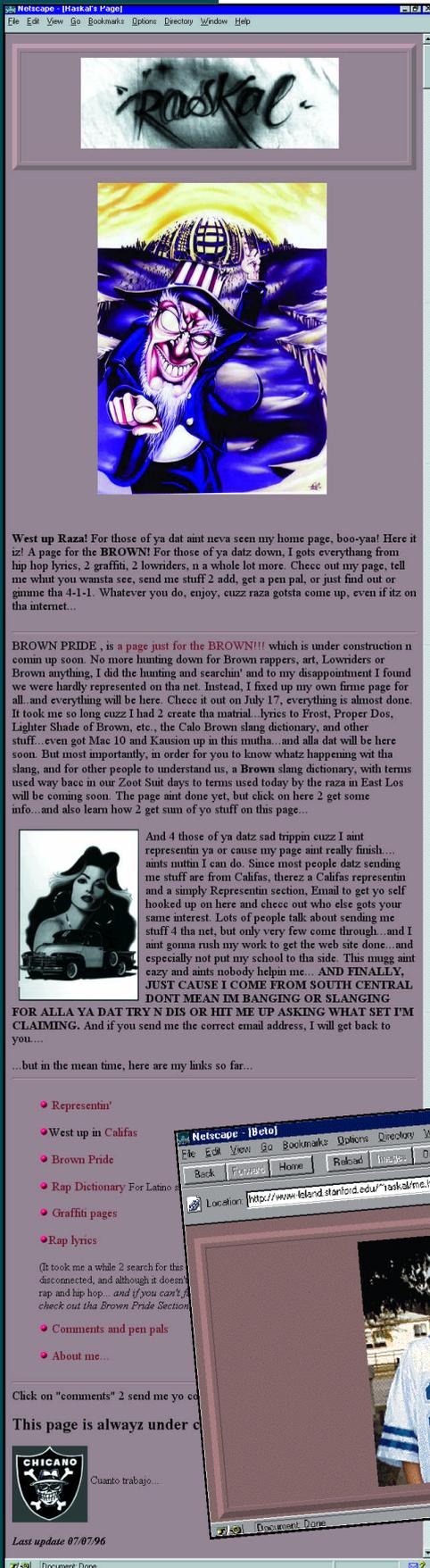


Figure 9.19. Roberto Ochoa's home page.

<http://www-leland.stanford.edu/~raskal/>

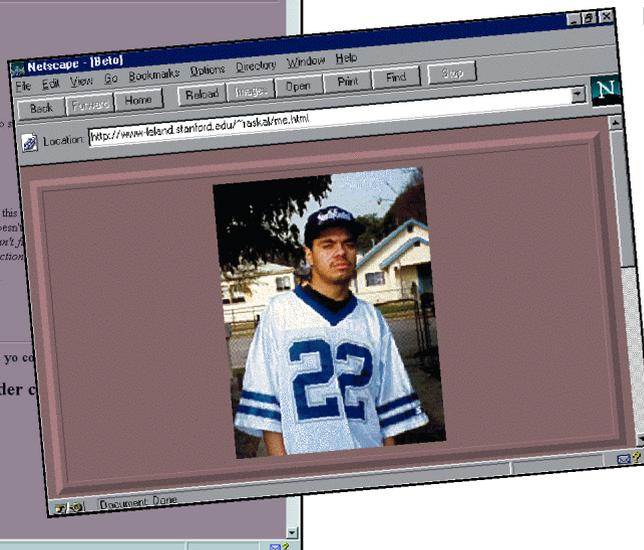
As with Shoel Perelman's look into New York life, Roberto Ochoa's page is a glimpse into the world of Los Angeles's graffiti, low riders, Latino Rap music, and slang speech. "I did the hunting and searchin' and to my disappointment I found we were hardly represented on tha net," Roberto states, regarding Chicano presence on the Web.

Roberto's site is housed at Stanford, where he's a student in Electrical Engineering and Software Design. He's put together a site that expresses personality and pride, with no apologies. There is a bold assertion that the Internet is a good place for the growth of the individual, as well as cultural self-esteem.

The site is simply designed, with some choice links and excellent pictures of posters, graffiti, people, and tattoo art. Many of the pictures are placed within a padded table to create a framed area around it. This is very commonly seen on personal home pages as well as commercial sites. Although it seems to be a popular way of separating elements, it is contrary to a natural visual flow.

This constraint of elements, in order to create visual separation, is an interesting phenomenon; I've noticed that many clients respond well to information that fits within a table that has cell padding. I think that it really does help organize information—when other forms of doing so are not obvious to the designer who is not yet completely aware that breaking up Web space must be done very thoughtfully.

With effective use of white space, justification of text, use of fonts, and the sizing and treatment of photographs and art, the organization of information becomes clear, without the need to draw literal dividing lines.



I took elements from one of Roberto's pages and re-arranged them to show how a natural separation of elements could be easily created to enhance the visual experience, as well as better feature the important and creative expression of the content. (See Figure 9.20.) I did this very carefully, not changing the words or the graphics. However, if I had a free hand with the elements, I would have matted the graphics, resized

most of them (the center color graphic is simply too big), and optimized them for better load times.

Here are the steps I took:

1. Blockquoted the entire body section to create margins
2. Selected a font (in this case, Verdana) for the text
3. "Floated" images within the text to create "white" space for the resting of the eye and flow of text and images
4. Used alignment to create diversity within the text
5. Removed constraints, such as tables, from around the graphics
6. Used an unordered list with bullets, rather than cliché graphic balls

Web designers and home page hobbyists can use these simple tricks to improve the layout of their designs. Stay away from breaking up space with non-design elements, such as the table border, even if it feels necessary. With a sophisticated layout, the effect of separating elements is achieved, but to a much better visual effect.

Bring It on Back to Me

I want to thank all of the people involved in this chapter for candid accounts of their lives and experiences. I want to also thank them for allowing me to go in to their art with a critical eye, to take the offerings they have given the world and use that as an angle for teaching the following elements of Web design:

- The use of humor and parody on personal sites can also be applied to commercial design.
- The use of frames as a form of navigation.
- Horizontal rules.
- Old ideas, new treatments.
- How to effectively keep up with Web design news.
- Background images.
- Font attributes.
- The Web as a living history.
- Text alignment.
- Freeing elements from constraints such as table borders.

Now I'll move from the realm of the personal, to the personally joyous: sites for kids!



Figure 9.20. A rearrangement of elements enhances the information.

Sites for Kids

Education, Games, Items of Interest with Children in Mind

Science Friday Kids' Connection

<http://www.npr.org/sfkids/>

Freezone

<http://freezone.com/hom/index.html>

Crayola

<http://www.crayola.com/>

Seussville

<http://www.seussville.com>

Kid'n Around

<http://www.kidnaround.com/>

World Surfari

<http://www.supersurf.com/>

The Yuckiest Site on the Internet

<http://www.nj.com/yucky/>

The International Kids' Space

http://plaza.interport.net/kids_space/

Mello Smello

<http://www.mellosmello.com/>

The MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom

<http://www.mca.com/home/playroom/>

Imagination is a wonderful thing, and it's alive on each of the following sites. First, I'll visit with Science Friday Kids' Connection, which uses RealAudio to enhance the online experience. I'll look at ways Web designers can access this technology, and where to get more information to do so. Next up is Freezone, an online kids' community complete with a variety of interactive components. Freezone is built on a commercial service model. I'll examine that model and show you how you might consider using it for certain sites that might call for this type of treatment.

Crayola teaches us a lot of interesting information about crayons, as well as other bits of information that keep the audience interested. What should a Web site teach? I'll offer up some ideas here, and a worksheet to help define what you might offer for your clients. Seussville is a pleasant journey into simplicity and clarity, and I'll ask you to question whether simple approaches to Web sites can help your sites reach the right audience.

Kid'n Around is a 'zine that uses background color, and I'll show you how to be sure that your background colors are pulled from a safe palette. You can visit

Appendix C, "Color Table," to see an example of the safe palette as well. Young Brian Giacoppo has created a great site about geography, called World Surfari. This site allows for a lesson in margins and blockquoting.

Just because it's called the Yuckiest Site on the Internet doesn't mean it really is. But it does have all kinds of fun things like worms and bugs, as well as a perfect example of the Low SRC/High SRC image trick. International Kids' Space presents a fine opportunity to design help pages that are effective and complete. Mello Smello is an attractive site, except for the horizontal scroll bar that appears if you're visiting with a 640x480 monitor—and most people are. I'll show you how to design sites so as to avoid that scroll bar, and give Mello Smello the fix for its site in the process! Finally, I'll look at the role of the copy editor in Web site design, and show you a mistake that could have been avoided on MCA/Universal's Home Video Kid's Playroom.

C'mon, let's play!

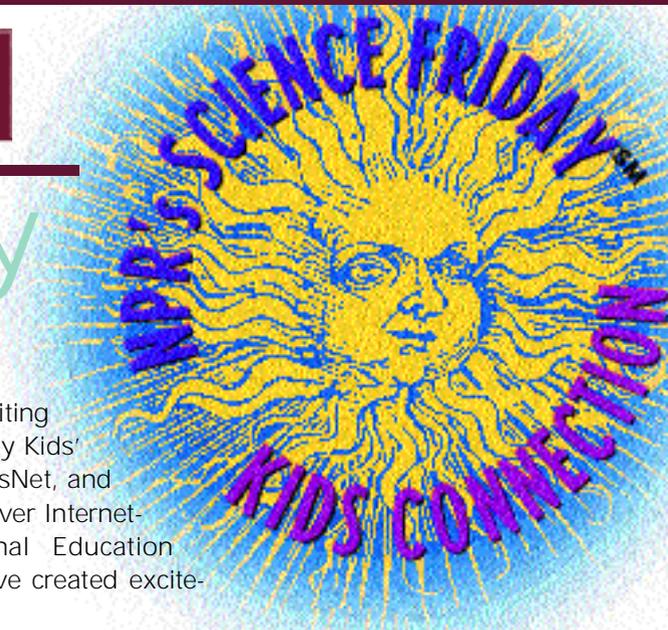
Featured Site I

Science Friday Kids' Connection

<http://www.npr.org/sfkids/>

When organizations come together to pool resources, exciting opportunities can occur. This is the case with Science Friday Kids' Connection. Sponsors from National Public Radio and KidsNet, and grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the ever Internet-supportive National Science Foundation, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers have created excitement with the Science Friday Kids' Connection.

This Web site is dedicated to promoting science and education using Internet technologies. The site is simply designed with attractive graphics, an easy-to-read layout, fully interactive forums for discussion of topics, and well-organized links to supportive information. Science Friday Kids' Connection (also referred to as "SciFri Kids") is not geared for the youngest set. Although it offers a variety of activities, the site generally seems directed at kids in junior high and later. SciFri Kids features



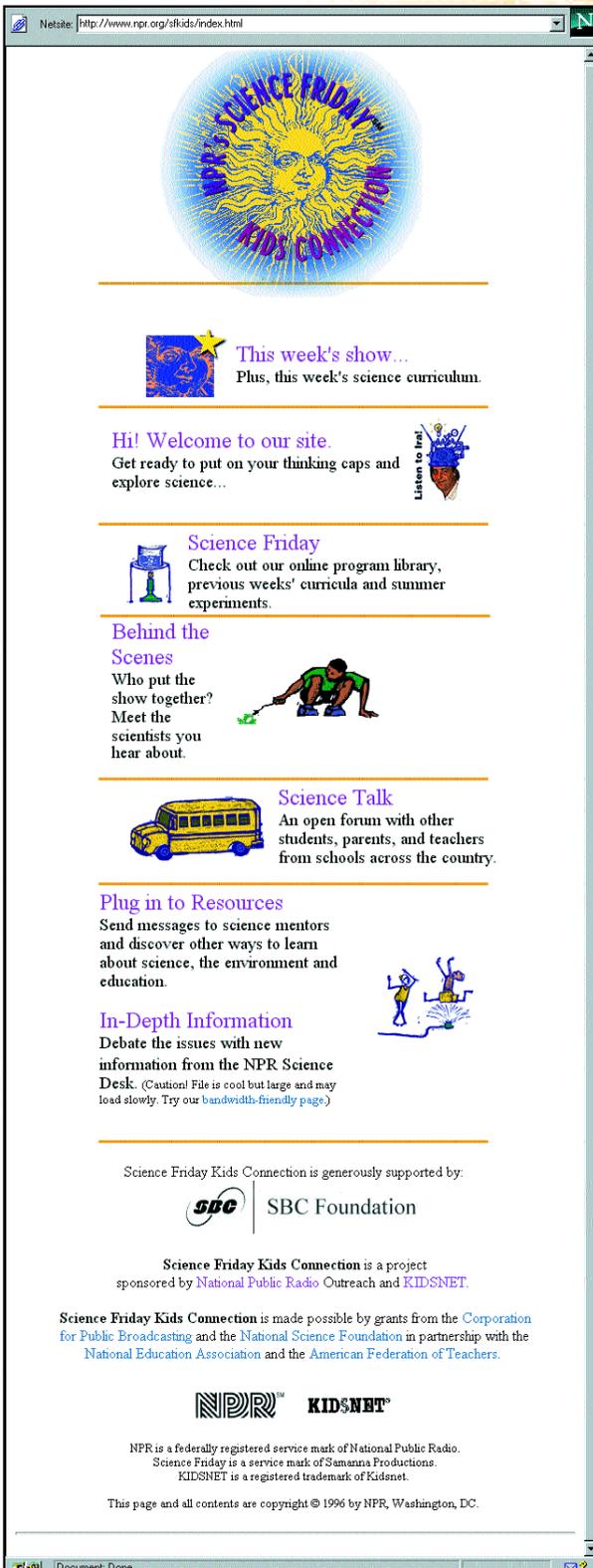


Figure 10.1. Splash page from Science Friday Kids' Connection.

intelligent material supported by a range of scientists available for questions through the Science Friday mentor program.

National Public Radio (<http://www.npr.org/>) has always been a progressive player, and when the opportunity to be involved in the Internet came along, National Public Radio, or NPR, was there. Apparently stimulated rather than threatened by the growing availability of audio technologies on the Web, NPR embraced RealAudio and has been making its programs available via this technology every hour on the hour for well over a year. SciFri Kids is an extension of this service. It is a particularly impressive program seeking to use this medium as a means of making information available on-demand 24 hours a day.

What Is RealAudio?

To understand the way RealAudio works, it's important to get a little background on the way the Internet handles data transmission. The idea behind the Internet is to send information, but how this information is sent is not consistent due to the limitations of the Net's current, underlying technology.

If the Internet were capable of sending information all at the same rate of speed, with a time relationship that was predictable, this would be ideal, and many of the challenges Web designers face today would be moot. This ideal time rate, referred to as "synchronous" (occurring at the same time) may be something that will eventually be consistently available. Until such a time, however, computer scientists and engineers have to be creative to manage data with some kind of reliability.

Pacing—attempting to send information that starts and stops at a predetermined interval—is one way engineers have attempted to bridge the Internet time-gap. Isochronous transmission is a way of delivering time-dependent data such as audio or video. This type of transmission uses specific time starts and stops to send information over a given protocol.

Progressive Networks, the company that pioneered RealAudio technology, studied this problem in detail and came up with a solution that capitalizes on the way that isochronous transmission works. By developing a loss correction system to smooth out bumps, and delivering paced, or "streamed" information, the end result is a technology that brings us an acceptable grade of audio at significant speeds.

In the case of Web developers who want to have rapid delivery of acceptable quality audio available for their clients, RealAudio is the current streaming solution. It is possible to send RealAudio files over 14.4 as well as 28.8 pipes without too much loss in quality or speed factors. As the Web becomes a complete multimedia environment, audio delivery is going to be more and more desired by potential clients. So, Web developers not already familiar with this technology need to find out if it is something that will be necessary for their clientele.

What Is Involved in Setting up RealAudio?

RealAudio technology demands three major parts in order to work:

- RealAudio encoder. This is software that enables developers to encode digital data from a live source, or take a preexisting audio file in common formats such as .au or .wav, and convert it to the RealAudio (.ram) format.
- RealAudio server. The server is also a software package that works in a method akin to most Internet-based servers (for example, mail, Web, and so on). The server is necessary as it works in concert with the encoded data to send streams that fulfill the technical algorithms as previously discussed.
- RealAudio player. This is the plug-in for Web browsers that allows for playing RealAudio files

on the client end. Figure 10.2 shows us the RealAudio player in action.

Where Can I Get More Information?

RealAudio technology is somewhat involved, as already demonstrated. If you are interested in offering this exciting product, a great deal of information is available on the RealAudio Web site at <http://www.realaudio.com/>. The information there is easy and accessible for nontechnical designers to gain a relatively painless education in the technology. There are also areas where more complex information is available.

RealAudio in Action on Science Friday

Each Friday, National Public Radio broadcasts the Science Friday radio show. By Monday, that show has been encoded into RealAudio format and made available to listeners around the world. All shows are saved in the archive, where the RealAudio files, a written synopsis, and other, related information on the topic are available.

SciFri Kids has done something quite intelligent by using the RealAudio files as a jumping off place for interactive learning via the Web. Although it's not necessary to listen to the RealAudio files to get the gist of what is being discussed, they most certainly serve as a pivotal part of the site's value. There are interactive forums available for kids, parents, teachers, and any interested party to become involved with the themes set forth in a given program. A debate area takes a specific topic and brings it to the forefront for discussion.

The power of RealAudio and SciFri Kids is that it is using what is known as convergent technologies in order to teach. It's a progressive model—taking what is essentially radio, mixing it with the interactive potentials of the Web, offering it up to kids, teachers, and any interested parties, and planting the seed of ideas from which, well, anything can grow!

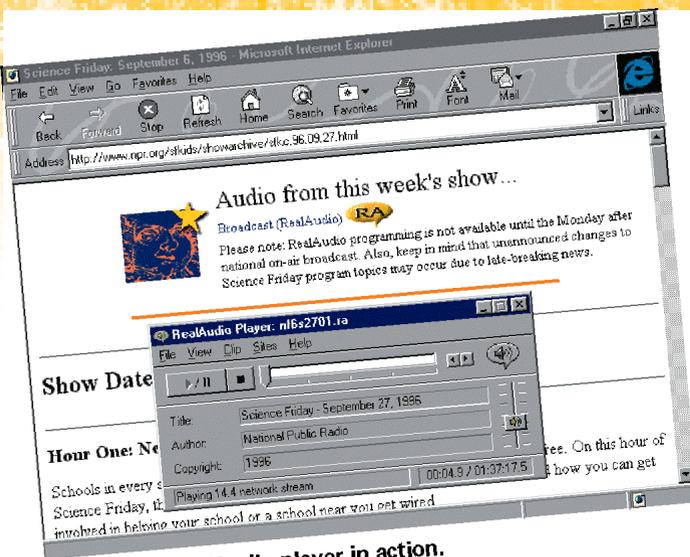


Figure 10.2. RealAudio player in action.



Featured Site II

FREEZONE

<http://freezone.com/home/index.html>

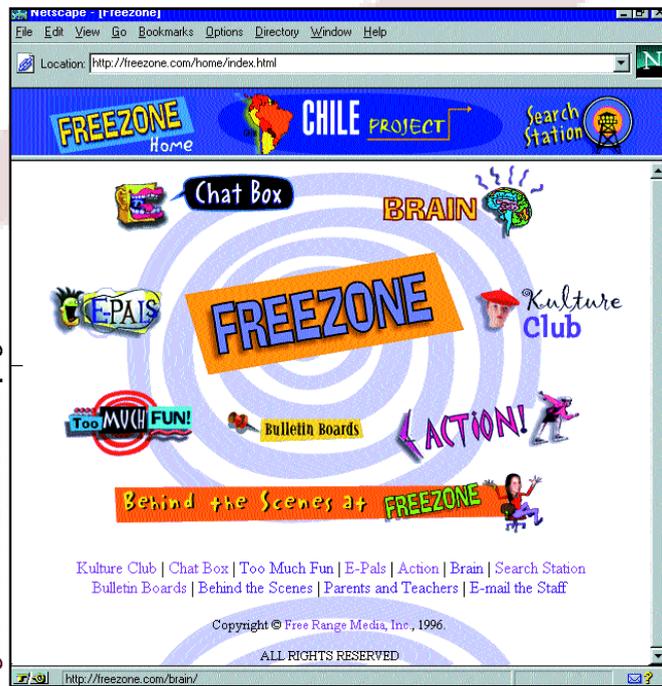


Figure 10.3. Freezone's home page.

Freezone is an online community for kids. Quality graphics, shrewd layout, excellent navigation, and tons of interactivity are all strengths of this site, and strengths of sizzling Web sites in general. But what is especially impressive about Freezone is how it has created an Internet-based community much like a commercial-based, comprehensive online service. The advantage is that it has no fees like commercial services, so kids the world over can get involved at low or no cost.

Commercial services are excellent choices for families wanting to have controlled environments and content. I refer to these as “gated communities.”

When I think of a gated community, I think of an exclusive, well-maintained area that promotes a positive and safe environment. Some people crave the security these communities offer, while others hunger for the hustle-and-bustle of urban sprawl.

It boils down to personal needs and tastes. Online gated communities provide some of the best information, services, and special interest groups available. These communities include the larger commercial services such as America Online, CompuServe, The Microsoft Network, and Prodigy. The advantage to these is that information is typically well-organized, services easily accessed, and public areas moderated by hosts. For individuals wanting fast, easy, and secure options online, one of these services is a ready choice. For parents who desire stricter control of what their children are doing online, these services are currently the best choice.

The World Wide Web is a vibrant place of great potential, resources, and vast access to international cultures. It is a bit more difficult to navigate, particularly for those new to computing. Finding where to go for your own needs could take time. The advantages to the freer ranges of the Web lie in its typically less expensive, broader spectrum of unique information. Also, the Web sees daily growth in information exchange, services, and technology, making it very competitive in terms of scope and future gains.

Freezone has found clever ways to bridge the gap between both. Areas that require moderation, such as chat, get it, as shown in Figure 10.4. The underlying concept goes back to the commercial environment—as well as another type of online service—usually free and run by hobbyists rather than large corporations. This type of service is known as the Bulletin Board

System, or BBS. BBSs seem largely to be dying out in the face of the Internet craze, but their structure, as well as the larger structure found on commercial services, has served the online communities well for a lot of years.

The end result of incorporating the gated model within the freedom of the Internet is powerful, as Freezone demonstrates. Web developers can take heed of the very specific aspects of such a structure and, whenever possible, think about using them within their online projects.

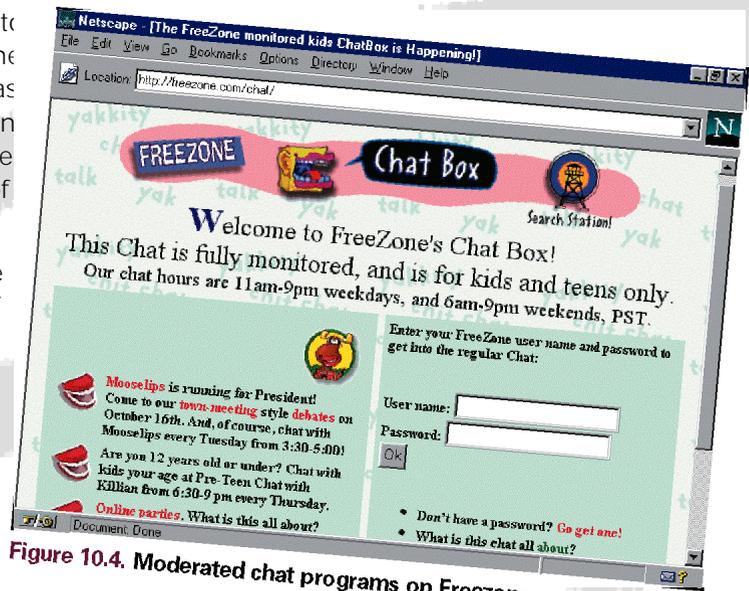


Figure 10.4. Moderated chat programs on Freezone.

