

appy 1999! The Internet grew a great deal last year, and we have only more expansion and growth to look forward to. Of course, like last year, there will be plenty of people who continue to create the dregs of the 'net. When I say dregs, I'm not talking about disgusting web pages. No, you've still got it wrong... I'm not talking about nude women and chat lines. I'm talking about W.E.B. page design: Whacked-out, Excruciatingly Brutal page design. To start the year, we'll discuss the Top 5 Issues in W.E.B. Page Design.

. Gyped with Java

We've all been to this type of website. You click a link, and suddenly your browser decides to load its Java VM. You sit for several seconds, staring blankly at the cute little wrist watch cursor. Then the web page begins to load and you see the result of your wasted time: a doggie that walks back and forth. This bugs the heck out of me on a T1, so I can only imagine how people on a modem must feel.

By the way, would someone tell Netscape that the little hands on the watch are supposed to move when a long operation is taking place? The reason they made it a watch was to indicate that some time will pass. It's the equivalent of that guy we all know who is consistently late because "his watch stopped."

. A Mac? Not on This Site, Buddy...

Have you ever surfed on over to a really cool site, only to be told by the web

browser that a Mac cannot access the site? Oh, excuse me, I was under the impression that the reason they made HTML and standard image and sound formats (and standards in general) was so that any person could access a website. And don't let them fool you with the old "a Mac user wouldn't need the contents of this site anyway." I was once given that excuse to explain why I couldn't download some cool new MP3 files from a particular site. "We're working on a Mac client." The last time I checked, Netscape and Internet Explorer were working pretty darn well as Mac clients.

. Give Me a Plug-In and I'll Take the Browser

Here's a good one. My college is trying to set up a virtual tour for prospective students on our website. The trouble is, the computer services people never want to do anything, so they contracted this job out. How would I go about creating a virtual tour? I'd get out my camera and QuickTime VR Studio. Take pictures, stitch some panoramas, and pop the finished product onto the website.

What have they done? Created their own format, which requires you to install a plug-in to view the tour. That's just fine and dandy — and a great way to attract students. Every PC/Mac browser comes with the QuickTime plug-in already, so why not use it? For what it's worth, the plug-in they've created is crap. On one occasion it actually trashed the Finder on my professor's PowerMac 9600. There's a stable product for you!

. You Didn't Actually Want to Keep 20/20 Vision, Did You?

One word describes this kind of website: ouch! I'd love to know where some people find these color schemes! Take HotBot, for instance. What is with the whole neon green thing? I can understand the whole "get their attention" thing, but really, a line must be drawn somewhere! My eyesight is bad enough — I'm legally blind without my contact lenses. So why do these web designers wish to take away the little bit of vision I have left?

For those of you who are still listening to this rant, take this down: never, ever design a site that you yourself could not look at for at least one hour straight. For most of us that's easy, since we have common sense when it comes to correct color schemes. For some... well, take a look at the web!

and the number one thing that goes into W.E.B. Page Design:

1. The Website-in-a-Page

Isn't it odd the way some websites seem to portray a sense of limited real estate? Look around the web and you'll see sites with tables scattered liberally over the page, each one colored a little differently and containing different kinds of information. In between these tables is teeny, tiny text which, I'm told, acts as "content." I wouldn't know, since my previously mentioned poor eyesight keeps me from wanting to "learn" how to use the website. That's what happens to some of the worst pages I come across: I refuse to take the time to attempt to sort through the oatmeal looking for the marble.

What Have We Learned?

So what have we learned from this walk down annoyance avenue? First and foremost, you've found out exactly what drives me nuts about poor websites. In learning that, I hope I've made you think about what drives you nuts about the web. And in doing that, perhaps we'll all think twice before creating W.E.B. page design.

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