Commercial and BBS Structure

The common model for these systems includes the following:

- BBs. Bulletin Boards—what I refer to as *interactive forums* when discussing the Web. This is where, as I've demonstrated throughout the book, messages can be posted on a virtual bulletin board (no tacks to fall behind the desk and be stepped on later) and read at the convenience of visitors to that area. Usenet newsgroups have acted as the Internet's Bulletin Boards, but CGI scripts and other programming have allowed for the creation of Web-based forums.
- Real-time chats. Live "in person" chats are a vital and popular part of online communications. It's been particularly challenging to find ways of delivering these via the Web. Internet Relay Chat, or "IRC," is the common Internet delivery chat system. However, getting it to stabilize and interact well with the Web has been somewhat challenging. Using Java, Visual Basic, and ActiveX technologies, it's becoming somewhat easier to manage this technology.
- Libraries or file areas. A fundamental part of any commercial or BBS system, these areas give access to software and files of interest relating to the topic at hand. Very often, search functions are available in these areas. Searches within larger Web sites are becoming commonplace, mimicking those that originated with the commercial model and allowing for access to information within the Web site.
- Contact. Through `mailto` links and feedback forms, the Web is offering its own methods of getting in touch with the people responsible for the day-to-day workings of the area, or in this case, Web site.
- Gateways to other areas. Well, this is the foundation of the Web! Links, links, and more links act as gateways to related areas of interest on many Web sites. The advantage is especially strong on the Web, because there is such a diverse range of things to choose from.

If you're about to design a Web site, think about this model. It is a very effective one, and one that is becoming increasingly necessary to provide for consumers of Web technologies. That Freezone has either chosen to build on this model, or naturally fell upon it, has resulted in a very strong example of a seriously capable Web site model.

Remember the excitement you felt the day you got your first package of Crayola crayons? I sure do. I was completely enamored of the colors, the often exotic and mysterious names, and even the smell of the crayons was agreeable to me. To this day, I blame Crayola for my inability to claim any single color as “my favorite.” I love them all.

The Crayola Web site is, as one would expect it to be, colorful. It also is informative, teaching us everything about how crayons and markers are made, even giving us the history of Crayola, which is interesting because it is filled with little-known facts that affect our daily lives. Did you know, for example, that tires are black because of a product Crayola made? It's true! Before that—for reasons you can read about on the Crayola Web site—they were white.

There is an inherent wisdom in offering some knowledge, a snippet of trivia, an iota of information on a Web site. Kids aren't the only ones who need—and want—to learn! In fact, even the most commercial of Web sites can make use of this very simple, nontechnical technique of offering up some idea for the simple joy of knowing.

What Should a Web Site Teach?

There are several things that naturally come to mind. Crayola has offered interesting historical tidbits about its company—and this is a great place to start!

Other items of interest would be ways products are designed or made, how a product or idea has impacted people from a philosophical perspective, and what an organization does philanthropically, such as offering a piece of information not directly related to the product, but connected to the company's goals. A perfect example of the latter would be the recent series of Nike television commercials, where gender law regarding athletics is used over images of women playing sports. The words “athletic shoes” or “Nike” are never even heard, yet the impact of the commercial is potent!

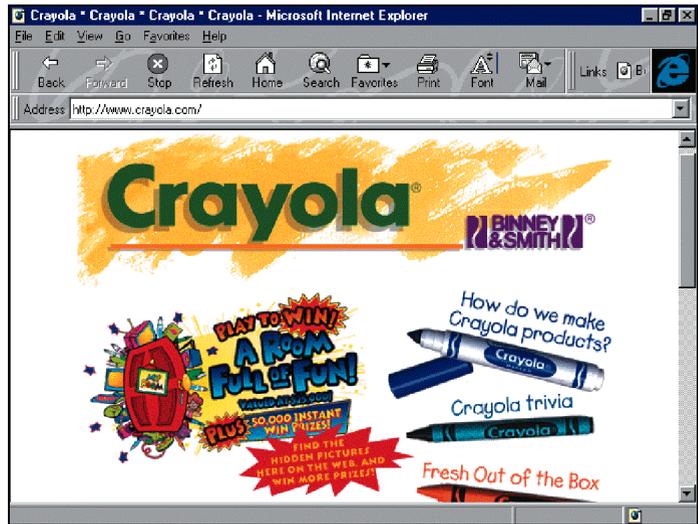


Figure 10.5. Crayola's colorful home page.

Here is a short worksheet you can use to explore what your site might teach:

- What is my company's history? What interesting or unusual things happened during its formative years?
- How are my products made or designed? Are any of the products made or designed with special or unusual tools?
- What are the fundamental ideas and philosophies that guide this organization?
- Has this organization or product impacted the society around it in some important way?
- What charities or projects does the company support?

Writing out answers to these questions will help give ideas as to not only what you might teach, but also get you in touch with wonderful things you might have forgotten or taken for granted.

More to Learn!

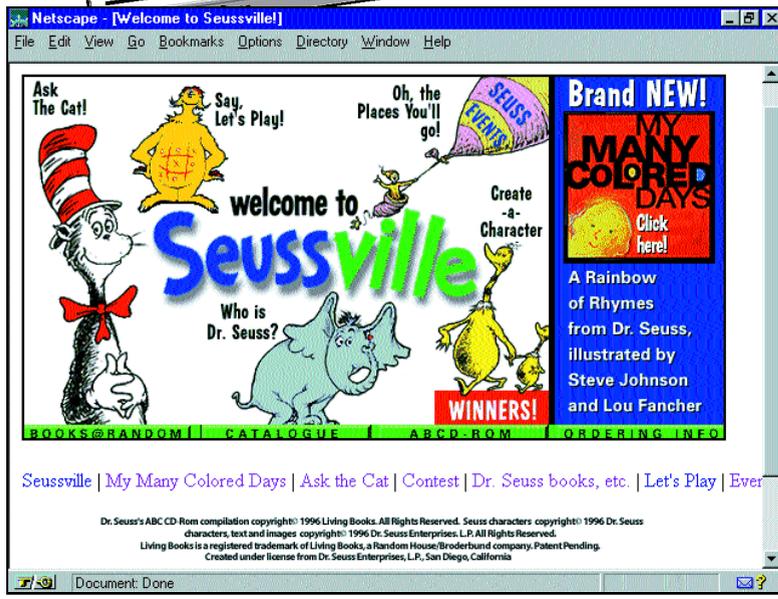
Another fine example of Crayola's contribution is its effort to educate moms, dads, and other adult friends or family. My favorite is a practical exercise in how to remove Crayola product stains from a variety of surfaces. The area is set up in a fun way, with drop-down boxes that bring us to the information needed. My mom will be envious to know on-demand assistance such as this now exists to help parents undo the less-bright side of what happens when kids get down to having fun!

Seussville



Figure 10.6. The Cat in the Hat's pointed navigation.

One Christmas in the not-too-distant past, I found myself shopping for gifts for a friend's nieces and nephews. "They must have Dr. Seuss," he insisted. So we went in search of those familiar books. When we found them on the shelves, I picked them up, noticing how the covers had changed from the more muted cloth to now-shiny cardboard. I opened one up and began to read—and the flood of time washed over me. I remembered the stories well. I became absorbed in the experience of Dr. Seuss and the memories of a happy, distant time.



It's an interesting thing, how life has changed in 30 years. I learned to read with Dr. Seuss—*Cat in the Hat*, *Green Eggs and Ham*, *Sam I Am*. These characters and rhymes are as familiar to me as my keyboard has become—an integral part of my life.

So it's easy to explain why I found the Seussville Web site to be so grand. Yes, perhaps I'm too busy working to worry about how to spend a rainy day, but one can never be too old or too engaged in the responsibilities in life to appreciate being sidetracked just a little. Especially if it involves crayons, and scissors, and yarn—and a good book.

Never Too Young: Audience and Content

It's obvious that the intended audience here is quite young—three-and four-year-olds. But, even younger kids will enjoy the site provided someone is there to help them read. It's a very colorful site, with large print that makes it easy to read. Follow the Cat in the Hat's pointing paw (see Figure 10.6) to get around. The simple navigation is geared to the younger set, but it is something Web designers should take note of! Maybe all Web designers need to think about gearing any site to a very young audience. Simplicity is sometimes the answer to the most complex of life's questions.

Out of the Web Design for Babes, Off Comes a Gem. . .

In fact, I'm going to offer clarity and simplicity as a design concept, one that I practice when I run into a jam while designing heavy doses of information. The idea is to simplify, and think about how a younger person might experience a Web site. Although I wouldn't apply a technique such as oversized print or very simple language to a credit union's site, the conceptual element of simplicity might enable you to find another perspective.

So, the next time you sit down to design a site—whether it's to sell a product or it's a purely creative endeavor—think about the ways a young child might experience the information.

Do You Believe in Magic?

Keeping people interested is important, and that means making a Web site logical and enjoyable. Even the driest of scientific or mechanical information has something fun and interesting about it, and if you look at it from a child's eyes, you might just be able to find the magic.

- How do you make the site sensibly organized? Instead of layering information very deep, it's often wise to keep things up toward the top level, or anchored with a main index.
- What can you do to keep a site navigable without making the audience struggle? Notice how Cat in the Hat's finger points us along? This moves us very obviously to the next area of interest.
- Do I have so much information that it is overwhelming? Where can I trim the excess without losing vital data? Arranging detailed information might be better in a virtual library rather than trying to put it all on the main site.

Kid'n Around

<http://www.kidnaround.com/>



Figure 10.7. Kid'n Around's intended color.

Having visited a variety of 'zines in Chapter 3, "Sites that Speak: Newspapers and Magazines," you've already gotten an idea of what can be done in terms of magazines and layout, particularly when compared to the original print versions.

Kid'n Around is, according to the magazine, the United States' "premier newspaper for kids and their families." Hinting at a more colorful design offline, Kid'n Around has taken a much more simple, but effective approach online.

Choosing to leave the typically bright color palette found in most children's Web sites behind, Kid'n Around uses

only two main color choices, tan and black. Boring, one might think! But in this case, the focus is on the clever cartoons, the magazine's humor, and the great content.

Safe Palettes for Safe Browsing'

A technical lesson everyone can take home from this Web site is that glitz and glamour aren't always necessary to achieve successful style. The simplicity of this site's design, navigation, and communication are some of its greatest strengths.

A word of caution here, however. When selecting backgrounds and colors for a Web site, it is still good practice to make sure that the color is chosen from a "safe" palette. These are palettes that use the 215 colors resulting from a native color management limitation in Windows 3.1.

Although this caution is something that will never be a problem for those of you using Windows 95 or Macintosh computers to surf, Windows 3.1 users—and there are still plenty out there due to the vast variety of home computers around—can only see 215 colors.

What this means is that when you select a color outside of the 215 safe palette, colors dither to the closest color that they can manage. If you've chosen a soft yellow, say, with a Windows 3.1 Operating System, this yellow can suddenly be seen as a very bright yellow, making the results painful to the eyes, and the careful design you've gone after is ruined.

In the case of Kid'n Around, the background color, which appears as tan with high-resolution monitors and video cards (see Figure 10.7), dithers to a mauve or deep pink with less sophisticated equipment. (See Figure 10.8.) This still looks good, so, in this case, no one's the wiser except detail-oriented Web designers such as me. But for future reference, keep the 215 palette issues in mind.

A safe palette for Photoshop is included on the CD-ROM, and a GIF version of the palette is also included. Therefore, anyone can import these into their graphic program of choice and use them to select safe colors.

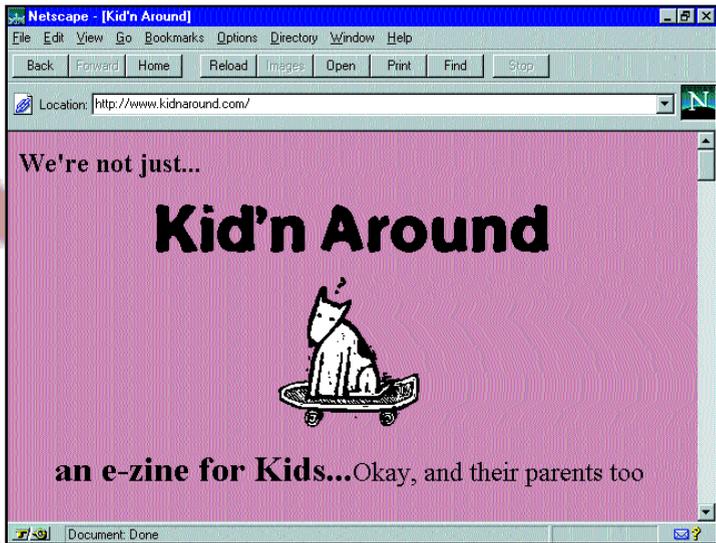
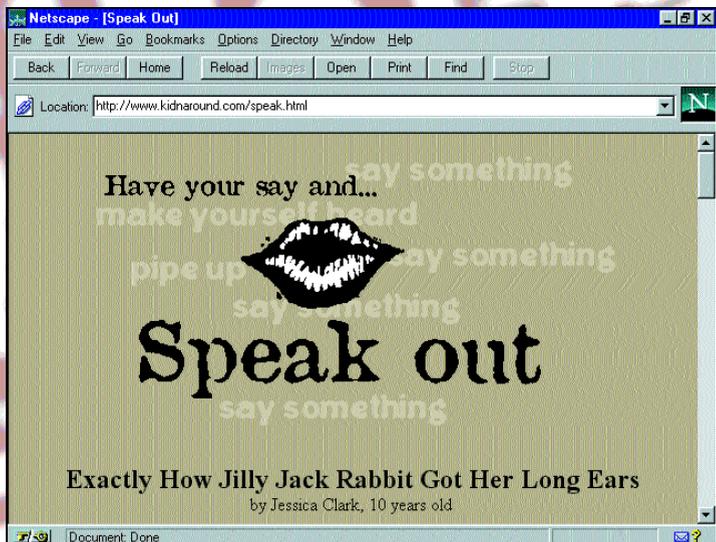


Figure 10.8. The background color results when dithered.



WORLD SURFARI

<http://www.supersurf.com/>

This is a wonderful site from 10-year-old, Brian Giacoppo. Each month, World Surfari teaches visitors about a different geographical location. Visitors are treated to the history, culture, society, and even expansive demographic information about the given destination of the month. This Web site is an excellent resource reference for anyone doing research on people and places, as well as a place to go and learn for the sheer fun of it!

World Surfari is very simply designed, using a subtle background and hand-drawn, colored pictures for navigation and headers. The focus is on the content, which is laid out with a minimum of detail but with maximum effect and wisdom.

The Importance of Margins!

All too often, text-heavy Web sites forget the importance of margins. It's an odd oversight, considering that most all of us are familiar with margins in both the print and electronic worlds. Every book, magazine, or newspaper I read uses margins as a method of pulling the text in from the absolute end of the page. When I sit down to write, my word processor insists on margins. Margins help text to appear neat and organized, and make the physical process of reading much easier.

Why they are overlooked in the creation of HTML documents is difficult to say. There are some very simple techniques that have been available for some time to create margins successfully. More recently, with most common browsers supporting tables, there is a heightened level of control. For this section, I'd like to show the two most simple methods of creating margins. The Web would improve vastly in a second if most creators of pages took heed of this simple issue.

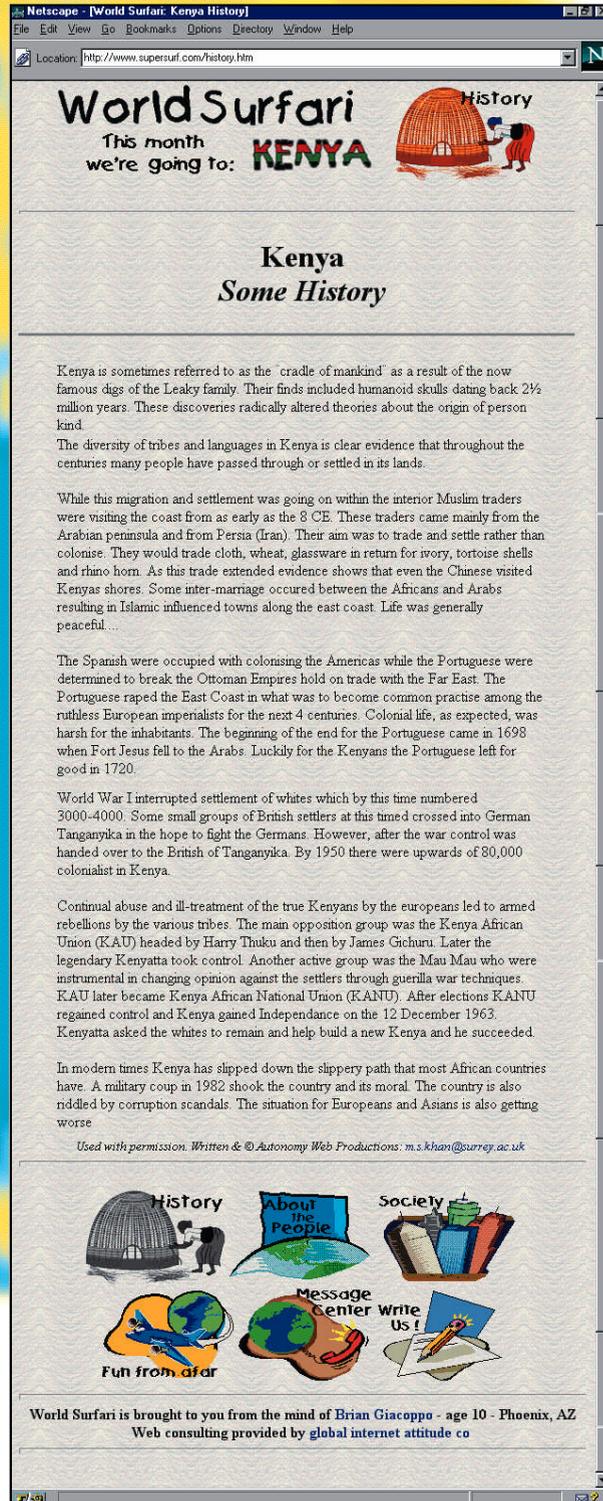


Figure 10.9. Nice, even margins on World Surfari.

Blockquote

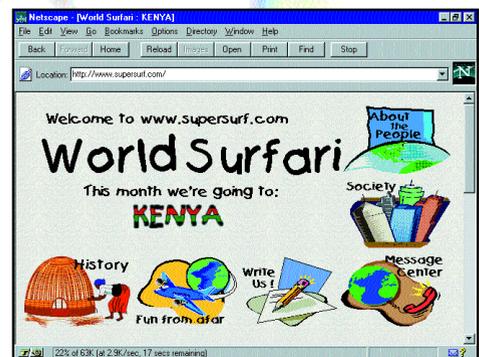
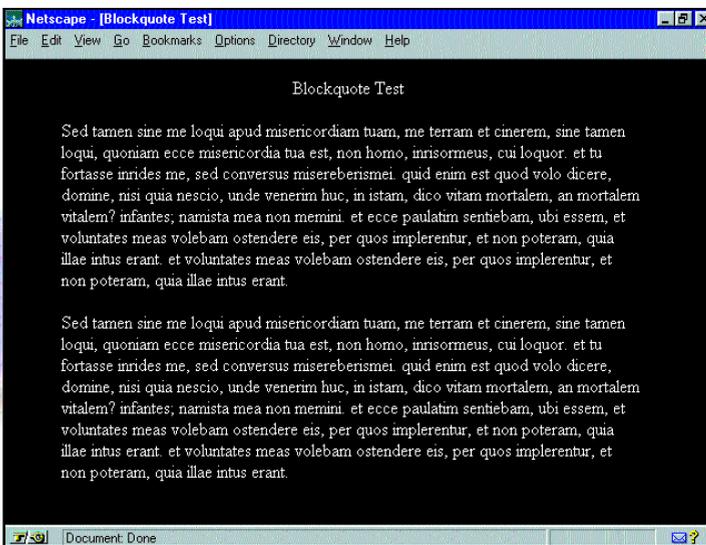
The blockquote tag is an effective way of creating an even margin on either side of the visual page. In fact, it is this technique that World Surfari uses to keep its margins nice and tight. (See Figure 10.9.)

Implementing blockquote is easy. In the body of your HTML document, immediately before and after the text you'd like to use, insert the opening and closing blockquote tags, `<blockquote>` and `</blockquote>`, respectively:

```
<blockquote>
Sed tamen sine me loqui apud misericordiam tuam, me terram et cinerem, sine
tamen loqui, quoniam ecce misericordia tua est, non homo, inrisor meus, cui loquor. et tu
fortasse inrides me, sed conversus misereberis mei. quid enim est quod volo dicere,
domine, nisi quia nescio, unde venerim huc, in istam, dico vitam mortalem, an mortalem
vitalem? infantes; namista mea non memini. et ecce paulatim sentiebam, ubi essem, et
voluntates meas volebam ostendere eis, per quos implerentur, et non poteram, quia
illae intus erant. et voluntates meas volebam ostendere eis, per quos implerentur, et
non poteram, quia illae intus erant.
</blockquote>
```

The resulting effect is demonstrated in Figure 10.10.

Figure 10.10. The blockquote.



Margin Control

With Microsoft's Internet Explorer, there is a more flexible control beyond the blockquote that is just as easy: the margin arguments within the body tag. By arguing a specific number of pixels, you can draw margins specifically to your personal tastes.

Here is an opening body tag with standard arguments:

```
<body bgcolor="#000000" text="#FFFFFF" link="#0000FF" vlink="#FF0000"
alink="#FFFFFF">
```

Here is an opening body tag with an Internet Explorer supported, margin argument:

```
<body leftmargin=200 rightmargin=200 bgcolor="#000000" text="#FFFFFF"
link="#0000FF" vlink="#FF0000" alink="#FFFFFF">
```

As you see, 200 pixels have been argued for the left margin, and 200 pixels for the right margin. The result is demonstrated in Figure 10.11. Figure 10.12 shows how Netscape 3.0 ignores these arguments and defaults to the undesired end-to-end, rather than an attractive, readable layout with margins.

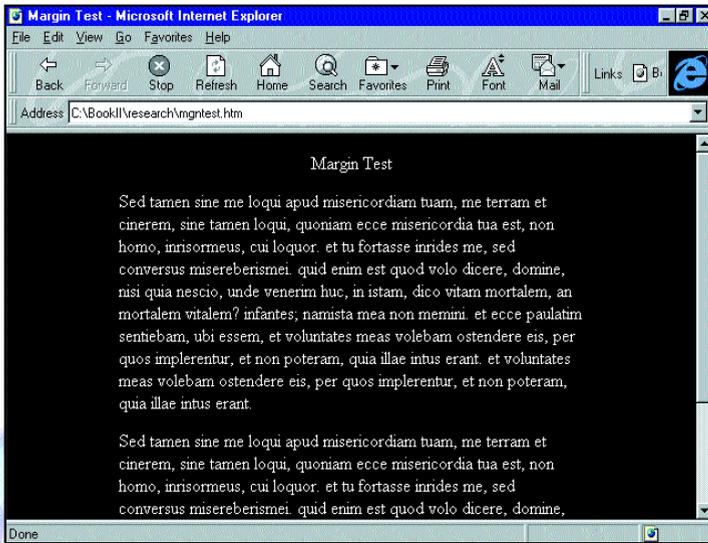


Figure 10.11. Margin results as viewed with Internet Explorer 3.0.

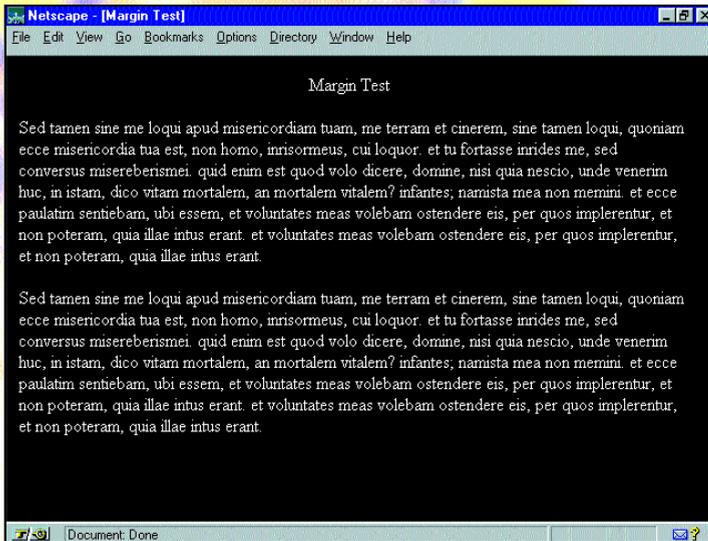
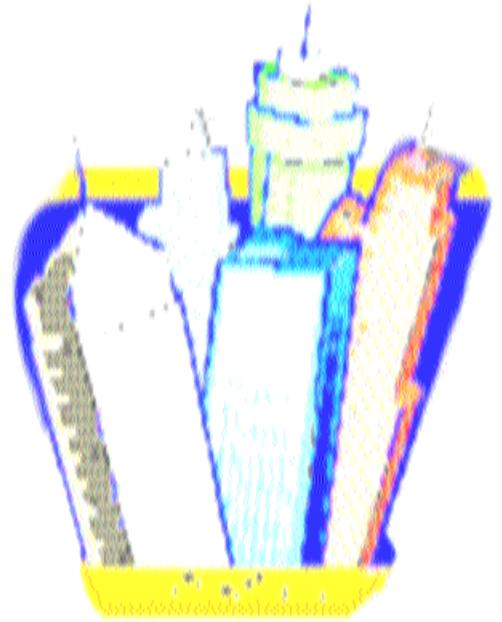


Figure 10.12. The same code as seen through Netscape 3.0.



The Yuckiest Site on the Internet

<http://www.nj.com/yucky/>

Just because it comes from New Jersey, it doesn't *have* to be yucky. In fact, I come from New Jersey. Suffice it to say that I was both pleasantly and humorously surprised to find such a great Web site from the heart of my old stomping grounds.

Sponsored by New Jersey Online, <http://www.nj.com/>, The Yuckiest Site on the Internet is geared toward education through fun and inventive means. The teachers are cockroaches (somehow fitting to certain areas of Jersey), dinosaurs, and—my favorite—worms.

In fact, Worm World offers up a great example of a technique many Web developers employ, both as a solution to low-bandwidth issues and as a creative visual trick.

Low SRC/High SRC

SRC is HTML's common graphic source argument. A standard, simplified tag (I've left out critical, but not absolutely necessary arguments for clarity's sake) looks like this:

```

```

This requests the file, `worm.gif`, and serves it up to your browser.

There is an argument you can use to load what is known as a Low SRC image. This image is typically a black-and-white rendering of the `worm.gif`. The point of offering this is to give low-bandwidth visitors a graphic that loads very quickly.

High SRC, then, relates to the higher-resolution image. You can call this

image to load on top of the low-bandwidth image for the high-bandwidth viewer. Here is the simplified syntax:

```

```

What this will do is load `wormlow.gif` first, and then follow it up with `worm.gif`, as you see in Figures 10.13 and 10.14.



Figure 10.13. The Low SRC image.

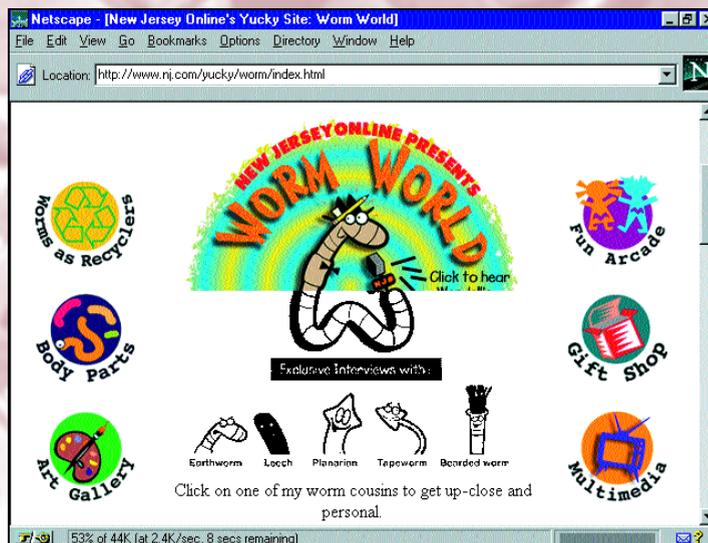


Figure 10.14. The High SRC image scrolling over the low image.

Those Clever Exploitationists

Part of the fun of Web technology is finding a creative use for a certain technique. The Low SRC/High SRC method has been employed to create a style of animation, albeit a somewhat limited one in light of technologies rapidly coming to the forefront.

The technique is based on using the `lowsrc` argument to load an image—full color, high-bandwidth (if you so desire) image, and then load a second image directly on top of it in the exact same place as the first one. The results can be quite clever. Say you load a triangle first, and then an upside-down triangle above it. You'll end up with a Star of David, with the appearance of movement as the images render.

The limitations of this simple trick relate primarily to browser caching. Once your browser has both of the images stored in cache, the load will be so quick that it will miss the movement dictated by load time connectivity. Still, it's a fun technique to play with. Of course, in its standard use, the Low SRC/High SRC technique can serve the Web designer concerned with offering graphics at low-bandwidth load times.



The International Kids' Space

http://plaza.interport.net/kids_space/

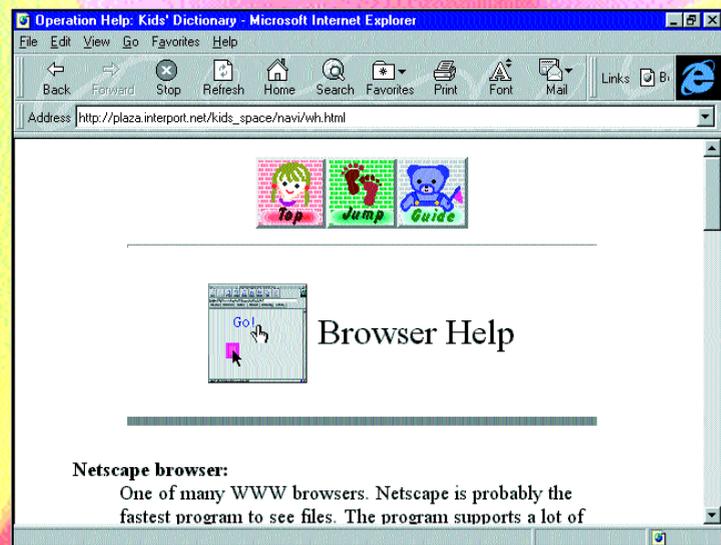


Figure 10.15. International Kids' Space help page.

This clever site is the Web's answer to a salon for kids. With areas to share music, literature, and art, as well as chat and make friends around the world, International Kids' Space is certain to expand a child's creative horizons, as well as give him or her a place to publish and be proud of achievements.

There is so much here, in fact, that it's very good that the Kids' Space designers made sure to give a visitor enough help. There is a guided tour of the site, a "jump" section where you can learn about what the many varied icons relate to, and a help page (see Figure 10.15) that answers some basic questions about the recommended browser of use and some of its important functions.

The challenge that any Web designer faces when dealing with large amounts of data invariably falls back to navigation and layout. The non-linear aspects of the Web make this process especially formidable, and it is very easy to create a great site but still have problems with navigation and structure. A help page with all of the information can sometimes be a quick and ready solution to these challenges.

Creating Helpful Help

The first step in helping visitors through large amounts of data is defining the three most important help needs on that site. If you've done a good job laying things out, this definition should be easily described.

Once defined, you have something quite concrete to work with. I'm going to set up a scenario and walk through it with you to demonstrate this concept in clear terms.

My three major needs are the following:

- To reach a broad audience

- To guide people through my content in a number of effective but easy ways

- To offer a means of feedback, so people who find a problem or want a question answered can get to me

Now, I'm going to decide how my design relates to these needs:

I've designed my Web site to be viewed by everyone, but the best way to view it is by using the Internet Explorer 3.0 browser. The second best way is by using the Netscape 3.0 browser. The site is fully text accessible as well. So, I've covered my bases with reaching the audience; however, I'd like to be sure that visitors have access to all of the necessary software to best view the site. As such, I'll need to make sure to put links to the best browsers on the site. Putting them just on the help page is such a neat way of doing it, too! I don't clutter up my stylish design and risk losing people right away by placing browser links all over the place.

There are several ways to navigate the site. I have a navigational bar running along the right vertical edge, I have a series of icons along the bottom of the page, and there are text options as well as a full site table of contents. I can use an area on my help page to describe different ways the icons and navigational options work, and how the table of contents can be reached from any page as a means of finding everything very efficiently. I also can take this opportunity to express that finding unique ways of navigating the site is part of the fun!

I want feedback as to how people are navigating the site, and if there are specific problems that I can address. Here is the perfect opportunity to place a form or e-mail link for folks to get in touch.

Finally, I want to make this help page especially helpful by providing *all* of the help information right there. I think splitting up this type of information can be confusing.

International Kids' Space is a great place to pass some time, and offers a lot of help with navigating the content. I would recommend one Help page that focuses on answering the navigation and user issues as a combined, cohesive effort.



Mello Smello

<http://www.mellosmello.com/>

Not only will the name delight young visitors, but the great Shockwave games are fun and educational, too! Mello Smello is a company that is deeply involved in the creation and promotion of kid-oriented products, and that such a company would have a Web site, much less a Web site geared toward kids, comes as no surprise.

What is especially pleasant about the Mello Smello site is the ample use of Shockwave's multimedia resources to add great animation and audio to the pages. A program as specialized as Shockwave is not always the best choice because, as always, you want to reach as wide an audience as possible. The Mello Smello site designers have done a good job of making the information compatible for people without Shockwave capabilities, but also offering ample links for people who do have the capabilities to go and get the software.

One unfortunate oversight is that throughout the site I see one of my least favorite things on the Web, and that is the evil horizontal scroll bar. (See Figure 10.16.) What's that? Well, it is something that is unnecessary. It appears frequently, though, because Web developers using nice big monitors at high screen resolution forget that many—possibly the majority of—well-equipped Internet surfers see the Web on 14- or 15-inch monitors at a 640x480 screen resolution.

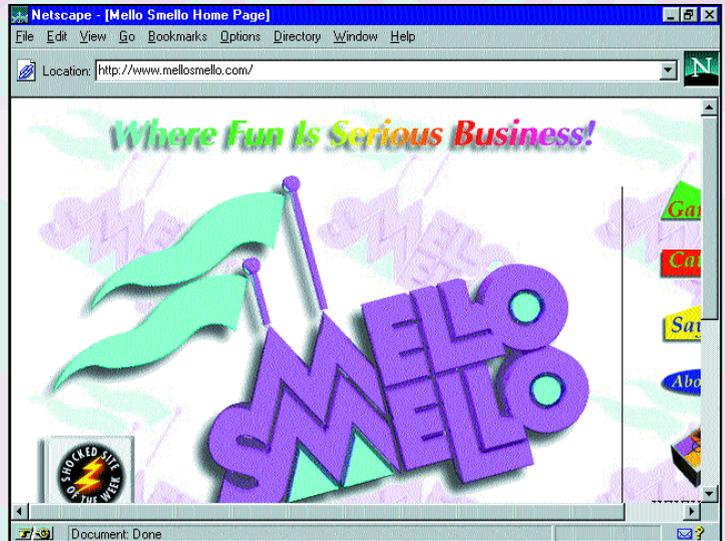


Figure 10.16. The Mello Smello home page with an evil horizontal scroll bar (lower-right corner of browser).

How to Avoid the Evil Horizontal Scroll Bar

Avoiding the horizontal scroll bar is so simple! Maybe that's why it bothers me that it appears so frequently.

When creating a page, remember that 640 pixels is the *total* width that the sum of all your parts should equal, in order to avoid the appearance of that dreaded scroll bar. Watch what happens when I examine the elements of the Mello Smello site and try to find why the scroll bar is there.

- The main image, `msindex2.gif`, is 500 pixels across.
- The vertical line image, `vline.gif`, is 10 pixels across.
- The icons to the left of the page are 100 pixels (or less) across.

Okay, you say, that's only 610 pixels! It should fit just fine. Well it doesn't. So I looked in the source code to find out just why.

This Mello Smello page is laid out using tables, an intelligent way to effectively control page elements. Tables have a variety of arguments; one is called cell padding. This is what the source code for this section looks like:

```
<CENTER>
  <IMG SRC="gfx/mstitle.gif" ALIGN=MIDDLE BORDER=0>
  <TABLE BORDER = 0 CELLPADDING = 10>
  <TR><TD>
    <IMG SRC="gfx/msindex2.gif" BORDER=0>
  </TD><TD>
```

```

<IMG SRC="gfx/vline.gif" HEIGHT=300 ALIGN=MIDDLE BORDER=0>
</TD><TD>
<A HREF="games/guestbook.html"><IMG SRC="gfx/games.gif" ALIGN=MIDDLE BORDER=0>
</A><BR>

```

Now, turn on the table borders just to see what the controls of this page look like. (See Figure 10.17.) See the space around the sections? This is cell padding.

If I drop that figure to 0, I end up losing the extra space, and I've almost eliminated the horizontal scroll bar. Looking again at the code, I see a couple of other things that can be done to get rid of it. First, I'm going to close the <center> tag before the table begins. It's the top image mstitle.gif that I want centered, not the table.

```

<CENTER>
  <IMG SRC="gfx/mstitle.gif" ALIGN=MIDDLE BORDER=0>
</center>
<TABLE BORDER = 0 CELLPADDING = 0>
<TR><TD>
  <IMG SRC="gfx/msindex2.gif" BORDER=0>
</TD><TD>
<IMG SRC="gfx/vline.gif" HEIGHT=300 ALIGN=MIDDLE BORDER=0>
</TD><TD>
<A HREF="games/guestbook.html"><IMG SRC="gfx/games.gif" ALIGN=MIDDLE BORDER=0>
</A><BR>

```

The results? Much better, as shown in Figure 10.18.

Generally speaking, Web designers should anticipate layout issues such as this when preparing their design. It's a wise rule of thumb to make 600 pixels the *absolute* width of any given total graphic or table. For this site, I would recommend dropping the size of the main graphic about 50 pixels in width, just so the extra space can be regained.



Figure 10.17. Mello Smello with tables shown.



Figure 10.18. The horizontal scroll bar is gone!

The MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom

<http://www.mca.com/home/playroom/>

Familiar faces such as Babe, Balto, and Casper the Friendly Ghost greet you from a virtual playroom filled with colorful sights, sounds, and interactive games. Each character has a dedicated page with links to arcade games, and a coloring book adventure.

The site will delight the youngest of kids, particularly those who are movie fans. It is possible that many of the younger children won't even be able to read the text parts of the site, which are generally well-written and graced by the presence of a variety of attractive graphics.

Yet, in reading along, I stumbled upon some mistakes in the writing! Grammar and spelling mistakes are unacceptable on the Web. I'm ashamed to say that I've made my fair share, and criticizing others who make fabulous sites is definitely a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black. However, the fact remains that copy editing is yet another overlooked part of Web design. Shame, shame to those who don't do it—particularly on a kids' site, and very particularly when that site is sponsored by a major industry!

The Copy Editor's Role in Web Design

If no one on your design team has copy editing skills, hire someone who does. It's that simple and that important! As trite as it might seem, you must be extra careful in this new medium not to lose grasp of something apparently being lost in mainstream U.S. education—literacy. It's disturbing, and the worst part is that in the



Figure 10.19. MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom home page.

electronic medium it seems to be especially rampant. But the good part is that, unlike print or other expensive media such as TV, you can change a typo or grammatical error online in the blink of an eye.

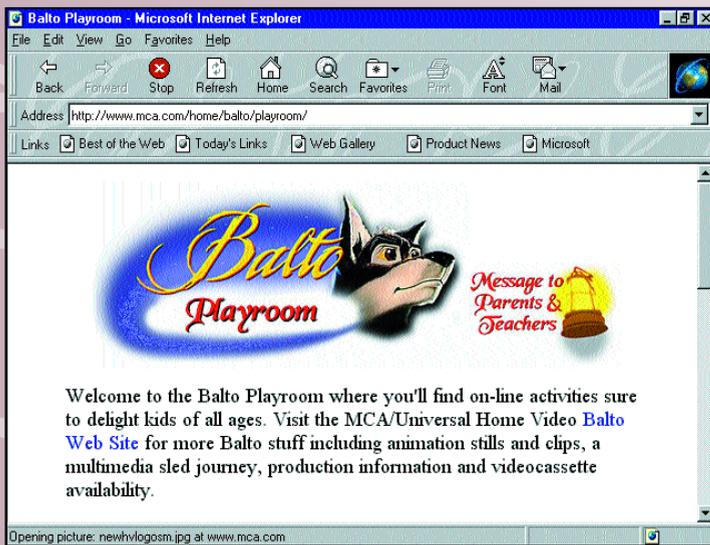
The offending example from the Kid's Playroom was found on Babe's page. (See Figure 10.20.) Notice the "it's" in "every animal has it's purpose?" Tsk tsk and oink oink. Well, those of you who remember your grammar rules know the only time an apostrophe appears in "it's" is when it's (as in "it is") a conjunction. There is no such thing as a possessive "its!"



Figure 10.20. The offending "it's."

Misusing “It’s” and “Its” is a common mistake, and my most despised—maybe I had a traumatic experience making the mistake at some point in my own history. I bet a million to one you can go to some of the sites that bear my name and find naughty grammar mistakes, but you won’t find that particular one. You will, however, find a person who will jump instantly to fix it.

So be aware of grammar, spelling, and copy editing as being part of the Web design process. You’ll make a better impression, and give all the kids a great big laugh when they see me slip off of this soapbox!



Doing Our Sums

Teachers always made me check my answers on tests, usually because I got so many things wrong—well, really only in math. I sure could have used the Web for extra assistance back then!

I’d like to recap the lessons of the Web sites featured in this upbeat and fun chapter. Much like going over my math problems, I learned a lot in the process of this chapter, especially because I’ve enjoyed myself so much with these kids’ sites. The lessons come more easily when they’re fun, at least for me! I suspect they do for you, too. That, in essence, is the most important lesson offered here—Web sites should find the fun and the magic. Even if it’s just a small, clever piece of programming, or a humorous anecdote told by the president of the corporation that you are doing the design for. It’s hard to make completely dry material work, particularly in the commercial mien.

Other topics covered include

- RealAudio technology.
- The gated community model can be very effective when applied to Web site design.
- Web sites should teach something!
- Applying simplicity can solve seemingly complex problems.
- Safe palette control.
- Margins are necessary *and* easy to code.
- Low SRC/high SRC is a bandwidth solution *and* creative option for animation.
- How to create helpful help pages.
- The evil horizontal scroll bar.
- Grammar and spelling COUNT!

I have some business to take care of. Big business, in fact. Check in with the next, and final, chapter, as I look at the design of some sites that use the Web for commerce.



Sites that Sell

Company Presence on the Web

JCPenney

<http://www.jcpenney.com/>

Bloomingdale's

<http://www.bloomingdales.com/>

IBM

<http://www.ibm.com/>

Toshiba

<http://www.toshiba.com/>

Sedgwick China

<http://www.insworld.com/sedgwick/china/>

Nike

<http://www.nike.com/>

Beaudry RV

<http://desert.net/beaudryrv/>

Konica Business Machines

<http://www.kbm.com/>

MCI

<http://www.mci.com/>

Gerber Optical

<http://www.gerberoptical.com/>

Some of the best uses for the Web are the extension of corporate image, customer relations, and access to information that the Internet so conveniently offers. This chapter examines some well known and not-so-famous companies that are doing innovative Web sites to great success.

The Web design lessons here are many, including the importance of promotions as exemplified by JCPenney's site, the powerful technique of GIF animation that Bloomingdale's does a beautiful job with, effective use of <meta> elements on IBM's home page, and the value of global presence as expressed by Toshiba. I continue with practical tips on how to mix background textures and flat colors on the Sedgwick China site, and how to cleverly avoid looking amateurish while

parts of a Web site have yet to be finished. Nike has done the Web justice with its treatment of this. With Beaudry RV, you'll think about themes and how they can drive a Web site, and learn how to color-match links by finding hexadecimal equivalents of RGB values at Konica Business Machines' site.

Customer service is an important function of Web sites, and MCI does it very well, offering a very progressive and convenient method of providing customers with on-demand access to account information. Finally, Gerber Optical will warm you up with a little hot Java, and you can see how fun and easy it is to add simple applets to a Web site with style, as well as functionality.

Featured Site!

JCPenney

<http://www.jcpenny.com/>



Since 1902, JCPenney has been a household word for most North Americans. Now, with a global online presence, this stalwart company has entered the world market with a bang. Secure online shopping, gift and wedding registries, sales, and corporate information are all available from this Web site with a simple mouse click.

I was browsing through companies with a Web presence while doing research for this book, and what drew me to the JCPenney site was the aggressive advertising campaign they had going on. (See Figure 11.2.) An old trick in media, promotion is as much a part of the business plan of any company as is the desire to make a profit!



Yet, many businesses on the Web have yet to catch on to this simple and sensible advice. Web designers need to sit up and take notice—promotional events are excellent methods of bringing a fresh look to a site, or the perfect opportunity to add a special game or other feature to a Web site. It's a good way to keep visitors entertained, *and* to keep clients engaged in being excited about their Web sites.

Web promotions needn't be cost prohibitive, either. One page of exciting information, or an additional banner on a home page, is a great start. The more resources available, the more flexibility you have in designing more aggressive strategies. JCPenney is obviously in a position to take advantage of some of the Web's best advertising methods, and these can be costly. But the advantage is obvious—the aggressive promotion is definitely giving the company a true *presence* on the Web.

Seasonal Promotions

To create effective seasonal promotions, the best place to start is with a little research. Find out as much as you can about your client. The interests and customer base of that client are going to drive the type of promotion you bring into being. This idea follows a statement I'm famous for: Intent drives content.

For example, if you don't want to alienate a specific heritage or religion during the holiday season, you'll be sure to incorporate as many events as feasible. This isn't just political correctness—it's good business sense. Don't alienate potential customers. In fact, a major part of selling involves flattering the customer, making him or her feel as though they have been personally singled out by you, and that you are making that particular customer some special offer.

It's a good idea to keep a comprehensive list of seasonal events available as a reference. Then, when consulting with Web site clients, you, as the designer, can be sure to offer good ideas as to how to promote the site. Consider all the familiar offerings, such as New Year's, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Halloween (see Figure 11.3), and so on, as well as more demographically specific ones such as Rosh Hoshana (Jewish New Year), or Dia de los Muertos (the Latin American equivalent to Halloween that is actually a highly ritualized holiday). Comprehensive conversations with your client will



JCP

Figure 11.3. JCPenney's Halloween page.



enlighten you to the types of customers they already have, as well as those they'd like to entice.

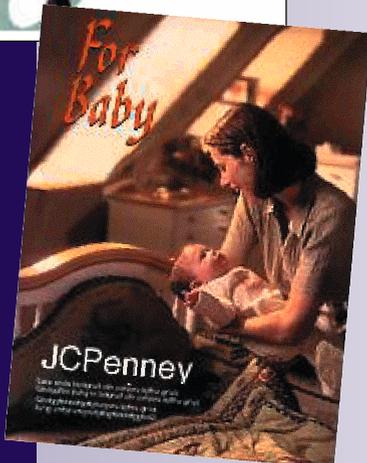
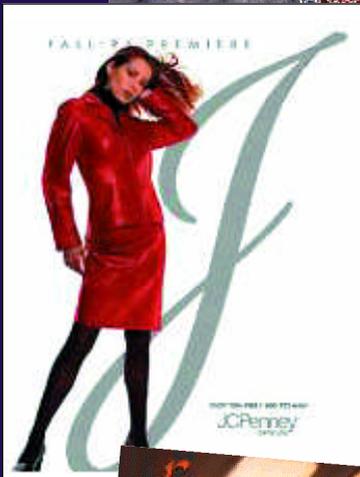
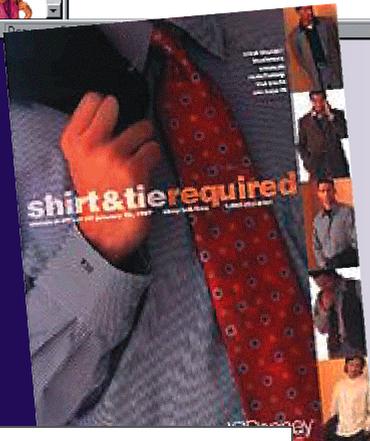
Banner Advertising

I was once at an Internet Exposition during DesertNet's early days, and was approached by an attendee for more information about the Web site design we provided. "I thought a Web site *was* marketing," she stated. The comment struck me as interesting, because, although a Web site can indeed be an extension of marketing, it also requires marketing in order to be successful.

One way of bringing Web sites out of the dark tangents of the vast Internet is by creating and placing advertising banners on well-traveled sites. This can be rather affordable or very expensive, depending on the type of marketing strategy the client is seeking. JCPenney's advertising happened to be on Yahoo!, which is extremely well-trafficked. There are also banners to be had on less expensive, but still effective, sites. Regionally-oriented sites such as DesertNet are a perfect example of effective presence in a specific market. Further narrowing down the scope of your intended audience would allow you to choose newspapers and magazines that reach the audience *you* want to reach.

Again, your preliminary research is going to be critical to the type of banner advertising you're going to create for the client. There are also different types of banner advertising, including the seasonal promotion as previously mentioned, which can be supported by custom banners for that promotion, single banners that are representative of the product or service at hand, or entire banner advertising campaigns. The choice you make will most certainly be determined by resources as well as demographic concerns.

For a full perspective on the power of banner advertising, I recommend a visit to DoubleClick, a company that is completely focused on Web advertising. Ideas as well as resources are available on the site. Point your browser to <http://www.doubleclick.com/> for more information.



ennney

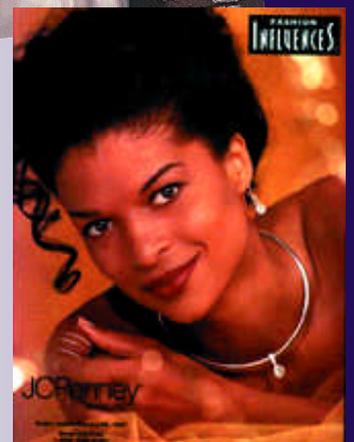
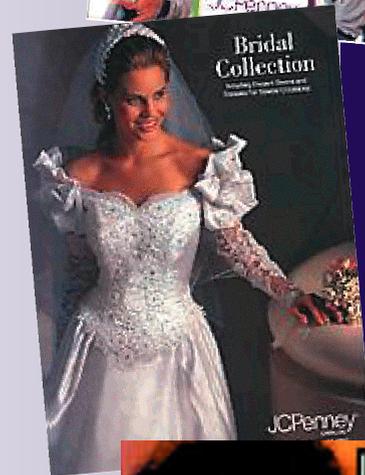
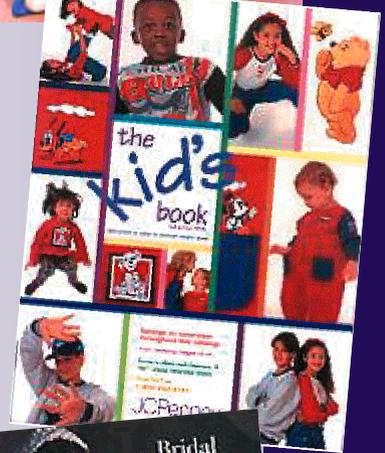
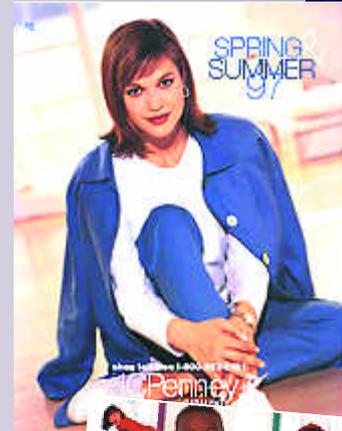
Offline Promotions

Another paradox found in the advertising methodology of the Web is that Web sites must be supported offline. There are two reasons I feel that offline promotions are extremely important. The first is the more obvious: It is necessary to make sure that customers and fellow businesspersons know about your Web site. The second is a bit more insidious, but perhaps the most powerful: the penetration and saturation of Web marketing into the culture at large.

It's almost impossible to watch television in the United States without seeing commercials go by with Web URLs. One Monday night while watching *Chicago Hope*, I counted commercials with Web sites. I kept thinking, "The next won't have an URL. It won't!" But sure enough, it did. It was both frustrating and exhilarating to see how much the Web had become a part of our daily lives. When the market becomes truly saturated, Web sites will be viewed (as well they should be) as an essential part of a business plan.

There have been some truly unique and commendable ways I've seen offline Web advertising handled. Of course, there are the more obvious ways, such as placement of URLs on business cards, letterhead, and in regular advertising spots that the client has in newspapers, radio, and television. My favorite two examples from URL watching include a waste disposal company that had their site's URL on a coffee mug (the paradox thrills me!) and one of my own clients, the Saguaro Credit Union who have placed their URL on check stubs. Kudos to them for relating a Web site with money!

Yes, a Web site is marketing. But, it is also much more. JCPenney, although already an established company, has proven how effective the use of extended advertising is in taking a business to a new level—in this case, from a national market to a global one. It's exciting to see this kind of vision from what might be considered old-paradigm corporations. As Web designers, you have the opportunity to bridge the gap for your clients, assisting them through promotions in getting the very best for their company's long-term future.



Featured Site II

bloomingdale's

<http://www.bloomingdales.com/>

Figure 11.4. Bloomingdale's home page.



It is truly accidental that both of the featured sites in this section are from major retail chains, at least on my part. The other end of the argument might claim that it's an endorsement of the Web working for corporations in a variety of different ways. No matter how you choose to sum it up, I, a shopping maniac with a serious addiction to clothing, am nothing less than delighted (and nothing more than deeper in debt) to find so much in the way of retail on the Web.

The Bloomingdale's site is as fashionable as one might expect, with a very contemporary look. I am particularly taken with the use of GIF animations on the home page, especially the center one, which shows off various fashion and home accessories fading in and out in a technically sophisticated manner. It gives the perfect opportunity to examine how animated GIFs are made, and to celebrate the fact that the exploitation of technology has turned out to be one of the most easy and effective techniques available to the Web designer.

Animated GIFs have literally changed the face of the Web, even more than other forms of animation. The primary reason is because they can be kept very small for fast loading, and they cross the platform barrier with ease. If a browser doesn't interpret the animated aspects of an animated GIF, the default is still a GIF image!

The technique is now extraordinarily simple because software engineers have graced us with WYSIWYG (What You See is What You Get) tools that can walk even the novice designer through the process with grace and ease. Because I work on a PC platform, I'll be discussing two programs that I've had great success with. For those designers using Macs, the popular GIF animation program available is GIFBuilder, a powerful program that is very similar to the programs I'm about to describe. GIFBuilder can be obtained for free, along with detailed history and tutorials of GIF animation, at Royal Frazier's now-famous Web site: <http://members.ao1.com/royalef/gifanim.htm>.

All GIF animations require a series of GIFs that make up the individual "cells" of the animation, a tool to process the GIFs, and a browser that will interpret them (Netscape and Internet Explorer 2.0+ users are safe). The same rule that I've covered whenever discussing graphic formats on the Web remains true: size matters. Keep individual cells optimized and the overall file size will remain very manageable.

Creating Animated GIFs with GIF Construction Set

To install the GIF Construction Set from Alchemy Mindworks (found on the enclosed CD-ROM), perform the following steps:

- Open the program, and select File | Animation Wizard.
- Click Next.
- Select For use with a Web page.
- Choose between Loop Indefinitely or Animate Once and Stop. (My suggestion is to loop only once, but your mileage may vary. Sometimes constantly looping animations become annoying.)
- Now choose between Photorealistic (anything that uses a photo as the source image), Drawn (for anything else), or Drawn in 16 Colors. (This one isn't too important unless you're dealing with very few colors.)
- Now select your delay. Remember, these are 1/100th second delays. Play around with delays to see what works best with a given animation.
- Select Files from the directory where you have saved them.
- Check the order. If it is satisfactory, select Save As, name the file, and voila!

Sounds too simple, right? It really is that easy. Another program that I highly recommend because it gives very detailed palette control, is the PhotoImpact GIF Animator from Ulead Systems. Although the instructions are very similar, there are settings in this product that can make a power user of anyone in an instant. Open the program, and from File go to Preferences. There, under General, you will find a range of palettes that will best match the work you are doing. Image Layer gives options on interlacing and diffusion, as well as offering more palette control options. You can add comments to your work if you have the commercial version. For personal palette control, select Edit and then Global Palette. This gives you the opportunity to set a custom palette for an entire project!

Bloomingdale's fantastic GIF animation (see Figures 11.5 and 11.6) is a perfect example of the kind of clever and practical applications GIF animations allow. They are a lot of fun, a diversion as well as an art for you, the designer!



Figure 11.5. Bloomingdale's animated GIF (center).



IBM

<http://www.ibm.com/>

This corporate giant has an attractive and practical Web presence. Using a news-style interface, the first information you are offered is the lead stories of the month, whether they be financial data about IBM or details of upcoming products and projects.

The graphic design is sensible: an effective, consistent page layout consisting of navigation icons to the left and details in the main body of the page. The lack of animation or Java on the main page is a tasteful choice for a business of IBM's corporate composure. The site, in a word, is precise.

This precision is reflected in the underlying HTML of the site. I was especially impressed with the thorough and consistent use of the `<meta>` element.

Used in the `<head>` section of HTML documents, the `<meta>` element helps provide information about the document for identification purposes, such as author and content. The `<meta>` element "tags" document information for search engines to index and catalog, to help browsers cache and refresh documents, or to allow for *client pull*, a technique that causes a page to automatically reload after a set amount of time.

IBM's site uses `<meta>` mostly to identify the page and alert the Web worms to do their indexing appropriately. Here are some relevant `<meta>` tag examples from IBM's Home Page code:

```
<META NAME="DESCRIPTION" CONTENT="The
➔IBM corporate home page, entry point
➔to information about IBM products and
➔services">
<META NAME="LANGUAGE" CONTENT="en-us">
<META NAME="KEYWORDS" CONTENT="dynamic
➔homepage home page index ibm
➔international business machines">
<META NAME="OWNER"
➔CONTENT="webmaster@www.ibm.com">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="REFRESH"
➔CONTENT="900">
```

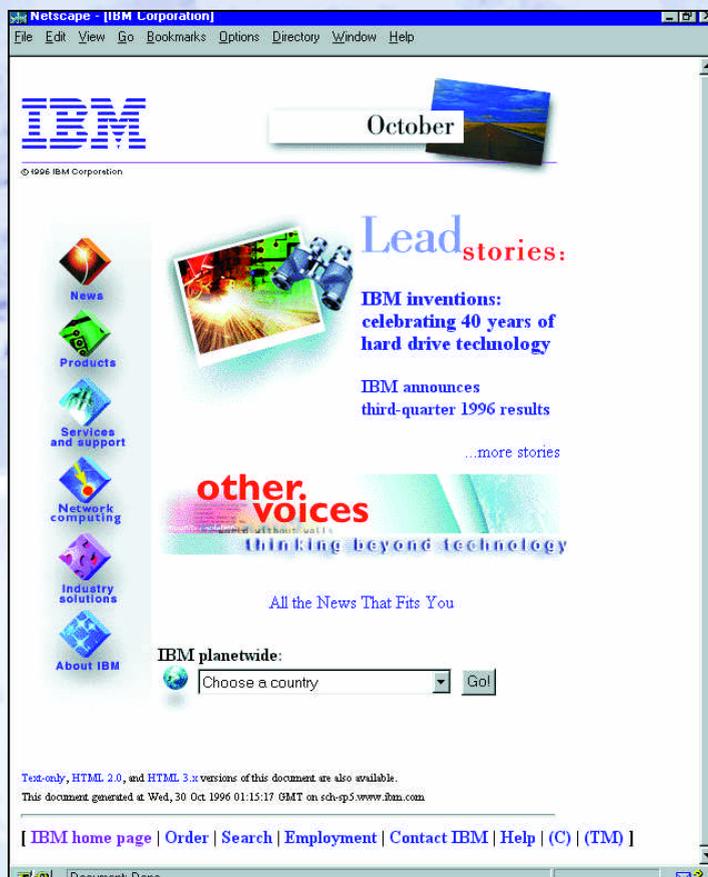


Figure 11.7. IBM's home page.

First, you'll notice that each `<meta>` element begins with a left-angle bracket, followed by the word `meta`, a space, the qualifying arguments, and finally, a right-angle bracket. It's important to note this because there is no closing `</meta>`, unlike many other tags and elements. Instead, the entire `<meta>` information is handled line by line, between the `<head>` tag and closing `</head>` tag.

The first line in this example is the description, defined by the `name="description"` argument. Once the name element is defined, you'll follow up with the `content`, which is the literal description. In this case, IBM has placed a description of the specific page. This is quite useful, both for identifying the page's purpose when looking only at the code, as well as providing a description for visiting Web crawlers, worms, and other robots to grab and place in their respective data banks.

The next line tells you the specific language and character set in use, in this case United States English. Following this are keywords, which also enable Web robots to index the page. I recommend using more than the example here provides, and in fact, using more descriptive words. Keywords are quite important, and should be very comprehensive, containing not only the company's name, but the names of products and related words. In IBM's case, such words might include "computers

copiers stock quotes economy money." This would enable those pesky robots to get a broad-range of information as quickly as possible.

The "owner" argument points to the Webmaster and how to get in touch with that individual via electronic mail. Finally, there is a refresh request. This particular example requests the browser to

reload the document after a period of 900 seconds. This particular type of meta argument can be used to actually replace the current document with another. This is referred to as *client pull*, as previously mentioned, and the technique, which creates a form of animation, is detailed in Chapter 4, "Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities."

TOSHIBA

<http://www.toshiba.com/>

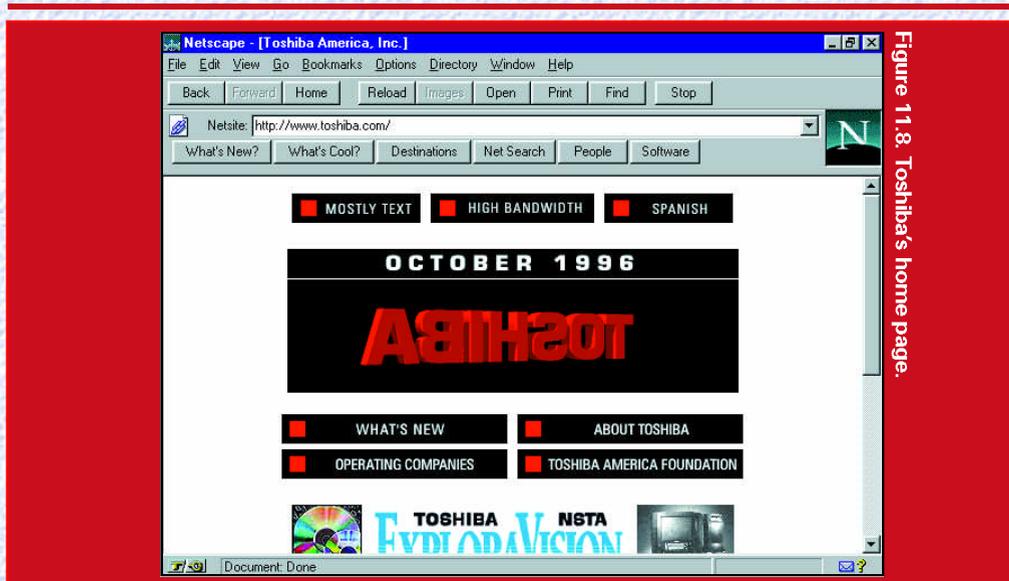


Figure 11.8. Toshiba's home page.

I like this site for a number of reasons. I'm a fan of many Toshiba products, particularly their wonderful notebook computers. More importantly, I think they've done an admirable job of incorporating the global awareness that is inherent on the Web—and their international company—within their site.

Some companies seem reluctant, despite an international business presence, to use the Web as a means to promote the worldwide opportunities the Web provides. I'm not certain that this is a deliberate or accidental issue. Or, perhaps this issue can be attributed to less obvious circumstances, such as the politics and policies involved in corporate image. Regardless of the reasons, it is refreshing to find a company that openly embraces this worldwide relationship.

For the Web designer, there is great empowerment in the non-geographical aspect of the Web. Essentially,

you can be anywhere in the world and present a global face; the size of the city does not matter. The same is true with the size of the businesses you represent. A large corporation, desiring a warmer, more personal presentation, can achieve that on the Web. Conversely, the small business can come across as a large corporate entity, as long as the ability to back up the product is there for follow-through, of course.

The significant point here is that Web designers should work closely with clients to take advantage of the Web's international scope. Understanding how the Web can be a powerful application is going to enable your client to have a successful Web site, and enable your own progress within the design world.

When meeting with clients, the following questions can serve as helpful guides to determine how the international mien of the Web can best assist with the site design at hand:

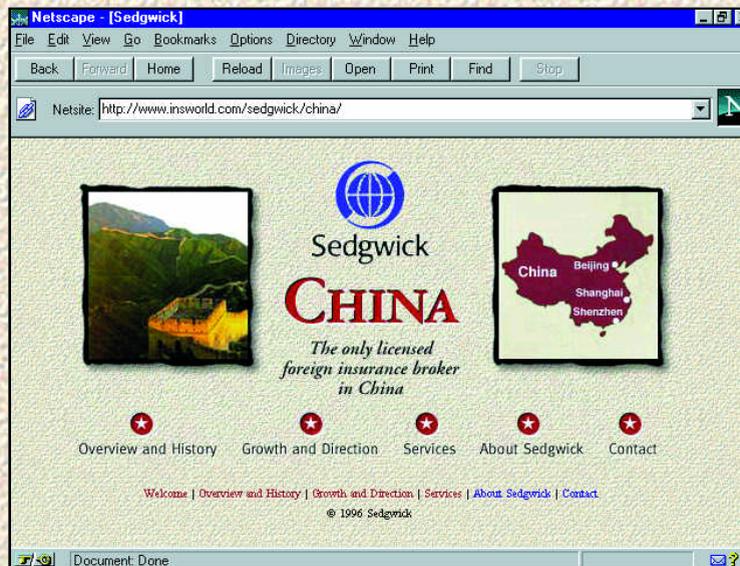
- What is your current market? Local, national, international?
- If local, are you interested in and capable of managing an international audience? If international, are you seeking to bring a sense of more personal service to your Web site visitors?
- Is the location of your company considered a strength? Do you think it would be more effective to take emphasis *off* of your physical location?
- Are you interested in promoting other activities in the city, regions, states, or countries in which you operate?
- Is your audience multi-lingual? Is there a language that you can provide as an alternative on your Web site that will enhance your interaction with customers?

Toshiba provides an excellent example of language options. The corporate site is offered in both English and Spanish. Because Spanish is a very common language worldwide, as well as in the United States, it makes sense to make a visit to the site as practical and helpful as possible. Toshiba provides a strong example for Web designers to take the international issues to their clients, strengthening not only the corporate advantage, but, ultimately, fully embracing the *World* in World Wide Web.

Sedgwick CHINA

<http://www.insworld.com/sedgwick/china/>

Figure 11.9. Sedgwick China's home page.



This elegant site is as functional as it is attractive, a powerful combination that is a reason for its success. The Web presence for China's only licensed foreign insurance broker, this site offers information about Sedgwick to its U.S.

constituents in a clear, crisp fashion that is easy to navigate and read.

The graphic design is a mix of clean lines and textured fields. Bright Chinese photographs and images appear throughout, nicely set into the text.

This mix of texture and clarity is first established on the site's home page, where photographs are set into the textured background. Within the site, the continuation of this blend is assisted by the use of frames, and visually created by the implementation of different backgrounds within those fields.

Background choices are very important. Web designers must select backgrounds that are elemental parts of a whole. The background must enhance and interact with the site design, never taking away from the information within a site. Instead, the background should serve as a complementary member of the entire site. Sedgwick China is a perfect example of the wise use of backgrounds as part of a cohesive Web environment. Look closely at Figure 11.10 to see the navigational frame (to the left) and the information frame. This figure will help you clearly follow this concept.

In the navigational frame, you'll notice the burlap-style texture. It's a very realistic-looking fiber, and is light enough to read the information placed over it. This is extremely important when creating textured backgrounds: Be sure to make them dark enough to maintain the look and feel you're after, but light enough for text to be *clearly* readable. Typically, textured backgrounds such as this are made into tiles, either square or rectangular. Textured backgrounds should, when tiled into a field, be smooth. In other words, the eye should not be able to detect where a tile begins and ends, or when a new one meets its edge.

The information frame also uses a background. This background has a left margin object with a

clean white chosen for the main field. Margin backgrounds are a special case, in that they must be created length-wise at a length of no shorter than 1280 pixels. The rationale behind this is that anything shorter is going to repeat at the screen resolution of the individual's monitor. For example, if I create a blue margin, as seen in the right frame field of Sedgwick, and I left it at 600 pixels on a 640 pixel screen width, the vertical blue line is going to repeat, which will disrupt my design. So, when creating any background with a vertical stripe, be sure to make it long enough to avoid repetition on a higher resolution monitor.

In the Sedgwick case, both a tiled texture and margin-style background are employed (see Figure 11.10), and the resulting effect is quite classy. Therefore, one background image is not necessary within a site. Play around with the colors and styles you like to get the kind of look you like the best.

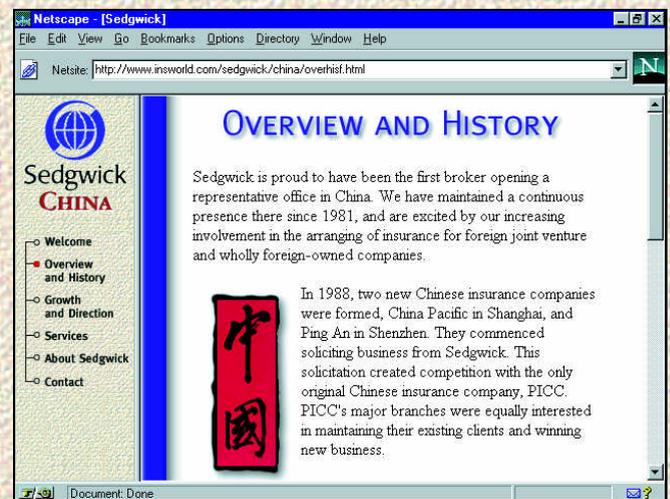


Figure 11.10. Sedgwick China's mix of backgrounds.

Here are a few rules of the highway when working with background images:

- As with any Web graphic, optimize! Reduce colors, index, drop bit number, whatever techniques are appropriate for your graphic, until you have a small graphic that *doesn't* lose quality.
- Make your own backgrounds. If it came from a background image repository, you probably want to avoid it. Of course, certain textures are popular for a reason—such as the burlap on Sedgwick. If you're going to choose a popular style, do something unusual with it, as the designer of Sedgwick did with the recessed fonts and symbols.
- Be sure that any type or words you place on a background will be easily read by visitors.
- Beware of the repeat phenomenon. Any background with a vertical and that you don't want to repeat needs high-resolution monitors 1280 pixels in length.
- Use backgrounds as an elemental part of the Web site, not as disconnected entities that have no relationship to other elements on the page, including text and graphics.

NIKE

<http://www.nike.com/>

Conceptually, the Web is *always* under construction. Areas of sites are constantly changing, with the infrastructure being rebuilt, torn down, and redesigned, sometimes on a daily basis. New areas of sites are added, and sites go through entire restoration or renovation. This is all part of the living, breathing Web. Announcing it with as stupid a symbol as the Under Construction sign (see Figure 11.12) is not as clever as it once was. Now, I'll get off my slippery soap box and offer some realistic advice as provided per Nike.

The method Nike uses (see Figure 11.11) perfectly exemplifies the right way to handle site changes or redesigns when you don't want a visitor to not be able to find the site, or think that it is no longer available. You want to let the visitor know that the site will be back, bigger and better than ever! Simply telling your audience what's going on is ever so much more informative than suggesting that you, like any Web site, are under construction.

Here's how Nike just did it. With their little check mark trademark on the left, the text reads as follows:

"The number you have reached is no longer in service. Nike.com will be dark for several months while we rebuild the site and prepare for the future. So thanks for thinking of us and be sure to come back when we go on-line again."

"Don't worry. You'll hear about it."

There you have it. Clear communication, appreciation of the audience, an invitation to return, and that Nike humor letting you know that they know you're going to be hearing about what a great Web site they've got. I'll bet big money it's going to be a sizzling site. After all, they treated this problem—a bane of my existence—with such grace, that I'm convinced only amazing things lie ahead.

in the dark

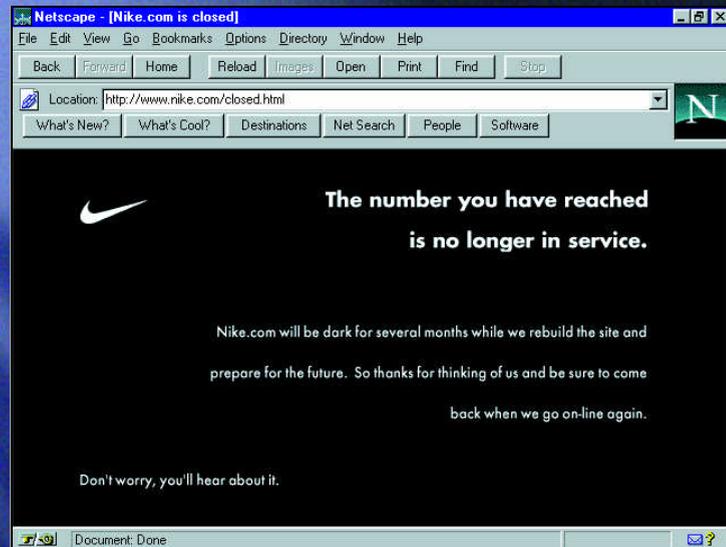


Figure 11.11. Nike's effective placeholder.

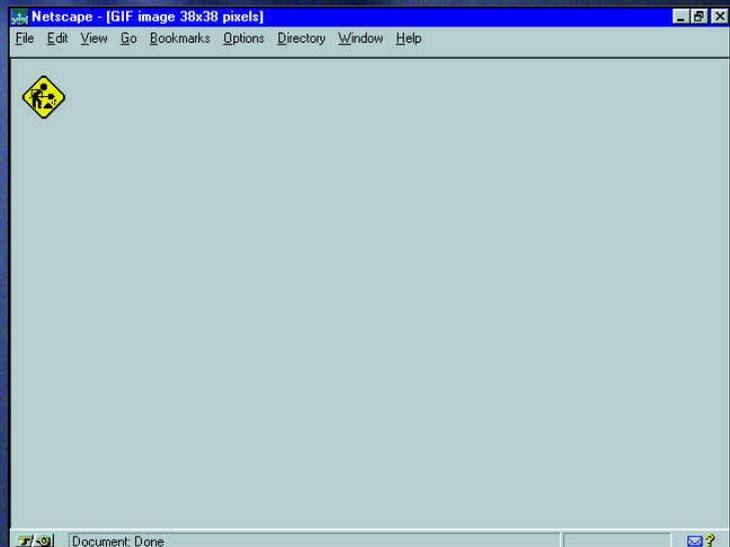


Figure 11.12. An example of the dreaded Under Construction symbol that Nike has wisely chosen to avoid using.

Beaudry RV

Tucson, AZ
800/284-4878

<http://desert.net/beaudryrv/>

There are a lot of things for sale on the Net, but who would have thought that selling recreational vehicles (expensive, elaborate items at best) would be a smashing success on the Web? Sure enough, the tale is that the company had to add a special salesperson just to handle the inquiries and sales leads generated from the Web site.

Perhaps being the World's #1 Fleetwood dealer doesn't hurt.

It takes a bold company to sell such a, well, big product, and bold is the way Beaudry RV has tackled the Web.

Blocky, masculine letters grace the page's splash page, which uses a postcard-style graphic that sets the theme for the site. Throughout the pages, the travel theme continues, both visually and in content. Photos are treated with a Polaroid matting. There are on-the-road forums for RV fans to write in and chat about their experiences, and even links to campgrounds and activities for RV enthusiasts to help plan trips from the virtual, or real, highway.

Theme is a strong aspect of creating a Web site. Choosing and developing a thematic approach to data and information can make a site cohesive, intelligent, and guide the material. In a sense, theme treatments can keep your job easy by showing you the route to take for various subjects to be incorporated into the site.

It's not difficult to develop a theme; typically, the subject matter will drive it. Beaudry RV's travel motif is a natural extension of the product. The idea is to find the theme within the product, subject, or with the client. Sometimes he or she might have excellent ideas as to how they'd like to present the information. It's a creative process, but it can be guided by thinking about the following:

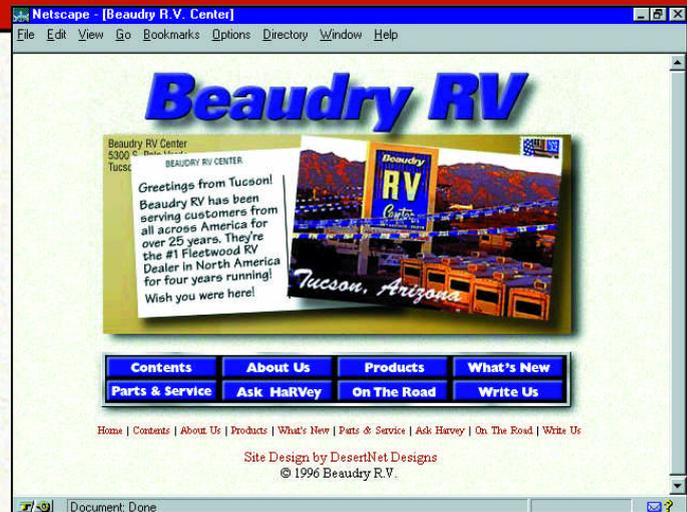


Figure 11.13: Beaudry RV's splash page.

- Is there a natural theme here? Examples would include a coffee plantation theme for a coffee company, a home tour for a real-estate firm, and a football game for a sports product manufacturer.
- If a natural theme seems cliché or inappropriate, what about a less obvious, more creative theme? A love story to sell wine, for example. On one of the first sites I ever worked on, the designers developed a theme all around the sensation of euphoria. The site features alternative, independent music. We used colors, words, and art to communicate a sense of exhilaration and euphoria.

Not all sites are going to call for a theme, but it should always be in the forefront of a Web designer's mind when approaching a particular site. The end result can be very powerful and act as a vehicle for success.





Konica

Business Machines

The lion's eyes light up the splash page on Konica's Business Machines' site, and their famous mascot roars. The internal pages are crisp and bright, and make excellent use of white space, well-optimized graphic images, and bright color.

I like the way the designers of this page have color-matched link attributes. (See Figure 11.15.) It's a sophisticated touch when designers go the extra mile and methodically, but creatively, make sure that smaller, seemingly less important elements like this are considered as part of the over-all design.

There's been a bit of controversy as to link colors. Some designers are of the mindset that link colors should remain at the default blue and purple for identification purposes. To me, this suggests that Web visitors aren't worldly enough to know when something is hot or not. I think that opinion is not only false, but insulting to the intelligence of Web users. Besides, it's the duty of designers to make

Web sites clear enough so that visitors will have little or no questions as to how to navigate.

Link color matching does have some recommended guidelines, however. Konica Business Machines' Web site matches from the graphic palette used for that site, and not from a safe palette. As much as I discussed background colors in Chapter 10, "Sites for Kids: Education, Games, Items of Interest with Children in Mind," any type of text or field color that will be pulled from a computer's color control system could conceivably end up dithering to horribly bright or significantly different colors on Windows 3.1 machines, and with monitors that only support 256 colors rather than thousands or millions. As such, text and link color matching should be done either by selecting from the safe palette (see Appendix C, "Color Table"), or the designer should be sure to check out his or her choices at lower color resolutions. It's an extra step in the process, but it's a wise one to take.



Figure 11.14. Konica Business Machines' home page.



Figure 11.15. Konica Business Machines' link color matching.

Link controls are all found within the <body> tag. Here is an example of the syntax from the KBM site:

```
<BODY bgcolor="#FFFFFF"
↳background="graphics/backg.gif"
↳vlink="#9d3e0d" alink="#9d3e0d">
```

The HTML coder has, in the preceding example, argued first for a background color value of white, and a background graphic to load after that. The visited link color is brown, and the active link (the color the link turns as it's being clicked on) appears as the same brown. Interestingly, the link color itself has been left at the default blue, as has the text.

I would personally have defined the elements left as defaults. It's a good rule of thumb to argue as much as would apply to a page, instead of leaving it to default. Browsers differ, and some browsers allow for customization of default colors. Therefore, in order for the careful, considerate design to be effective, arguing the default will create as much cross-browser, cross-platform consideration as possible. The results would look like this:

```
<BODY bgcolor="#FFFFFF"
↳background="graphics/backg.gif" text=
↳"#000000" link="#3758DB" vlink="#9d3e0d"
↳alink="#9d3e0d">
```

The preceding shows a minor change with potentially improved results. Now, some readers might be asking, "Well, where did the value come from? Just what do those letters and numbers mean?"

Colors are defined in HTML documents (either in the <body> or tags, or wherever the bgcolor argument is allowed, as with table data fields) by the hexadecimal equivalent of the RGB (red-green-blue) value of a given color. (An exception is with Internet Explorer extensions—

you can simply type a color in the appropriate field, but I would avoid this as it isn't standard.) There are several ways to get this value. My preference is by converting the RGB value to hexadecimal with a scientific calculator. In Windows, all of this can be done with Photoshop and the calculator provided with the operating system. The following steps show how:

1. Open the graphic to be color-coded in Photoshop (or any graphic program that reads RGB values).
2. Use the picker to select the color you would like to use for text, link, or other page attributes.
3. Read the RGB value and jot it down.
4. Open the calculator and place it in scientific mode.
5. Type in the Red value.
6. Click on "hex" and jot down the result.
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 for the Green and Blue values. The resulting numbers and letters, in the RGB order, will be the hexadecimal value necessary.

My RGB value for the blue link color was: 55 88 219. After processing, the result was: 3758DB, which is indeed the bright blue resulting link color.

It's important to note that "0" will appear as "0" in hexadecimal. Be sure to use *two* zeros in order to achieve the proper results. Hexadecimal values should always, as the name indicates, be six characters in length.

Please see Appendix C, which provides the complete hex values for the safe palette.

Photographs courtesy of Konica Business Machines U.S.A., Inc.



Product
Information

Overview Products News Dealers Software How To For Dealers Jobs Links

MCI

<http://www.mci.com/>

When pitching the Web to clients, I have often mentioned the value of 24-hour online customer service. This is one of the best uses of the Web for businesses. It provides on-demand access for information about a product, can easily provide secure account information for customers, and offers a variety of other services to the public any time of the day, any day of the year. A client can get all of this with much less overhead than such services would cost elsewhere.

MCI has taken this aspect of the Web and truly made it a powerful part of the various offerings on their Web site. There is a lot of energy on the site: product information, news with feature articles, and regular columns from Internet and technology personalities, such as Vint Cerf (casually known as the Internet's dad for his part in developing the TCP/IP protocol).

Other site areas focus on MCI's vast services, including long distance for home or business, hot focus on their Internet products (see Figure 11.17), and an online CGI-to-pager service. There's even a collection of QuickTime Virtual Reality scenes from the "Garden of the Gods," the MCI home office in Colorado Springs. The site is heavy on the frames, but it is generally a judicious use of space. It is very comprehensive, but the intelligent use of interactive customer service shines the brightest.

The first thing customers who want service must do is apply for a password and user ID. (See Figure 11.18.) This is done via a CGI script, and the password is generated and automatically sent back to your e-mail. You can then sign on and use the service to view your bill, update your account, redeem points, and add or delete custom services. All that's missing is paying your bill online, but this may well be available in the near future.

Obviously, not all clients wanting to have a Web site are going to have the resources, both technologically and financially, that a large corporation has available. However, this doesn't mean customer service—even with limited interactivity such as feedback e-mail or FAX forms—is out of reach. The hallmark of customer service on the Web is the provision of information. Beyond that, everything else is value-added service.



Figure 11.16. MCI's home page.



Figure 11.17. MCI technology.

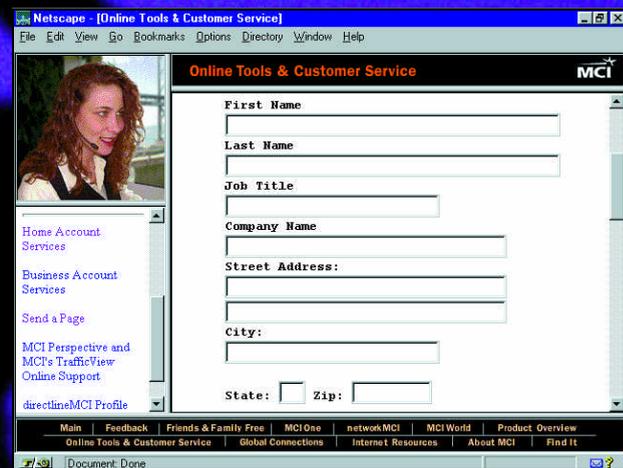


Figure 11.18. Customer service on MCI.

The one caution is to work within the client's resources. Over-extending options, such as a 24-hour e-mail feedback response, could cause problems if the means to provide that type of support are not in place. Always evaluate a client's needs as well as the level of resource commitment he or she is able to make. Re-evaluations can always take place as a company grows or resources change.

Gerber Optical

<http://www.gerberoptical.com/>

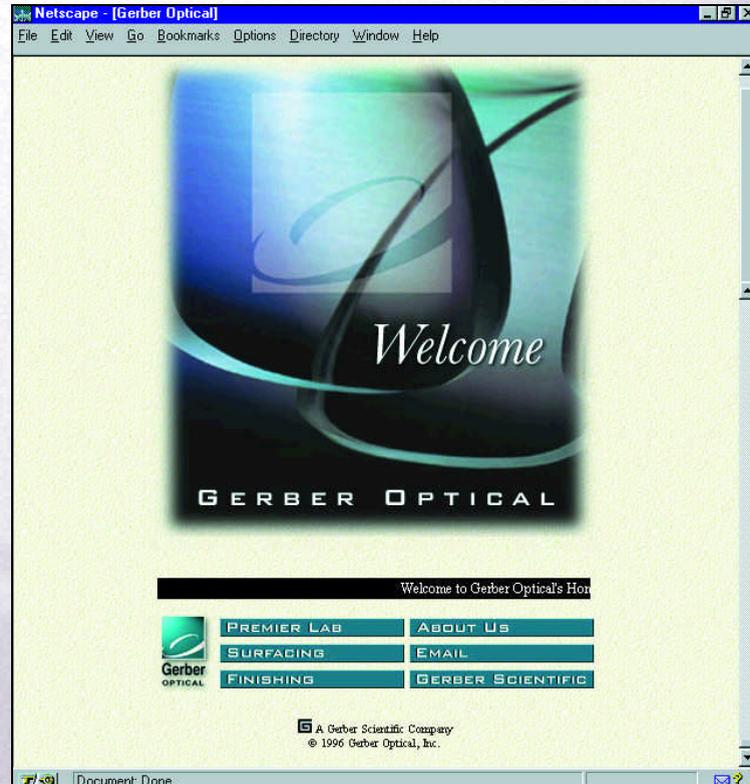


Figure 11.19. Gerber Optical's home page (with Java applet).

The entire spectrum of Gerber sites are quite exceptional and rather diverse. (See Figure 11.20.) The Gerber Optical site is a quintessential example of corporate presence—attractive but functional design, with a focus on the products and information.

There's almost a feeling with sites such as this that they aren't out to serve the general public, but rather, a very specific network of peers or buyers interested in the company. I think of sites such as this as Intra-Internets: sites not quite as private or in-house as an intranet, but not quite as public as a frank commercial Web site, either.

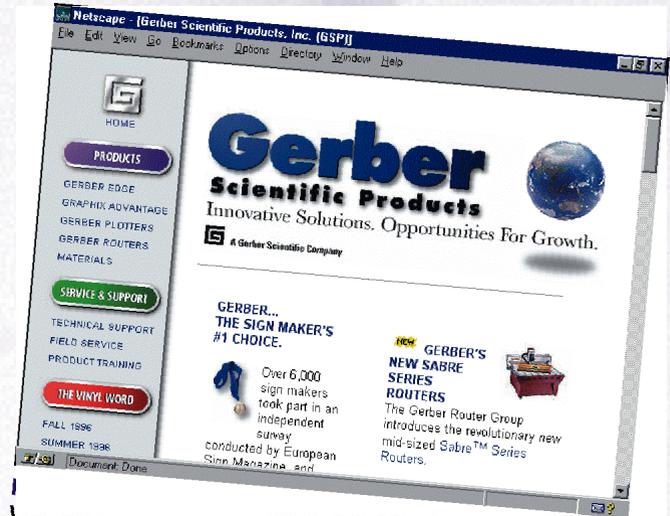
When going down this road with a client, it's to the Web designer's advantage to be rather subtle with the design and focus on the content. You're not trying to impress with the proverbial hoops, bells, and whistles, but rather, you want to allow function to guide form. The designers of Gerber Optical have done a good job adding a simple, popular Java applet to the home page.

Java applets are fun and neat additions to HTML pages, without requiring advanced or detailed programming. They are set right within the HTML code itself and are simply customized to the needs of the individual.



Here is the Java applet from Gerber Optical:

```
<applet code="TickerTape.class" width=370 height=18>
<param name=step value=3>
<param name=redbackground value=0>
<param name=greenbackground value=0>
<param name=bluebackground value=0>
<param name=redforeground value=255>
<param name=greenforeground value=255>
<param name=blueforeground value=255>
<param name=text0 value="Welcome to Gerber Optical's
➔Home Page!
Check out our three new products">
<param name=url0 value="index.html">
<param name=text1 value=": Triumph Frame Tracer in
➔Finishing">
<param name=url1 value="finishing.html">
<param name=text2 value="... Apex Finer/Polisher in
➔Surfacing">
<param name=url2 value="surfacing.html">
<param name=text3 value="... Step Two Finish Blocker
➔in Finishing">
<param name=url3 value="finishing.html">
</applet>
```



As you can see, a JavaScript applet opens with the `<applet>` tag, and attributes are added. In this case, it is a tickertape-style applet, which allows for a vertically scrolling selection of information. Note that the width and height are argued. Then, each following parameter describes values including background color, foreground or text color, and the actual text to be scrolled across the tickertape. Finally, the `</applet>` tag closes the application.

Common applets are available from JavaSoft's official Java directory at Gamelan, <http://www.gamelan.com/>, and at Macromedia's fantastic Web site in the software section, <http://www.macromedia.com/software/powerapplets/index.html>. A general overview of JavaScript and the more complex Java language is available at <http://java.sun.com/>.



Charge It!

Okay, fellow Web designers. Sell me your best. I'd like to see you

- Promote Web sites effectively.
- Create killer animated GIFs that make me want to buy, buy, BUY!
- Use those `<meta>` elements for greater Web visibility and identification.
- Create and use background images that look so good I stay longer and spend more.
- Entice me back when your site is *really* finished instead of making me cry "amateur!"
- Involve me in a fascinating theme so I enjoy the whole site and nothing but the whole site.
- Color-match link attributes so I can oooh and ahhhhh at a sophisticated design.
- Provide me with easy access to customer service, with a warmer, friendlier environment than all of those "press 5" now canned operators found on 1-800 numbers.
- Fill up my Java cup and let me kick back and enjoy!

It's no accident that I've finished the book's sites and lessons with the commercial end of the spectrum, because many designers are finding that the demand for business-oriented sites is the highest these days. I hope you've found the lessons within this chapter, and the entire book, helpful in making your designs sizzle!

Please be sure to read through the appendices. They offer a variety of resources, including an index of this book, twenty top design tips, a safe palette example, a list of designer resources, and an index to everything on the well-stocked CD-ROM.



Site Reference

The following site reference is arranged into five separate categories to help guide you to sites by discipline. Subcategories include site name, URL, type of site, chapter, and site lesson.

The categories include the following:

- **HTML.** Sites that fall into this section focus on HTML or HTML-related practices.
- **Web Technology and Programming.** This section features sites that examine various technologies and programming for the Web.
- **Graphics Technology.** Graphics-intensive learning is featured within this section.
- **Web Design Concepts.** Web sites that exemplify general Web design concepts are highlighted here.
- **Points to Ponder.** Philosophical and practical points for the Web designer to examine are expressed within the Web sites in this section.

HTML

AEGIS: <http://www.aegis.com/>; AIDS clearing house; cascading style sheets; Chapter 5, "Sites to Live By: Beauty, Fashion, Health, and Lifestyle."

Eve Andersson: <http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~eveander/>; personal home page; text alignment techniques; Chapter 9, "Sites that Express: People on the Net—Unique Home Pages."

Blue Note Restaurant: <http://interjazz.com/clubs/bluenote/>; jazz club and restaurant; background colors in tables; Chapter 8, "Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web."

Cocktail: <http://www.hotwired.com/cocktail/>; mixed drinks and high style; HTML style conventions; Chapter 8.

Ellis Island and Immigrant Wall of Honor:

<http://www.ellisland.org/>; historic museum; unordered lists; Chapter 4, "Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities."

Escape Artist Mat Cooper:

<http://www.loop.com/~straitjacket/>; personal home page; frame-related tags; Chapter 9.

Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm: <http://www.bungalow.com/>; personal home page; font attributes, dos and don'ts of font mixing; Chapter 9.

IBM: <http://www.ibm.com/>; business machine manufacturer; <meta> tagging; Chapter 11, "Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web."

Intel: <http://www.intel.com/>; computer hardware company; trimming the fat from HTML; Chapter 6, "Sites that Network: Computers, Internet, and the Web."

Internet World: <http://www.iworld.com/>; *Internet World Magazine* online; using the `alt` argument; Chapter 6.

Maison Européenne de La Photographie:

<http://www.pictime.fr/mep/>; House of *European Photography*; how to generate HTML source code; Chapter 4.

A Man's Life: <http://www.manslife.com/>; men's lifestyle magazine; use of the `<embed>` tag; Chapter 5.

Mello Smello: <http://www.mellosmello.com/>; Shockwave games and educational tools; avoiding horizontal scroll bars; Chapter 10, "Sites for Kids: Education, Games, Items of Interest with Children in Mind."

Jennifer Ringley: <http://amazing.netaxs.com/jennifer/>; personal home page; using horizontal rules; Chapter 9.

Sportsline: <http://www.sportsline.com/>; sports 'zine; study of character entities; Chapter 2, "Sites that Play: Movies, Music, and Entertainment."

Sundance Channel: <http://www.sundancefilm.com/>; independent film channel; type control, the `<tt>` tag; Chapter 2.

T@P Online: <http://www.taponline.com/>; entertainment 'zine; `
` tag and elements; Chapter 2.

Travelocity: <http://www.travelocity.com/>; travel reservations on the Net; floating images and the `align` argument; Chapter 7, "Sites the Explore: Travel and Adventure."

UK Web: <http://www.ukweb.com/>; Web server hardware and software company; using `mailto:` anchors; Chapter 6.

Urban Artifacts: <http://www.urbanartifacts.com/>; art gallery; `<nobr>` tag; Chapter 4.

World Surfari: <http://www.supersurf.com/>; geography for kids; using `<blockquote>` and creating margins; Chapter 10.

Web Technology and Programming

The 40k Miracle Monthly:

<http://www.40kmiracle.com/>; Shockwave and FutureSplash animations under 40k; discussion of domain names; Chapter 2.

alt.coffee: <http://www.altdotcoffee.com/>; coffee house and computers online; VRML for the Web designer; Chapter 8.

The Buffalo Exchange: <http://desert.net/buffalo/>; recycled fashions; server-push animations; Chapter 5.

Clinique: <http://www.clinique.com/>; cosmetics company; CGI password protection; Chapter 5.

Fodor's: <http://www.fodors.com/>; travel magazine; randomization preprocessing; Chapter 7.

FutureWave: <http://www.FutureWave.com/>; software company; the FutureSplash animator; Chapter 6.

Gerber Optical: <http://www.gerberoptical.com/>; scientific products; Java applets; Chapter 11.

Lycos: <http://www.lycos.com/>; Web search engine; JavaScript launch pads; Chapter 6.

The Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune:

<http://www.startribune.com/>; daily newspaper; downloadable video formats on the Web; Chapter 3, "Sites that Speak: Newspapers and Magazines."

Quantum Chess: <http://www.br1abs.com/quantumchess/>; interactive chess game; ActiveX; Chapter 2.

Science Friday Kids' Connection:

<http://www.npr.org/sfkids/>; science education for children; RealAudio; Chapter 10.

Martin Scorsese: http://www.wenet.net/~clayton/directors/martin_scorsese/; film director filmography and news site; examination of hit counters; Chapter 2.

Graphics Technology

Bloomingdale's: <http://www.bloomingdales.com/>; department store; animated GIFs; Chapter 11.

The Boston Phoenix:

<http://www.bostonphoenix.com/>; alternative news weekly; client-side image maps; Chapter 3.

Guinness Brewing Company:

<http://www.guinness.ie/>; Irish beer company; font solutions via graphics; Chapter 8.

Lonely Planet: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>;

independent traveler's resources; progressive JPGs; Chapter 7.

Nordic Track: <http://www.nordictrack.com/>;

home exercise equipment; how to create interlaced GIFs; Chapter 5.

Penelope's: <http://desert.net/penelopes/>;

French restaurant; transparent GIFs; Chapter 8.

Wilde Rose Coffee Company:

<http://desert.net/wilderose/>; microroastery; image enhancement and production; Chapter 8.

The Yuckiest Site on the Internet:

<http://www.nj.com/yucky/>; fun and learning for kids; low SRC/high SRC graphic tricks; Chapter 10.

Web Design Concepts

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater:

<http://www.alvinailey.org/>; using frames as an interface tool; Chapter 4.

An Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright:

<http://selfpub.www.columbia.mo.us/~jmiller/wright2.html>; architect Frank Lloyd Wright biography and resources; pull quotes; Chapter 4.

ARTnet IAMfree: <http://www.artnet.org/iamfree/>;

interactive art site; study of shape; Chapter 4.

Beaudry RV: <http://www.desert.net/beaudryrv/>;

recreational vehicles company; developing a theme for Web sites; Chapter 11.

Border Grill: <http://www.bordergrill.com/>;

restaurant; consistent design from page to page; Chapter 8.

The Brink: <http://www.brink.com/brink/>;

alternative 'zine; hypermedia as artistic form; Chapter 3.

C|NET: <http://www.cnet.com/>; computer information network; writing for the Web; Chapter 6.

Crayola: <http://www.crayola.com/>;

crayon company; offering information on Web sites; Chapter 10.

Adrienne Dailey:

<http://www.speakeasy.org/~adrienne/>; personal home page; how to create effective background images; Chapter 9.

Dark Alliance: <http://www.sjmercury.com/drugs/>;

investigative journalism; designing for varied browser and user requirements; Chapter 2.

Excite City.Net: <http://city.net/>; travel resources online; left margin solutions; Chapter 7.

The Film Vault: <http://filmvault.com/filmvault/>; film search and review site; tables as layout; Chapter 2.

Freezone: <http://freezone.com/home/index.html>; children's online community; commercial and BBS system design models; Chapter 10.

Gadabout Salons: <http://www.gadabout.com/spa/>; salon and day spa; the importance of white space; Chapter 5.

GRP Records: <http://www.mca.com/grp/>; jazz record label; study in proximity; Chapter 2.

Health Girl: <http://www.nethealthgirl.com.au/>; beauty and well-being; designing for your audience; Chapter 5.

HotWired: <http://www.hotwired.com/>; technology lifestyle magazine; using browser-based color features to optimize download times; Chapter 6.

International Kids' Space:

http://plaza.interport.net/kids_space/; kid's online community; how to create effective Help pages; Chapter 10.

JCPenney: <http://www.jcpenney.com/>; department store online; promoting Web sites effectively; Chapter 11.

Kid'n Around: <http://www.kidnaround.com/>; kids' magazine; safe palettes; Chapter 10.

Konica Business Machines: <http://www.kbm.com/>; business machine manufacturer; link color matching; Chapter 11.

Loréal: <http://www.lorealcosmetics.com/>; cosmetics company; baiting the audience and bringing them back for more; Chapter 5.

Lumière: <http://www.lumiere.com/>; fashion magazine; treating space as an entire unit; Chapter 5.

"M&M's"[®]: <http://www.m-ms.com/>; commercial site for "M&M's" chocolate candies; experiments with voice; Chapter 8.

The MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom:

<http://www.mca.com/home/playroom/>; video fun online; the importance of editing Web pages; Chapter 10.

Microsoft: <http://www.microsoft.com/>; computer software company; top navigation; Chapter 6.

The Microsoft Network (MSN): <http://www.msn.com/>; commercial online services; creating "jumping-off" sites; Chapter 6.

MoJo Wire: <http://www.mojones.com/>; political commentary; conceptually appropriate design; Chapter 3.

Museum of Modern Art: <http://www.moma.org/>; contemporary art museum online; how to create effective and attractive thumbnail sketches; Chapter 4.

Nike: <http://www.nike.com/>; athletic footwear company; effective placeholders; Chapter 11.

La Nacion On Line: <http://www.lanacion.com/>; daily newspaper from Argentina; navigation consistency and text options; Chapter 3.

Roberto Ochoa:

<http://www.leland.stanford.edu/~raska1/>; personal home page; freeing page elements from constraints such as table borders; Chapter 9.

Out.com: <http://www.out.com/>; lifestyle magazine; developing community through interactive forums; Chapter 3.

Paramount Pictures: <http://www.paramount.com/>; movie company; study of proportion; Chapter 2.

The Phoenix New Times:

<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/>; alternative news weekly; keeping content fresh; Chapter 3.

Ragú: <http://www.eat.com/>; Mama's kitchen; strategic loading of background images; Chapter 8.

Red Meat: <http://redmeat.com/redmeat/>; Max Cannon's popular comic; balance of content and design; Chapter 2.

Suza Scalora: Color Therapy: <http://myth.com/color/>; interactive art experiment; color significance; Chapter 4.

Sedgwick China:

<http://www.insworld.com/sedgwick/china/>; insurance company; mixing textures and colors; Chapter 11.

Seussville: <http://www.seussville.com/>; Dr. Seuss Web site; design simplicity; Chapter 10.

The Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum:

<http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/start.htm>; Native American Indian museum; study of splash pages; Chapter 4.

The Internet Squeegee Guy:

<http://www.website1.com/squeegee/>; Web humor; using humor and parody on the Web; Chapter 9.

TimeOut Net: <http://www.timeout.co.uk/>; European-centric guide to travel; iconography; Chapter 7.

Toshiba: <http://www.toshiba.com/>; computer and technology company; designing for an international audience; Chapter 11.

The Tucson Weekly: <http://tucsonweekly.com/tw/>; alternative news weekly online; study of navigation and large data management; Chapter 3.

Walt Disney World:

<http://www.disney.com/DisneyWorld/>; theme park; continuity and repetition; Chapter 7.

The Web Developer's Virtual Library:

<http://www.wdv1.com/>; Web developer's resource; redesign of site using simple elements from Chapter 4; Chapter 6.

Word: <http://www.word.com/>; interactive 'zine; study of interface and audience relationship; Chapter 3.

Points to Ponder

7UP: <http://www.7up.com/>; soda company; corporate involvement in community service; Chapter 8.

AIDS Quilt Project: <http://www.aidsquilt.org/>; community art and education project; art on the Web as a unifying, community effort; Chapter 4.

Cyberspace World Railroad:

<http://www.mcs.com/~dsdawdy/cyberoad.html>; RailFan resources; when hobbyist sites become very popular, a graphic design consult might be in order; here's how to know when, and how, to contact graphic designers; Chapter 7.

Expedia: <http://www.expedia.msn.com/>; travel resources online; RSACi ratings; Chapter 7.

gURL: <http://www.tsoa.nyu.edu/gURL/>; lifestyle 'zine; collaborative paradigm and healthy work spaces; Chapter 5.

The Internet Travel Network: <http://www.itn.net/>; secure-server travel network; copyrighting Web sites; Chapter 7.

MCI: <http://www.mci.com/>; communications technology; Web sites for customer service; Chapter 11.

Shoel Perelman: <http://shoel.cscmicro.com/>; personal home page; the human view in a technological environment; Chapter 9.

Tales of 4 Iguanas: <http://www.mcp.com/people/igtale/>; personal home page; fundamental resources for the Web designer; Chapter 9.

TerraQuest: <http://www.terraquest.com/>; outdoor adventure; a look into sponsor-driven solutions to fund Web sites; Chapter 7.

The United Kitty Front:

<http://www.inet-images.com/exalted/cat/kfront.html>; personal home page; injecting new ideas into old themes; Chapter 9.

Top Twenty Design Tips

The following twenty tips were selected to

Draw the reader to significant, contemporary issues in Web design that he or she might want to research in depth

Point the designer to the most common problems in Web design and offer solutions so those problems can be avoided in the future

- Cascading style sheets. Style sheets, once supported by all of the common browsers on the market, will be one of the primary methods of controlling page style with ease. They are covered in Chapter 5, "Sites to Live By: Beauty, Fashion, Health, and Lifestyle," under AEGIS (AIDS Education Global Information System).
- How to generate HTML source code. You might have asked yourself what the best method of generating HTML is. There's a lot of information on the market, and many very good packages. The discussion in Chapter 4, "Sites that Teach: Arts, Culture, and the Humanities," under Maison Européenne de La Photographie offers a sensible breakdown of how to decide what type of package might be right for you.
- Avoid horizontal scroll bars! One of the more unsightly phenomenon on the Web, the horizontal scroll bar can be avoided. Read about some of the methods to design for common-denominator space, and look at one solution in action: Chapter 10, "Sites for Kids: Education, Games, Items of Interest with Children in Mind," Mello Smello site.
- Creating margins. All too often, the text on Web pages runs the full horizon, making it difficult to read. Learn how to use two HTML techniques to create margins in Chapter 10, at the World Surfari Site.
- Domain Names. Do you really need one, how do you get one, and how much do they cost? Learn how to research and register domain names for your Web sites: Chapter 2, "Sites that Play: Movies, Music, and Entertainment," The 40k Miracle Monthly.

- **ActiveX.** Microsoft's heavy contender into client-side applications. A fun example of ActiveX in action, plus a discussion on where to study it more. Both are available in the discussion of the Quantum Chess site in Chapter 2.
- **Animated GIFs.** The current animation style of choice, animated GIFs can be fast-loading, fun, and easy to create. Learn how to make them while browsing through Bloomingdale's, in Chapter 11, "Sites that Sell: Company Presence on the Web."
- **Client-side image maps.** This effective method of mapping images can be learned in Chapter 3, "Sites that Speak: Newspapers and Magazines," in the coverage of the Boston Phoenix.
- **Interlaced GIFs.** Progressive rendering of graphics keeps the eye engaged while other elements on a page are downloaded. Learn how to make interlaced GIFs in Chapter 8, "Sites with Spice: Food and Beverage on the Web," in the Penelope's Restaurant discussion.
- **Consistent design.** Have you ever gotten to a great page and thought the entire site would be as well designed, only to find bland design behind the pretty door? Consistent design is an important part of making the Web visually strong and keeping sites logical from page to page. I discuss this issue in Chapter 8, Border Grill.
- **Tables as design layout tool.** Underlying some of today's best Web sites are tables, which are being used as the fundamental layout tool on the Web. Table fundamentals are addressed in Chapter 2, The Film Vault.
- **White space.** Having a balance of space with visual and text elements helps designs flow, the eyes rest, and makes the experience of a page more pleasant—a design essential in any media. A look at the importance of white space can be found with the Gadabout Salons Web site, Chapter 5.
- **Designing for the audience.** Knowing your audience is one of the most powerful driving forces behind good communications, and a foundation of effective design. Health Girl in Chapter 5 offers up an example of how to create Web sites specific to your audience.
- **Promoting Web sites.** What if I built a Web site and nobody came? The effort and money that went into it is wasted. Learn how to promote your sites effectively, as JCPenney has, in Chapter 11.
- **Safe palettes.** It's important for Web designers to understand how to select background colors that won't dither on less sophisticated systems. Safe palettes allow for this; read about the importance of safe palettes in Chapter 10, Kid'n Around.
- **Link color matching.** Just as with backgrounds, matching link and text colors to design is going to be more visually stable when selected from a safe palette. This discussion can be found in Chapter 11, in the Konica Business Machine coverage.
- **Treat space as an entire unit.** Instead of breaking up space, let it flow! See how this has been done by the designers of the attractive Lumière Web site in Chapter 5.
- **Splash pages.** When do you use them? How can you make them effective? Look at the study of splash pages in Chapter 3, under the Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum.
- **RSACi ratings.** Put Web site ratings in the hands of parents and schools, not special interest groups. RSACi allows for intelligent, controlled ratings for Web page content. This is discussed in Chapter 7, under the Expedia site.
- **Keeping up in an ever-changing Web world.** Where do I go every day to read about what's new in this rapidly evolving field? Find out about the resources Web designers should be using as frequently as possible in Chapter 9, "Sites that Express: People on the Net—Unique Home Pages," in the Tale of 4 Iguanas section.

Color Table

Color Table

FFFFFF	FFFFCC	FFFF99	FFFF66	FFFF33	FFFF00	CCFFFF	CCFFCC
CCFF99	CCFF66	99FFFF	99FFCC	99FF99	66FFFF	99FF66	99FF33
66FFCC	FFCCFF	99FF00	33FFFF	FFCCCC	33FFCC	00FFFF	66FF99
FFCC99	66FF66	66FF33	00FFCC	66FF00	33FF99	FFCC33	CCCCFF
33FF66	33FF33	00FF99	FFCC00	33FF00	00FF66	00FF33	00FF00
CCCCCC	CCCC99	99CCFF	CCCC66	CCCC00	CCCC33	99CCCC	FF99FF
99CCCC	66CCFF	FF99CC	99CC66	66CCCC	99CC33	00CCFF	33CCFF
99CC00	FF9999	66CC99	FF9966	66CC66	33CCCC	CC99FF	00CCCC
FF9933	FF9900	66CC33	66CC00	33CC99	00CC99	CC99CC	33CC66
00CC66	CC9999	FF66FF	33CC33	33CC00	CC9966	00CC33	9999FF
00CC00	CC9933	CC9900	FF66CC	9999CC	FF6699	999999	6699FF
FF6666	CC66FF	999966	6699CC	999933	FF6633	FF6600	FF33FF
3399FF	999900	669999	CC66CC	0099FF	FF33CC	3399CC	CC6699
669966	FF00FF	339999	669933	669900	FF3399	0099CC	9966FF
CC6666	009999	CC6633	CC6600	339966	FF00CC	FF3366	009966
CC33FF	FF3333	339933	009933	9966CC	FF3300	FF0099	339900
009900	6666FF	CC33CC	FF0066	996699	FF0033	FF0000	CC00FF
CC3399	996666	6666CC	996633	996600	3366FF	CC3366	CC00CC
9933FF	0066FF	666699	CC3333	CC3300	3366CC	CC0099	9933CC
666666	666633	0066CC	9900FF	666600	CC0066	336699	993399
CC0033	6633FF	336666	006699	CC0000	993366	9900CC	336633
006666	336600	6633CC	3333FF	006633	993333	993300	6600FF
990099	006600	0033FF	663399	990066	3333CC	663366	6600CC
990033	0033CC	990000	3300FF	663333	663300	660099	0000FF
333399	3300CC	003399	333366	660066	333333	003366	0000CC
660033	333300	660000	330099	003333	003300	000099	330066
330033	000066	330000	000033	000000	CCFF33	66FF66	66FF33

Resource Reference

The following list includes a variety of resources online and offline that would be of interest to Web designers.

HTML Resources

- The HTML Reference Manual (from Sandia National Laboratories)
http://www.sandia.gov/sci_compute/html_ref.html
- HTML Writers Guild
<http://www.hwg.org/>
- InfoBON's HTML Guide by Dr. Clue
http://www.cnw.com/~drclue/Formula_One.cgi/HTML/HTML.html
- Web Development CyberBase—HTML
<http://www.hamline.edu/personal/matjohns/webdev/html/>
- NCSA—A Beginner's Guide to HTML
<http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/General/Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimer.html>
- The Web Developer's Virtual Library
<http://WWW.Stars.com/>
- World Wide Web Consortium's HyperText Markup Language HTML Working and Background Materials
<http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/MarkUp/MarkUp.html>
- World Wide Web FAQ
<http://www.boutell.com/faq/>
- Yale/CAIM WWW Style Manual
http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/StyleManual_Top.HTML

Mail Lists (Listservs) and Usenet Newsgroups

- **ADV-HTML**
To subscribe to ADV-HTML, send the following command in the body of an e-mail message to `listserv@ua1vm.ua.edu`:
`subscribe ADV-HTML Your Name`
- **alt.html**
- **comp.infosystems.www.authoring.html**
- **HTML-L**
To subscribe to HTML-L, send the following command in the body of an e-mail message to `listserv@vm.ege.edu.tr`:
`subscribe HTML-L Your Name`
- **HTML Writers Guild: Mailing Lists**
<http://www.hwg.org/lists/index.html>
hwg-news (Mandatory for all hwg members)
hwg-main; "Discussion of all aspects of creating Web services"
hwg-main-digest; "As above, but in digest version"
hwg-basics; "Basic HTML, including inline images"
hwg-business; "Marketing, contracts, ethics, sales, etc."
hwg-ops; "Guild-related business"
- **Netscape**
To subscribe to Netscape, send the following command in the body of an e-mail message to `listserv@irlearn.ucd.ie`:
`subscribe NETSCAPE Your Name`
- **Web-Consultants**
You can find out how to subscribe to the Web-Consultants list and the Web-Consultants Jobline list at
<http://just4u.com/webconsultants/mlists.htm>.
- **www-html**
To subscribe to www-html, send the request, `subscribe`, in the body of an e-mail message to `www-html-request@w3.org`.

Books

- ***The HTML Sourcebook: a Complete Guide to HTML 3.0***
Ian S. Graham
2nd Edition
John Wiley & Sons, 1996
ISBN: 0471142425
<http://www.utirc.utoronto.ca/HTMLdocs/NewHTML/htmlindex.html>
- ***Teach Yourself Web Publishing with HTML 3.0 in a Week***
Laura Lemay
2nd Edition
Sams.net, 1995
ISBN: 1-57521-064-9
- ***Complete Teach Yourself HTML Kit***
Laura Lemay
Published by Sams.net, 1995
ISBN: 1-57521-063-0
<http://www.1ne.com/web/>
- ***HTML and CGI Unleashed***
John December and Mark Ginsburg
Book & CD-ROM Edition
Sams, 1995
ISBN: 0-672-30745-6
- ***Web Publishing Unleashed***
William Robert Stanek
Book & CD-ROM Edition
Sams, 1996
ISBN: 1-57521-051-7
- ***The Webmaster's Guide to HTML: for Advanced Web Developers*** (J. Ranade Workstation Series)
Nathan J. Muller and Linda L. Tyke (Illustrator)
Book & Disk Edition
McGraw Hill, 1995
ISBN: 0079122736
- ***Web Programming Secrets with HTML, CGI, and PERL***
Ed Tittel, Mark Gaither, Sebastian Hassinger, and Mike Erwin
Book & Disk Edition
IDG Books Worldwide, 1996
ISBN: 156884848X

Conferences and Events

- An in-depth view of forms, tables, and CGI
<http://www.Stars.com/Seminars/>
- General Events Information
<http://conferences.calendar.com>
- Mecklermedia / Internet World Events
A complete list of the events sponsored by Mecklermedia (*Internet World*) is available at
<http://events.iworld.com>.
Contact: Ann Zmitrovich (annz@mecklermedia.com)
Phone: 203-341-2967
- Softbank Expo's Upcoming Event Calendar and Product Fact Sheet
http://www.sbexpos.com/sbexpos/public_relations/product_fact_sheet.html
Also, check <http://www.interop.com>.

- Using HTML to Design and Structure Information
<http://www.sol-sems.com/creatwww.html>

Other Resources

- WebTechs Validation Service
<http://www.webtechs.com/html-val-svc/>
- Yahoo!
http://www.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Software/Data_Formats/HTML

Web Graphic Design Resources

The following resources can help provide more information on how to approach graphics for the Web.

Web Sites

- The 3-D Café
<http://www.baraboo.com/3dcafe/>
- Creating Graphics for the Web
<http://www.widearea.co.uk/designer/>
- Graphics Formats for the WWW
<http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/Graphics/>
- Adobe
<http://www.adobe.com>
- Corel/WordPerfect
<http://www.corel.ca>
- David Siegel's Net Tips for Writers and Designers
http://www.dsiegel.com/tips/tips_home.html
- Kai's Power Tips and Tricks for Adobe Photoshop
<http://the-tech.mit.edu/KPT/>
- Paintshop Pro
<http://www.jasc.com/index.html>

- Royal Frazier
<http://members.aol.com/royalef/index.html>
- Web Developers Virtual Library
<http://www.stars.com/Graphics/>
- Web Graphics FAQ
<http://www.cis.ohiostate.edu/hypertext/faq/usenet/graphics/fileformats-faq/faq.html>

Listservs and Newsgroups

- alt.corel.graphics
- comp.graphics.misc
- comp.graphics.apps.photoshop
- comp.infosystems.www.authoring.images
- Corel
<http://www.corelnet.com/corelnet/newtalk/newtalk.htm>
- DIRECT-L
Macromedia Director support list to provide a forum for discussions of the software program.
To subscribe to DIRECT-L, send the following command in the body of an e-mail message to LISTSERV@uafsysb.uark.edu:
subscribe DIRECT-L *Your Name*

- Graphics

The Graphics mailing list discusses the history, theory, practice, and techniques of graphic design. To subscribe to the Graphics mailing list, send the following command in the body of an e-mail message to

listserv@ulkyvm.louisville.edu:
subscribe graphics Your Name

- Lynda's Homegurrl Web Design List

To subscribe to Lynda's Homegurrl Web Design List, follow the instructions available at <http://www.lynda.com/webdesign.html>.

- Photoshop

To subscribe, send the following command in the body of an e-mail message to

listproc2@bgu.edu:
subscribe PHOTSHOP Your Name

Books

- *Creating Great Web Graphics*

Laurie McCanna
Holt Publishing
ISBN 1-55828-479-6

<http://www.mccannas.com/book/overview.htm>

- *Designing Large-Scale Web Sites: a Visual Design Methodology*

Darrell Sano
John Wiley & Sons, 1996
ISBN: 047114276X

This book is described in more detail at

<http://www.connect.hawaii.com/hc/webmasters/books/sano1.html>

and

<http://www.dru.nl/bedrijven/broese/specials/eoug96/int7.htm>.

- *Designer's Guide to the Internet*

Rick Albertson and Jeffrey Fine
Hayden Books, 1995
ISBN: 1568302290

<http://www.davison.net/books/desc/macmillan/internet.des.guide.html>.

- *Designing Web Graphics*

Lynda Weinman
New Riders Publishing
ISBN:1-56205-532-1

- *Photoshop for Windows 95 Bible*

Deke McClelland
IDG Books Worldwide, 1996
ISBN: 156884882X

Conferences, Courses, and Events

- Adobe Internet Conference Overview

<http://www.adobe.com/events/aic/main.html>

- Designing Effective User Interfaces

http://cs.wpi.edu/~matt/courses/cs563/talks/smartin/int_design.html

- The MasterClass Series: Training in HCI (Human-Computer Interface)

<http://www.system-concepts.com/masterclass/>

Visit the following Web sites for up-to-date information on these courses:

- Photoshop Unleashed

<http://microweb.com/idig/psun/PSUN.html>

- Siggraph Online

<http://www.siggraph.org/>

Siggraph Online is the Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics. The calendar of Siggraph events is at

<http://www.siggraph.org/calendar/calendar.html>.

Other Resources

- Computer User Groups on the World Wide Web

<http://annarbor.apcug.org/others/index.htm>

Web Multimedia Resources

Web Sites

- The Apple QuickTime VR Download Site
<http://qtvr.quicktime.apple.com/>
- Internet Safari
<http://www.bloomfield.k12.mi.us/CompCntr/safari/Inet.html>
- Jack Decker's Personal Audio-Video Home Page
<http://www.novagate.com/~jack/audiovid.html>
- Macromedia Shockwave
<http://www.macromedia.com/Tools/Shockwave/index.html>
- The MICE Multimedia Index
<http://boom.cs.ucl.ac.uk/mice/>
- Microsoft Internet Explorer
<http://www.microsoft.com/ie/default.htm>
- Netscape Navigator Plug-Ins
http://home.netscape.com/comprod/products/navigator/version_2.0/plugins/index.html
- QTVR: a Practical Guide
<http://www.sils.umich.edu/~mbonn/guide.html>
- University of Geneva Multimedia Sources
<http://viswiz.gmd.de/MultimediaInfo/>
<http://fourier.dur.ac.uk:8000/mm.html>
- Voice on the Net home page
<http://www.von.com/>

Listservs and Newsgroups

- Image-L
Send e-mail to listserv@vm3090.ege.edu.tr with
SUB IMAGE-L Your Name
in the body of the message and a blank subject line.
- Multimedia Discussion List
Send e-mail to majordomo@c1eo.murdoch.edu.au with
subscribe multimedia
in the body of the message and a blank header.

- news:clari.tw.new_media
This is a newsfeed dealing with multimedia and other new technologies.
- news:comp.multimedia
This is a general multimedia newsgroup.
- news:comp.os.mswindows.programmer.graphics
This is a technical MS-Windows graphics programming list.
- Voice on the Net (VON) Mailing List
This is a mailing list dedicated to broader discussion of all of the various audio/video products and technologies. To subscribe, send e-mail to majordomo@pulver.com. Leave the subject blank, and in the body write the following:
subscribe von-digest
- Web Multimedia Fusion
<http://www.emf.net/~mal/vcd-dev.html>

Conferences and Events

- Antares Virtual Reality
<http://www.avrs.com/antares/edu.html>
Educational software and classes are offered through Antares Virtual Reality Systems.
- Asymetrix Seminars
<http://www.asymetrix.com/events.html>
Seminars are available from Asymetrix, a proprietary multimedia tool vendor.
- CSU Master of Arts in Multimedia
<http://monet.mcs.csuhayward.edu/mmm/>
Pick up an outline for the Master of Arts in Multimedia Program at California State University at Hayward.
- Imagination Online Creating 3D Images Seminar
<http://www.ination.com/p0000037.htm>
3-D imaging techniques are the focus of this tutorial. This company also has seminars on creating a Web site. The base address provides information on these services.

- Texas A&M
http://mccnet.tamu.edu/Internet_Seminars.html
Descriptions appear for free seminars at Texas A&M on the second Tuesday of every month.
- University of California at Berkeley
<http://www-plateau.cs.berkeley.edu/courseware/>
Descriptions are offered for courseware at UC Berkeley. Many lectures are broadcast on the Internet backbone.
- Virginia Commonwealth University: Multimedia Seminars
<http://www.vcu.edu/mdcweb/new/seminars/seminars.html>
Find multimedia seminars at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Books

- *Designing Multimedia: a Visual Guide to Multimedia and Online Graphic Design*
Lisa Lopuck
Peachpit Press, 1996
ISBN 0-201-88398-8

- *Multimedia: Making It Work, Second Edition*
Tay Vaughan
Osborne, 1994
with CD-ROM
ISBN 0-07-882035-9
- *Multimedia Power Tools, Second Edition*
Peter Jerram and Michael Gosney
Random House, 1996
with CD-ROM
ISBN 0-679-76346-5
- *Multimedia Systems Design*
Prabhat K. Andleigh and Kiran Thakrar
Prentice Hall, 1996
ISBN 0-13-089095-2
- *Shockwave for Director User's Guide*
Sasha Magee and Noel Rabinowitz
New Riders Publishing, 1996
with CD-ROM
ISBN 1-566205-595-X

Other Resources

The following is an e-mail-based multimedia course:

MULTIMED-Request@URIACC.URI.EDU

Web Programming

Web Designers can help increase Web-related programming skills by researching the following references.

Web Sites

- Aereal Serch
<http://www.virtpark.com/theme/cgi-bin/serch.html>
- Earthweb's Gamelan Java Directory
<http://www.gamelan.com>
- The Java Message Exchange
<http://porthos.phoenixat.com/~warreng/WWWBoard/wwwboard.html>
- The JavaScript Index
<http://www.c2.org/~andreww/javascript/>
- The Microsoft Internet Developer's site
<http://www.microsoft.com/intdev/welcome.htm>
- Netscape's JavaScript Authoring Guide
<http://www.netscape.com/eng/mozilla/Gold/handbook/javascript/index.html>
- Netscape JavaScript Link List
http://www.netscape.com/comprod/products/navigator/version_2.0/script/index.html
- Netscape's JavaScript Tutorial
http://www.netscape.com/comprod/products/navigator/version_2.0/script/script_info/tutorial/main.htm
- PERL Manual and Searchable Index
<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/htbin/perl-man>
- Virtual Cities Repository
<http://www.vir.com/~farid/ctrepos.htm>

- VR for the People
<http://gnn.com/gnn/wr/sept29/features/vrml/index.html>
- VRML Futures Forum
<http://vag.vrml.org/>
- The VRML Repository
<http://www.sdsc.edu/vrml/>
- VRML Resources
<http://vrml.wired.com/>
- VRML Resources from Silicon Graphics
<http://webspacesgi.com/>
- The World Wide Web Consortium
<http://www.w3.org/pub/WWW/>

Listservs and Usenet Newsgroups

- CGI List
This is a Common Gateway Interface discussion.
Send e-mail to listserv@vm.ege.edu.tr with SUB CGI-L *Your Name* in the body of the message and a blank subject line.
- JavaScript Talk
<http://www.farhorizons.com/jstalk/jstalk.html>
- JavaScript Mailing List
Send e-mail to javascript-request@netural.com with SUBSCRIBE in the body of the message and a blank subject line.
- news:comp.lang.java
This is a Java newsgroup.
- news:comp.lang.javascript
This is a JavaScript newsgroup.
- news:comp.lang.perl
Check this for Perl information and discussion.
- news:comp.lang.basic.visual
This offers MS Visual Basic general news.
- OpenDoc Standards and Java Discussion
<http://www.cuesys.com/lists/jod/>
- STRONG-JAVA Mailing List
<http://www.entmp.org/cgi-bin/lwgate/STRONG-JAVA/>
This offers subscription information about the STRONG-JAVA mailing list. Beginners are strongly discouraged.

- VRML Standards
To join the VRML standards discussion, please subscribe to the www-vrml mailing list. Send e-mail to majordomo@wired.com with the subject line blank and the following in the message body:
subscribe www-vrml your e-mail address

Conferences, Learning Resources, and Organizations

- Algorithm Incorporated
<http://www.algorithm.com/virtual/virtual.html>
- Association for Women in Computing
<http://www.halcyon.com/monih/awc.html>
- Interface Online Training Center
<http://www.iftech.com/iti/itioltc.htm>
- SIGGraph 96
<http://www.siggraph.org/conferences/siggraph96/siggraph96.html>
- Team WebGrrls
<http://www.women.org/>
- Women Online
<http://women-online.com/>

Books

- *Beyond HTML*
Richard Karpinki
Osborne, 1996
ISBN 0-07-882-198-3
- *CGI Programming on the World Wide Web*
Shishir Gundavaram
O'Reilly & Associates, 1996
ISBN 1-56592-168-2
- *Danny Goodman's JavaScript Handbook*
Danny Goodman
IDG Books, 1996
with CD-ROM
ISBN 0-7645-3003-8
- *Learning Perl (the Llama Book)*
Randal L. Schwartz
O'Reilly & Associates, 1993
ISBN 1-56592-042-2

- *Programming Perl (the Camel Book)*

Larry Wall and Randal L. Schwartz
O'Reilly & Associates, 1991
ISBN 0-937175-64-1

- *Teach Yourself Java in 21 Days*

Laura Lemay and Charles L. Perkins
Sams.net, 1996
with CD-ROM
ISBN 1-57521-030-4

- *Using CGI: Special Edition*

Jeffrey Dwight and Michael Erwin, et al.
Que, 1996
with CD-ROM
ISBN 0-7897-0740-3

- *VRML: Flying Through the Web*

Mark Pesce
New Riders, 1996
with CD-ROM
ISBN 1-56205-521-6

<http://www.mcp.com/newriders>

What's on the CD-ROM?

On the *Laura Lemay's Guide to Sizzling Web Site Design* CD-ROM, you will find sample files that have been presented in this book, along with a wealth of other applications and utilities.

Note: Please refer to the `readme.wri` file on the CD-ROM (Windows) or the Guide to the CD-ROM (Macintosh) for the latest listing of software.

Windows Software

ActiveX

- Microsoft ActiveX Control-Pad and HTML Layout Control

CGI

- CGI*StarDuo and CGI*StarDuo95
- CGI PerForm command language interpreter for Common Gateway Interface (CGI) application design
- Several sample CGI scripts and libraries

GNU

- GNU Licenses

HTML Tools

- Microsoft Internet Assistants for Access, Excel, PowerPoint, Schedule+, and Word
- W3e HTML editor
- CSE 3310 HTML Validator

- Hot Dog 32-bit HTML editor
- HoTMeTaL HTML editor
- HTMLed HTML editor
- HTML Assistant for Windows
- WebEdit Pro HTML editor
- Web Weaver HTML editor
- ImageGen

Java

- Sun's Java Developer's Kit for Windows 95/NT, version 1.0.2
- Sample Java applets
- Sample JavaScripts
- Trial version of Jamba for Windows 95/NT
- Jpad IDE
- JPad Pro Java IDE demo
- Kawa IDE
- Studio J++ demo
- Javelin IDE demo
- JDesigner Pro database wizard for Java

Graphics, Video, and Sound Applications

- Goldwave sound editor, player, and recorder
- MapThis imagemap utility
- MPEG2PLY MPEG viewer
- MPEGPLAY MPEG viewer
- Paint Shop Pro 3.12
- SnagIt screen capture utility
- ThumbsPlus image viewer and browser

Perl

- Perl 4
- Perl 5.002
- Perl 5 build 109 for Windows NT

Explorer

- Microsoft Internet Explorer 3

Utilities

- Microsoft Viewers for Excel, PowerPoint, and Word
- Adobe Acrobat viewer
- Microsoft PowerPoint Animation Player and Publisher
- WinZip for Windows NT/95
- WinZip Self-Extractor

Macintosh Software

HTML Tools

- BBEdit 3.5.1
- BBEdit 4 demo
- HTML Web Weaver
- WebMap imagemap creator
- HTML.edit
- HTML Editor for the Macintosh

Graphics, Video, and Sound Applications

- Graphic Converter
- GIFConverter
- Fast Player
- Sparkle
- SoundApp

Utilities

- ZipIt for Macintosh
- ScrapIt Pro
- Adobe Acrobat

About Shareware

Shareware is not free. Please read all documentation associated with a third-party product (usually contained with files named `readme.txt` or `license.txt`) and follow all guidelines.

Index

symbols

& (ampersand), HTML markup, 21
@ (at symbol), HTML markup, 21
(pound sign), 134
7UP Web site, 137-138
40k Miracle Monthly Web site, 9-11

a

ActiveX, 15, 208
advertising
 design issues, 187-189
 domain names, 9-11
 offline promotions, 189
AEGIS (AIDS Education Global Information System) Web site, 72-74
AIDS Quilt Web site, 63-64
Ailey, Alvin, American Dance Theater Web site, 57-58
Alchemy Mindworks, 191
align attribute
 tag, 115
 <P> tag, 161
 <TABLE> tag, 14
aligning
 horizontal rules, 151
 images, 115
 tables, 13-14, 161
 text, 160-161

 tag, 17
 <NOBR> tag, 58-59
all attribute (
 tag), 17
alt attribute, 102-104
alt.coffee Web site, 142-143
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Web site, 57-58

ampersands (&), character entities, 21
analyzing
 audiences, 32-33, 81
 businesses
 physical work environments, 71
 relationships, 70-71
 teamwork, 71
Andersson, Eve (home page), 160-161
animal Web sites
 Tales of 4 Iguanas, 153-154
 United Kitty Front, 152
animations
 creating, 95
 GIFs, 190-191
 server-push, 75-76
announcing Web site redesigns, 196
antialiasing, 135
<APPLET> HTML tag, 202
applets (Java), 201-202
 as navigation tools, 97-98
applications, *see* software
architecture, Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright Web site, 56
arguments (HTML), *see* attributes
art Web sites, 48-51
 AIDS Quilt Web site, 63-64
 ARTnet Web site, 54-55
 Color Therapy, 61
 Museum of Modern Art Web site, 52-54
ARTnet Web site, 54-55
attributes (HTML)
 all, 17
 bgcolor, 14, 133

- border, 13
- cellspacing, 13
- colspan, 14
- hspace, 115
- left, 17
- leftmargin, 176-177
- right, 17
- rightmargin, 176-177
- rowspan, 14
- valign, 115
- vspace, 115
- width, 13
- audiences, analyzing, 32-33, 81
- audio clips
 - HTML markup, 80
 - RealAudio technology, 167-168
- auto Web sites, Beaudry's RVs, 197
- .avi file format, 38

Backgrounds

- choosing, 195
- colors, 93-94, 133, 141
- integrating, 155-156
- load times, reducing, 140-141
- balance in design, 18, 67-68
- banner advertising, 188
- BBSs (Bulletin Board Systems), 170
- Beaudry's RVs Web site, 197
- beauty Web sites
 - Clinique, 82
 - Gadabout Salons, 78-79
 - gURL, 69-71
 - Loréal, 76-77
 - Lumière, 66-69
- beverage Web sites, 126
 - 7UP, 137-138
 - alt.coffee, 142-143
 - Cocktail Lounge, 129-131
 - Guinness Brewing Company, 134-135
 - Wilde Rose Coffee Company, 139
- bgcolor attribute, 14, 133
- <BLOCKQUOTE> HTML tag, 176-177
- Bloomingdale's Web site, 190-191
- Blue Note Restaurant Web site, 133-134

- <BODY> HTML tag, 198
- border attribute (<TABLE> tag), 13
- Border Grill Web site, 132-133
- Boston Phoenix 'zine, 34-35
-
 HTML tag, 16-17
- Brink 'zine, 35-36
- browsers
 - color palettes, 174
 - supporting, 46
- Buffalo Exchange Web site, 75-76
- bulleted lists, 62
- Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs), 170
- businesses, analyzing
 - marketing strategies, 91
 - peer-based relationships, 70-71
 - physical work environments, 71
 - teamwork, 71

Cannon, Max, 17

- cascading style sheets, 72-74
- cellspacing attribute (<TABLE> tag), 13
- CGI (Common Gateway Interface) scripts, 82
- character entities, 21
- chat programs, 170
- children's sites
 - Crayola, 171
 - Freezone, 169-170
 - International Kid's Space, 179-180
 - Kid'n Around, 173-174
 - MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom, 183-184
 - Mello Smello, 181-182
 - Science Friday Kids' Connection, 166-168
 - Seussville, 172-173
 - World Surfari, 175-177
 - Yuckiest Site on the Internet, 178-179
- choosing
 - background images, 156, 195
 - domain names, 115
- client pull, 192-193
- client-side image maps
 - creating, 35
 - testing, 35
- Clinique Web site, 82

- Cocktail Lounge Web site, 129-131
- coffee Web sites
 - alt.coffee, 142-143
 - Wilde Rose Coffee Company, 139
- Color Therapy Web site, 61
- colors
 - backgrounds, 93-94, 133, 141
 - browser-safe palettes, 174
 - fonts, 93-94, 157
 - hexadecimal values, 199
 - reference table, 209-210
 - links, 198-199
 - table fields, 133
- colspan attribute (<TABLE> tag), 14
- .com domain names, 10-11
- comment tagging (HTML), 130-131
- communications, peer-based relationships, 70-71
- Compendium of HTML Elements Web site, 80
- computer-related Web sites, 86
 - C|NET, 87-90
 - FutureWave, 94-95
 - HotWired, 93-94
 - IBM, 192-193
 - Intel, 96-97
 - Internet World, 102-104
 - Lycos, 97-98
 - Microsoft, 92-93
 - MSN (Microsoft Network), 90-92
 - Netscape, 154
 - Toshiba, 193-194
 - UKweb, 99-100
 - Web Developer's Virtual Library, 100-101
- conferences, 214
 - HTML-related, 213
 - multimedia, 215-216
 - Web programming, 217-218
- configuring RealAudio, 168
- continuity in design, 67-68, 132-133
 - repetition, 120-121
- controls (ActiveX), 15
- converting RGB values to hexadecimal, 199
- Cooper, Matthew (home page), 148-149
- copyediting Web sites, 183-184

- copyrights, 116
 - copyright symbol character entity, 21
- cost considerations in Web design, 110-111
- counters, 23-24
- Crayola Web site, 171
- cross-cultural Web sites, designing, 193-194
- customer service, 200
- Cyberspace World Railroad Web site, 122-123
- C|NET Web site, 87-90, 154
 - ActiveX page, 15

d

- Dailey, Adrienne (home page), 155-156
- daisy-chain navigation, 29-30
- dance-related Web sites, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 57-58
- Dark Alliance Web site, 45-46
- Dawdy, Daniel S., Cyberspace World Railroad Web site, 122-123
- design guidelines, 2-5, 207-208
 - ActiveX controls, 15
 - advertisements, 187-189
 - banners, 188
 - offline promotions, 189
 - audience analysis, 32-33, 81
 - audio clips, 80
 - backgrounds
 - choosing, 156, 195
 - colors, 93-94, 133
 - integrating, 155-156
 - balance, 18, 67-68
 - browser issues, 46, 174
 - colors, 208
 - browser-safe palettes, 174
 - color reference table, 209-210
 - links, 198-199
 - tables, 133
 - content, 44-45
 - cost considerations, 110-111
 - domain names, 9-11
 - educational sites, 171
 - fonts, 93-94, 135, 157
 - colors, 157
 - faces, 157

- monospaced, 20
 - sizes, 157
- frames, 57-58, 148-149
- headers, 63-64
- Help systems, 180
- hit counters, 23-24
- humor, 146-147
- hypermedia, 3-5, 36-37
- images, 48-51
 - animation, 75-76
 - icons, 124
 - interlaced GIFs, 78
 - Low SRC/High SRC, 178-179
 - placement, 67-68
 - producing, 139
 - sizing, 22
 - thumbnails, 52-54
 - transparent GIFs, 136-137
- interactivity, 2-5, 76-77
 - games, 76-77
 - interactive forums, 40
- international issues, 193-194
- ISO-Latin 1 character entities, 21
- legal issues
 - copyrights, 116
 - libel, 146-147
- margins, 175-177, 207
- multimedia, 3-5, 215-216
- navigational components, 43, 181-182
- new media, 2-5, 27
- non-linear, 2-5, 29-30
- online resources, 154
- organization, 108-109
- parody, 146-147
- precision writing, 88-89
- professional consultations, 123-124
- proportion, 22
- proximity, 19
- public broadcasting model, 110-111
- pull quotes, 56
- randomization, 112-113
- RSACi ratings, 118-119
- repetition, 120-121
- resources
 - conferences, 214
 - HTML, 211-213
 - Web design sites, 205-206

- rules, 150-151
- separation of elements, 162-163
- shapes, 55
- simplicity, 172-173
- site redesigns, 100-101, 196
- sound clips, 167-168
- splash pages, 49-51, 66-68
- style conventions, 129-131
- style sheets, 72-74, 207
- tables, 12-14
- teamwork, 71
- text alignment, 160-161
- themes, 197
- user interfaces, 31-33
- video clips, 38
- visual continuity, 67-68, 132-133
- voice, 127-128
- voice (in writing), 89-90
- VRML (Virtual Reality Markup Language), 143
- white space, 78-79, 208
- developing themes, 197
- Disney World Web site, 120-121
- Dispatch program, 30
- <DIV> HTML tag, 161
- domain names, 9-11, 207
- download times, minimizing, 140-141

e

- editing Web sites, 183-184
- editors (HTML), 60
- .edu domains, 10-11
- educational Web sites, 48-51
 - Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 57-58
 - Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright, 56
 - ARTnet, 54-55
 - Color Therapy, 61
 - design tips, 171
 - Ellis Island, 62
 - Maison Européenne de La Photographie, 59-60
 - Museum of Modern Art, 52-54
 - Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum, 49-51
 - Urban Artifacts, 58-59
- Ellis Island Web site, 62

- <EMBED> Web site, 80
- encoders (RealAudio), 168
- entertainment Web sites, 8
 - 40k Miracle Monthly, 9-11
 - Film Vault, 12-14
 - GRP Records, 19
 - Paramount Pictures, 22
 - Quantum Chess, 15
 - Red Meat, 17-18
 - Scorsese, Martin, 23-24
 - SportsLine USA, 21
 - Sundance Channel, 20
 - T@P Online, 16-17
- ergonomics, 71
- European Museum of Photography Web site, 59-60
- Excite City.Net Web site, 107-109
- Expedia Web site, 118-119

f face attribute (tag), 157

- fashion Web sites
 - Buffalo Exchange, 75-76
 - gURL, 69-71
 - Lumière, 66-69
 - Nike, 196

- files
 - formats
 - .avi, 38
 - .jpg, 139
 - .mov, 38
 - .mpeg, 38
 - sizes, reducing, 96-97
- Film Vault Web site, 12-14
- floating images, 114-115
- Fodor's Web site, 112-113
- HTML tag, 157
- fonts, 93-94, 135
 - antialiasing, 135
 - colors, 157
 - faces, 157
 - graphic-based, 135
 - monospaced, 20
 - sizes, 157

- food Web sites, 126
 - Blue Note Restaurant, 133-134
 - "M&M's"®, 127-128
 - Penelope's Restaurant, 136-137
 - Ragú, 140-141
- formats (files)
 - .avi, 38
 - .jpg, 117-118, 139

- .mov, 38
- .mpeg, 38
- frames, 57-58, 148-149
- <FRAMESET> HTML tag, 149
- Freezone Web site, 169-170
- FutureSplash, 94-95
- FutureWave Web site, 94-95

g

- Gadabout Salons Web site, 78-79
- game Web sites, 8
 - Quantum Chess, 15
- Gamelan Web site, 202
- games in interactive Web design, 76-77
- gated communities, 169-170
- gay/lesbian interests, Out.com Web site, 39-40
- Gerber Optical Web site, 201-202
- GIF Construction Set, installing, 191
- GIFs
 - animating, 190-191, 208
 - interlacing, 78
 - transparent, 136-137
- .gov domains, 10-11
- granularity (RSACI ratings), 119
- graphic-based fonts, 135
- graphics, *see* images
- GRP Records Web site, 19
- Guinness Brewing Company Web site, 134-135
- gURL Web site, 69-71

h

- headers, 63-64
- Health Girl Web site, 81
- health-related Web sites
 - AEGIS (AIDS Education Global Information System), 72-74
 - Health Girl, 81
 - Nordic Track, 77-78
- Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm Web site, 157
- Help systems, designing, 180
- hexadecimal color values, 199
- hit counters, 23-24
- home pages (personal)
 - Andersson, Eve, 160-161
 - Cooper, Matthew, 148-149

- Dailey, Adrienne, 155-156
- Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm, 157
- Internet Squeegee Guy, 146-147
- Ochoa, Roberto, 162-163
- Perelman, Shoel, 158-159
- Ringley, Jennifer, 150-151
- United Kitty Front, 152
 - see also* sites (WWW)
- horizontal rules, 150-151
- HotWired Web site, 93-94
 - Cocktail Lounge, 129-131
- <HR> HTML tag, 150-151
- hspace attribute (tag), 115
- HTML
 - attributes
 - all, 17
 - bgcolor, 14, 133
 - border, 13
 - cellspacing, 13
 - colspan, 14
 - hspace, 115
 - left, 17
 - leftmargin, 176-177
 - right, 17
 - rightmargin, 176-177
 - rowspan, 14
 - valign, 115
 - vspace, 115
 - width, 13
 - comments, 130-131
 - editors, 60
 - files, reducing size of, 96-97
 - frames, 149
 - lists, 62
 - online resources, 203-204, 211-213
 - Compendium of HTML Elements Web site, 80
 - style conventions, 129-131
 - style sheets, 73
 - tables, 161
 - tags
 - <APPLET>, 202
 - <BLOCKQUOTE>, 176-177
 - <BODY>, 198
 -
, 16-17
 - <DIV>, 161
 - <EMBED>, 80
 - , 157
 - <FRAMESET>, 149
 - <HR>, 150-151
 - , 62
 - mailto:, 99-100

- <META>, 192-193
- <NOBR>, 58-59
- <NOFRAME>, 149
- <P>, 131, 161
- <STYLE>, 73
- <TABLE>, 13-14
- <TD>, 161
- <TT>, 20
- , 62
- humanities Web site, 48-51
 - AIDS Quilt, 63-64
 - Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 57-58
 - Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright, 56
 - ARTnet, 54-55
 - Color Therapy, 61
 - Ellis Island, 62
 - Maison Européenne de La Photographie, 59-60
 - Museum of Modern Art, 52-54
 - Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum, 49-51
 - Urban Artifacts, 58-59
- humor in design, 146-147
- hyperlinks, *see* links
- hypermedia
 - advantages, 3-5
 - design issues, 36-37

I

- IAMfree Web site, 54-55
- IBM Web site, 192-193
- icons, 124
- Iguanas (Tales of 4 Iguanas) Web site, 153-154
- image maps
 - client-side, 35
 - server-side, 34
- images
 - alternative text, 103-104
 - animations, 95
 - animated GIFs, 190-191
 - server push, 75-76
 - artwork, 48-51
 - backgrounds, 156, 195
 - colors, 93-94
 - floating, 114-115
 - GIFs
 - animated, 190-191
 - interlaced, 78
 - transparent, 136-137

- icons, 124
- JPGs, 117-118
- linking, 130-131
- load times, reducing, 133, 140-141
- Low SRC/High SRC, 178-179
- optimizing, 135
- photos, 139
- placement, 67-68
- proportions, 22
- online resources, 213-214
- scanning, 139
- sizing, 141
- thumbnails, 52-54
- visual continuity, 67-68, 132-133
- HTML tag, 103-104
- indenting text, 21
- installing GIF Construction Set, 191
- integrating backgrounds, 155-156
- Intel Web site, 96-97
- interactivity in Web design, 2-5, 76-77
 - games, 76-77
 - interactive forums, 40
- interlaced GIFs, 78
- international Web sites, designing, 146-147, 193-194
- International Kid's Space Web site, 179-180
- Internet Arts Museum for Free (IAMfree) Web site, 54-55
- Internet Squeegee Guy Web site, 146-147
- Internet Travel Network Web site, 115-116
- Internet World Web site, 102-104
- Internic, 10-11

j-k-l

- Java
 - applets, 201-202
 - as navigation tools, 97-98
 - Java Language Web site, 202
- JCPenney Web site, 186-189
- JPG file format, 117-118, 139
 - progressive, 117-118
- justifying text, 161

- Kid'n Around Web site, 173-174
- Konica Business Machines Web site, 198-199

- La Nacion* On Line Web site, 42-43
- launch pad navigation, 97-98
- left attribute (
 tag), 17
- left-margin navigation, 108-109

- LEFTMARGIN attribute, 176-177

- legal issues
 - copyrights, 116
 - libel, 146-147

- HTML tag, 62
- libel, 146-147

- libraries (BBSs), 170
- linear navigation, 28

- links
 - colors, 198-199
 - images, 130-131
 - Linktionary program, 30
 - managing, 30

- Linktionary program, 30
- lists, HTML markup, 62

- listservs
 - graphics, 213-214
 - HTML, 212
 - multimedia, 215-216
 - Web programming, 217-218

- Lonely Planet Web site, 117-118

- Loréal Web site, 76-77

- Lumière Web site, 66-69

- LView Pro, 136-137

- Lycos Web site, 97-98

m

- "M&M's"® Web site, 127-128
- Macromedia Web site, 202
- magazines, 26

- Boston Phoenix, 34-35
- Brink, 35-36

- Dark Alliance, 45

- gURL, 69-71

- HotWired, 93-94

- Cocktail Lounge, 129-131

- Internet World, 102-104

- Kid'n Around, 173-174

- La Nacion* On Line, 42-43

- Lumière, 66-69

- Man's Life, 80

MoJo Wire, 44-45
 Out.com, 39-40
 T@P Online, 16-17
 Word, 31-33

mailing lists
 graphics technology, 213-214
 HTML, 212
 multimedia, 215-216
 Web programming, 217-218

mailto: anchors, 99-100

Maison Européenne de La Photographie Web site, 59-60

Man's Life Web site, 80

managing Web sites, 29-30

MapEdit, 35

margins, 175-177, 207

Martin, Amy, Web site, 152

MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom Web site, 183-184

MCI Web site, 200

media
 impact on society, 4-5
 new media, 27

Mello Smello Web site, 181-182

<META> HTML tag, 192-193

Microsoft Network (MSN) Web site, 90-92, 154

Microsoft Web site, 92-93, 154
 Internet for Developers pages, 15
 Site Builder Workshop pages, 14

.mil domain names, 10-11

Mina the Cat's home page, 152

Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune Web site, 37-38

moderated forums, 40

MoJo Wire Web site, 44-45

MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) Web site, 52-54

monospaced fonts, HTML markup, 20

Mother Jones magazine Web site, 44-45

.mov file format, 38

movie-related Web sites, 8
 Film Vault, 12-14
 Paramount Pictures, 22
 Scorsese, Martin, 23-24

.mpeg file format, 38

MSN (Microsoft Network) Web site, 90-92, 154

multimedia, 3-5
 animations, 95
 FutureSplash, 95
 RealAudio, 167-168
 resources, 215-216
 video, 38
 VRML, 142-143

Museum of Modern Art Web site, 52-54

museum Web sites, 48-51
 Maison Européenne de La Photographie, 59-60
 Museum of Modern Art, 52-54
 Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum, 49-51

music sites, 8
 GRP Records, 19

n

La Nacion On Line Web site, 42-43

National Public Radio Web site, 167-168

Native American Indian Museum Web site, 49-51

navigational controls, 27, 43
 frames, 148-149
 Help systems, designing, 180
 Java applets, 97-98
 left-margin controls, 108-109
 linear, 28
 navigation bars, 92-93
 non-linear, 29-30
 scroll bars, 207
 alternatives to, 181-182

.net domain names, 10-11

Netscape Web site, 154

new media, 27
 defined, 2-5

New Times Online Web site, 41-42

newsgroups
 graphics technology, 213-214
 HTML, 212
 multimedia, 215-216
 Web programming, 217-218

newspaper Web sites, 26
Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune, 37-38

Phoenix New Times Online, 41-42

San Jose Mercury Online, 45

Tucson Weekly Online, 27-30

niche markets, 91

Nike Web site, 196

<NOBR> HTML tag, 58-59

<NOFRAME> HTML tag, 149

non-linear design, 29-30

non-linear media, 2-5

Nordic Track Web site, 77-78

noshade attribute (<HR> tag), 151

O

Ochoa, Roberto (home page), 162-163

offline promotions, 189

optimizing images, 135

.org domain names, 10-11

organizing Web sites, 19,
 108-109, 162-163
 frames, 57-58
 lists, 62
 rules, 150-151
 simplicity, 172-173

Out.com Web site, 39-40

<P> HTML tag, 131, 161

Paint Shop Pro, 78

paragraphs
 aligning, 161
 HTML markup, 131
 margin control, 176-177

Paramount Pictures Web site, 22

parody in Web design, 146-147

passwords, 82

peer-based relationships, 70-71

Penelope's Restaurant Web site, 136-137

Perelman, Shoel (home page), 158-159

personal home pages
 Andersson, Eve, 160-161
 Cooper, Matthew, 148-149
 Dailey, Adrienne, 155-156
 Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm, 157
 Internet Squeegee Guy, 146-147
 Ochoa, Roberto, 162-163
 Perelman, Shoel, 158-159
 Ringley, Jennifer, 150-151
 United Kitty Front, 152

pet-related Web sites
 Tales of 4 Iguanas, 153-154
 United Kitty Front, 152
 photography Web sites
 Maison Européenne de La Photographie, 59-60
 Perelman, Shoel, 158-159
 photographs, 139
 design issues, 67-68
 physical work environments, planning, 71
 pi Web site, 160-161
 point-of-presence sites, 137-138
 Portfolios.com Web site, 123-124
 pound signs (#), 134
 precision writing, 88-89
 programming resources, 216-218
 programs, *see* software
 progressive JPGs, 117-118
 Progressive Networks Corp., 167-168
 proportion in Web design, 22
 proximity, 19
 public broadcasting model, 110-111
 publications online, 26
 Boston Phoenix, 34-35
 Brink, 35-36
 Dark Alliance, 45-46
 gURL, 69-71
 HotWired, 93-94
 Cocktail Lounge, 129-131
 Internet World, 102-104
 Kid'n Around, 173-174
 La Nacion On Line, 42-43
 Lumière, 66-69
 Man's Life, 80
 Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune, 37-38
 MoJo Wire, 44-45
 Out.com, 39-40
 Phoenix New Times Online, 41-42
 San Jose Mercury Online, 45
 T@P Online, 16-17
 Tucson Weekly Online, 27-30
 Word, 31-33
 pull quotes, 56

q-r

Quantum Chess Web site, 15
 Ragú Web site, 140-141
 randomization, 112-113
 RASCI rating system, 118-119
 RealAudio, 167-168
 Recreational Software Advisory Council, 118-119
 Red Meat Web site, 17-18
 redesigning Web sites, 100-101, 196
 reducing
 file sizes, 96-97
 load times, 133, 140-141
 registering
 copyrights, 116
 domain names, 10-11
 remote-control navigation, 97-98
 repetition in Web design, 120-121
 resolution (images), 178-179
 resources online, 211-218
 graphic design, 213-214
 HTML, 211-213
 multimedia, 215-216
 Web programming, 216-218
 restaurant Web sites
 Blue Note Restaurant, 133-134
 Border Grill, 132-133
 Penelope's Restaurant, 136-137
 retail Web sites
 Bloomingdale's, 190-191
 JCPenney, 186-189
 Sedgwick China, 194-195
 RGB values, converting to hexadecimal, 199
 right attribute, 17
 rightmargin attribute, 176-177
 Ringley, Jennifer (home page), 150-151
 ROWSPAN attribute (<TABLE> tag) tag, 14
 RSACi (Recreational Software Advisory Council), 118-119, 208
 rules, 150-151

s

sales promotions
 designing, 187-189
 offline advertisements, 189
San Jose Mercury Online Web site, 45
 sans serif fonts, 135
 scanning images, 139
 Science Friday Kids' Connection Web site, 166-168
 Scorsese, Martin, Web site, 23-24
 Scott, Kim (home page), 153-154
 scripts (CGI), 82
 scroll bars, 207
 alternatives to, 181-182
 search engines, Lycos, 97-98
 security, passwords, 82
 Sedgwick China Web site, 194-195
 separating design elements, 162-163
 serif fonts, 135
 server-push animation, 75-76
 server-side image maps, 34
 servers (RealAudio), 168
 Seussville Web site, 172-173
 shapes in design, 55
 simplicity in design, 172-173
 sites (WWW)
 autos, Beaudry's RVs, 197
 beauty
 Clinique, 82
 Gadabout Salons, 78-79
 Loréal, 76-77
 beverages
 7UP, 137-138
 alt.coffee, 142-143
 Guinness Brewing Company, 134-135
 Wilde Rose Coffee Company, 139
 children's
 Crayola, 171
 Freezone, 169-170
 International Kid's Space, 179-180
 Kid'n Around, 173-174
 MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom, 183-184
 Mello Smello, 181-182

- Science Friday Kids' Connection, 166-168
- Seussville, 172-173
- World Surfari, 175-177
- Yuckiest Site on the Internet, 178-179
- computers, 86
 - C|NET, 87-90
 - FutureWave, 94-95
 - IBM, 192-193
 - Intel, 96-97
 - Internet World, 102-104
 - Microsoft, 92-93
 - MSN (Microsoft Network), 90-92
 - Netscape, 154
 - Toshiba, 193-194
 - UKweb, 99-100
 - Web Developer's Virtual Library, 100-101
- design resources
 - content, 44-45
 - hypermedia, 36
- domain names, 10-11
- entertainment, 8
 - 40k Miracle Monthly, 9-11
 - Film Vault, 12-14
 - GRP Records, 19
 - Paramount Pictures, 22
 - Quantum chess, 15
 - Red Meat, 17-18
 - Scorsese, Martin, 23-24
 - SportsLine USA, 21
 - Sundance Channel, 20
 - T@P Online, 16-17
- fashion
 - Buffalo Exchange, 75-76
 - gURL, 69-71
 - Lumière, 66-69
 - Nike, 196
- food
 - Blue Note Restaurant, 133-134
 - Border Grill, 132-133
 - "M&M's"®, 127-128
 - Penelope's Restaurant, 136-137
 - Ragú, 140-141
- health
 - AEGIS (AIDS Education Global Information System), 72-74
 - Health Girl, 81
 - Nordic Track, 77-78
 - humanities, 48-51
 - AIDS Quilt, 63-64
 - Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 57-58
 - Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright, 56
 - ARTnet, 54-55
 - Color Therapy, 61
 - Ellis Island, 62
 - Maison Européenne de La Photographie, 59-60
 - Museum of Modern Art, 52-54
 - Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum, 49-51
 - Urban Artifacts, 58-59
 - information management, 29-30
 - navigation, 27-30, 43
 - linear, 28
 - non-linear, 29-30
 - organizing, 108-109
 - personal home pages
 - Andersson, Eve, 160-161
 - Cooper, Matthew, 148-149
 - Dailey, Adrienne, 155-156
 - Heather and Selene's Mystical Realm, 157
 - Internet Squeegie Guy, 146-147
 - Ochoa, Roberto, 162-163
 - Perelman, Shoel, 158-159
 - Ringley, Jennifer, 150-151
 - Scott, Kim, 153-154
 - United Kitty Front, 152
 - publications, 26
 - Boston Phoenix, 34-35
 - Brink, 35-36
 - Dark Alliance, 45-46
 - gURL, 69-71
 - HotWired, 93-94
 - Cocktail Lounge, 129-131
 - Internet World, 102-104
 - Kid'n Around, 173-174
 - La Nacion** On Line, 42-43
 - Lumière, 66-69
 - Man's Life, 80
 - Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune**, 37-38
 - MoJo Wire, 44-45
 - Out.com, 39-40
 - Phoenix New Times** Online, 41-42
 - San Jose Mercury** Online, 45
 - T@P Online, 16-17
 - Tucson Weekly** Online, 27-30
 - Word, 31-33
 - retail
 - Bloomingtondale's, 190-191
 - JCPenney, 186-189
 - Sedgwick China, 194-195
 - search engines, Lycos, 97-98
 - site reference, 203-206
 - technology
 - Gamelan, 202
 - MCI, 200
 - RealAudio, 168
 - travel, 106
 - Cyberspace World Railroad, 122-123
 - Excite City.Net, 107-109
 - Expedia, 118-119
 - Fodor's, 112-113
 - Internet Travel Network, 115-116
 - Lonely Planet, 117-118
 - TerraQuest, 110-111
 - TimeOut Net, 123-124
 - Travelocity, 114-115
 - Walt Disney World, 120-121
 - see also* design guidelines
 - size attribute (<HR> tag), 151
 - sizing
 - fonts, 157
 - horizontal rules, 151
 - images, 22, 141
 - Smithsonian Native American Indian Musieum Web site, 49-51
 - software
 - Dispatch, 30
 - Linktionary, 30
 - LView Pro, 136-137
 - MapEdit, 35
 - sound clips
 - HTML markup, 80
 - RealAudio technology, 167-168
 - splash pages, 49-51, 66-68
 - sponsors, 111
 - SportsLine USA Web site, 21
 - Star Tribune** (Minneapolis/St. Paul) Web site, 37-38
 - <STYLE> HTML tag, 73
 - style conventions, 129-131

style sheets, 207
 cascading, 72-74
 HTML markup, 73
 online resources, 74
suffixes (domain names), 11
Sundance Channel Web site, 20

T
T@P Online Web site, 16-17
<TABLE> HTML tag, 13-14
tables, 12-14
 aligning, 161
 colors, 133
 HTML markup, 13-14
tabs, 21
tags (HTML)
 <APPLET>, 202
 <BLOCKQUOTE>, 176-177
 <BODY>, 198

, 16-17
 <DIV>, 161
 <EMBED>, 80
 , 157
 <FRAMESET>, 149
 <HR>, 150-151
 , 62
 mailto:, 99-100
 <META>, 192-193
 <NOBR>, 58-59
 <NOFRAME>, 149
 <P>, 131, 161
 <STYLE>, 73
 <TABLE>, 13-14
 <TD>, 161
 <TT>, 20
 , 62

Tales of 4 Iguanas Web site, 153-154

<TD> HTML tag, 161

technology Web sites

 Gamelan, 202

 MCI, 200

 RealAudio, 168

see also computer-related Web sites

TerraQuest Web site, 110-111

testing image maps, 35

text

 alignment, 160-161

 <NOBR> tag, 58-59

 justification, 161

 colors, 198

 fonts, 20, 157

HTML editors, 60
lists, 62
margins, 175-177, 207
pull quotes, 56
tables, 161
wrapping, 17

themes, developing, 197
threaded-column navigation, 29-30

thumbnail graphics, 52-54

TimeOut Net Web site, 123-124

top navigation, 92-93

Toshiba Web site, 193-194

trademark symbols, character entities, 21

transparent GIFs, creating, 136-137

Transposition Web site, 37

travel-related Web sites, 106

 Cyberspace World Railroad, 122-123

 Excite City.Net, 107-109

 Expedia, 118-119

 Fodor's, 112-113

 Internet Travel Network, 115-116

 Lonely Planet, 117-118

 TerraQuest, 110-111

 TimeOut Net, 123-124

 Travelocity, 114-115

 Walt Disney World, 120-121

Travelocity Web site, 114-115

<TT> HTML tag, 20

Tucson Weekly Online Web site, 27-30

U
UKweb site, 99-100
 HTML tag, 62

Under Construction symbols, alternatives to, 196

United Kitty Front Web site, 152

unmoderated forums, 40

Urban Artifacts Web site, 58-59

Usenet newsgroups

 graphics technology, 213-214

 HTML, 212

 multimedia, 215-216

 Web programming, 217-218

user interfaces, designing, 31-33

valign attribute (<TABLE> tag), 14, 115
video file formats, 38
virtual reality, 142-143
visual continuity in Web design, 67-68, 132-133
 repetition, 120-121
voice (in writing), 89-90, 127-128
VRML (Virtual Reality Markup Language), 142-143
vspace attribute (tag), 115

W
W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) Web site, 74
Walt Disney World Web site, 120-121
WDVL (Web Developer's Virtual Library), 100-101
Web, *see* WWW
Wellman, Mark, 111
white space, 78-79, 208
whois searches, 11
width attribute, 141
 <HR> tag, 151
 <TABLE> tag, 13
Word 'zine, 31-33
World Safari Web site, 175-177
World Wide Web, *see* WWW
Wright, Frank Lloyd, An Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright Web site, 56
writing Web sites
 avoiding too little content, 18
 copy editing, 183-184
 HTML editors, 60
 humor, 146-147
 precision, 88-89
 voice, 89-90, 127-128
WWW (World Wide Web)
 chat programs, 170
 gated communities, 169-170
 impact on society, 1-5
 information management, 29-30
 sites
 40k Miracle Monthly, 9-11
 7UP, 137-138

AEGIS (AIDS Education Global Information System), 72-74
 AIDS Quilt, 63-64
 Andersson, Eve, 160-161
 Appreciation of Frank Lloyd Wright, 56
 ARTnet, 54-55
 Beaudry's RVs, 197
 Bloomingdale's, 190-191
 Blue Note Restaurant, 133-134
 Border Grill, 132-133
 Boston Phoenix 'zine, 34-35
 Brink, 35-36
 Buffalo Exchange, 75-76
 Clinique, 82
 Color Therapy, 61
 Compendium of HTML Elements, 80
 Cooper, Matthew, 148-149
 Crayola, 171
 Cyberspace World Railroad, 122-123
 C|NET, 87-90, 154
 Dailey, Adrienne, 155-156
 Dark Alliance, 45-46
 Ellis Island, 62
 Excite City.Net, 107-109
 Expedia, 118-119
 Film Vault, 12-14
 Fodor's, 112-113
 Freezone, 169-170
 FutureWave, 94-95
 Gadabout Salons, 78-79
 Gamelan, 202
 Gerber Optical, 201-202
 Guinness Brewing Company, 134-135
 Health Girl, 81
 IBM, 192-193
 Intel, 96-97
 International Kid's Space, 179-180
 Internet Squeegee Guy, 146-147
 Internet Travel Network, 115-116
 Internet World, 102-104
 Internic, 11
 Java Language, 202
 JCPenney, 186-189
 Kid'n Around, 173-174

Konica Business Machines, 198-199
La Nacion On Line, 42-43
 Lonely Planet, 117-118
 Loréal, 76-77
 Lumière, 66-69
 Lycos, 97-98
 "M&M's"®, 127-128
 Macromedia, 202
 Maison Européenne de La Photographie, 59-60
 Man's Life, 80
 MCA/Universal Home Video Kid's Playroom, 183-184
 MCI, 200
 Mello Smello, 181-182
 Microsoft, 92-93
Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune, 37-38
 MoJo Wire, 44-45
 MSN (Microsoft Network), 90-92
 Museum of Modern Art, 52-54
 National Public Radio, 167-168
 Netscape, 154
 Nike, 196
 Nordic Track, 77-78
 Ochoa, Roberto, 162-163
 Out.com, 39-40
 Paramount Pictures, 22
 Penelope's Restaurant, 136-137
 Perelman, Shoel, 158-159
Phoenix New Times Online, 41-42
 Portfolios.com, 123-124
 Quantum Chess, 15
 RASCI, 119
 RealAudio, 168
 Red Meat, 17-18
 Ringley, Jennifer, 150-151
 Science Friday Kids'Connection, 166-168
 Scorsese, Martin, 23-24
 Sedgwick China, 194-195
 Seussville, 172-173
 site reference, 203-206
 Smithsonian Native American Indian Museum, 49-51

SportsLine USA, 21
 Sundance Channel, 20
 T@P Online, 16-17
 Tales of 4 Iguanas, 153-154
 TerraQuest, 110-111
 Toshiba, 193-194
 Travelocity, 114-115
Tucson Weekly Online, 27-30
 UKweb, 99-100
 United Kitty Front, 152
 Urban Artifacts, 58-59
 W3C (World Wide Web Consortium), 74
 Web Developer's Virtual Library, 100-101
 Word 'zine, 31-33
 World Surfari, 175-177
 Yuckiest Site on the Internet, 178-179



'zines

Boston Phoenix, 34-35
 Brink, 35-36
 Dark Alliance, 45
 gURL, 69-71
 HotWired, 93-94
 Cocktail Lounge, 129-131
 Internet World, 102-104
 Kid'n Around, 173-174
La Nacion On Line, 42-43
 Lumière, 66-69
 Man's Life, 80
 MoJo Wire, 44-45
 Out.com, 39-40
 T@P Online, 16-17
 Word, 31-33