

Isn't It Time You Started *Designing Your Own Web Pages?*

by Ken Kozlowski

Professional Perspectives—Tools and Techniques of the Trade. The Professional Development Committee encourages members to continue to explore topics after presentations at the local, regional, and national levels. We welcome your comments and article suggestions. Please contact Carol Avery Nicholson at 919/962-1199 or carol_nicholson@unc.edu.

A few years ago, I started to teach myself how to create Web pages. There was a lot of trial-and-error involved, and some of the results were not pretty. Even now, when I review some of the stuff I'm posting to the Web (<http://www.undayton.edu/~lawlib>), I cringe. The point I'm trying to make is that I am doing it, and you should be too.

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also subscribe to a low-cost Internet Service Provider for use at your home, and publish a Web page that way.

Basic Web Page Editors

Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, and Netscape Communicator are all good starting points for anyone who has never tried to create a Web page. You do not need to know all the codes involved, just a basic knowledge of word processing. The latter programs are all some of us will ever need.

For others, who need to know how the pages are really created and want to fine-tune how the pages are displayed, plenty of other programs are available.

Microsoft Word allows you to create new pages by using templates. It is very easy to substitute your own text for the defaults. You can also start with a blank Web page and just start creating. Before you publish a page, you should always see how it looks by previewing it in a browser, usually Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator. (Even if you don't have Web access, you probably have a copy of Internet Explorer on your computer if you use Windows 95/98.) If you have Web access, preview your page using both Internet Explorer and Netscape so you can see how it will look to anyone accessing the page. You can then edit the page if something looks out of whack.

Word Perfect has Internet Publisher (on the File Menu). Netscape Communicator allows you to create Web pages by using the "Composer" function.

Tucows

If you're interested in other Web page editors, and you have Internet access,

check out Tucows (<http://www.tucows.com>). By my count, it has 49 editors available within the advanced classification, along with numerous others in the Beginner and Text-Based classes. A decent editor that is absolutely free is GhostHTML, available on the Tucows site. As you gain experience with these programs, you will probably use whichever is the easiest and most efficient (and least costly).

Don't get hung up on terminology. It's not important for a beginner to know what vml, xml, sgml, xxl, xsl, or any of the other alphabet soup of abbreviations means. If you are interested in sounding like a Web designer, and have the time to slog through some technical stuff, head to the World Wide Web Consortium (<http://www.w3.org>) and read some of the articles. The latter site also allows you to keep up on whatever is happening in the world of Web design standards.

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Graphics vs. Text

One last thing (or maybe the first thing) you ought to consider when designing a Web page is the sight-impaired user. To get started on the road to "accessibility for all," preview your Web pages with a text-only browser such as Lynx, which is available on the Tucows site. By previewing with Lynx, you can tell if your information is getting across to users who can't or don't view graphics. (Some users turn off graphics to make pages load faster, especially when they are using modems below 28K.) If the graphics on the page are more important than the information, these users will probably

Web Sites

CNET Builder.com: www.builder.com

Mining Co. Web Design:
webdesign.miningco.com

WebDeveloper.Com:
www.webdeveloper.com

Nuthin' But Links: [pages.prodigy.com/
bombadil/home.htm](http://pages.prodigy.com/bombadil/home.htm)

WEBalley: [free.prohosting.com/
~weballey/index.html](http://free.prohosting.com/~weballey/index.html)

Top 15 Mistakes of First Time Web Design: [www.doghause.com/
top15.html](http://www.doghause.com/top15.html)

WebDesignhelp.com:
www.webdesignhelp.com

Web Design Resource:
www.pageresource.com

Library Web Manager's Reference Center:
[sunsite.berkeley.edu/Web4Lib/
current.html](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Web4Lib/current.html)

A Desktop Learning Opportunity

To get started on the road to “accessibility for all,” preview your Web pages with a text-only browser so you can tell if your information is getting across to users who can’t or don’t view graphics.

not be able to use your page. A good way to test whether your page will be accessible to all types of users is to run it through an evaluator such as the Center for Applied Special Technology’s Bobby (<http://www.cast.org/bobby>). This program will test your Web pages and offer suggestions on how to make it accessible to a wider variety of users.

Encouraging Conclusion

I hope this article has persuaded you to try your hand at Web page creation. Remember, you don’t have to be an expert at or on the World Wide Web to start creating Web pages (I certainly am not). This does not have to be an expensive proposition for you or your employer. There are plenty of free, or inexpensive, programs available on the Web that you can use. Odds are that you already have

Books

Building Better Web Pages by Rebecca Frances Rohan (AP Professional, 1998)

Create FrontPage 98 Web Pages in a Weekend by Dave Rasmussen (Primia Pub., 1998)

Creating Web Pages Simplified (IDG Books Worldwide, 1996)

FrontPage 98 For Dummies by Asha Dornfest (IDG Books Worldwide, 1997)

Home Sweet Homepage and the Kitchen Sink by Robin Williams (Peachpit Press, 1997)

The Lawyer’s Guide to Creating Web Pages by Kenneth E. Johnson (ABA

Law Practice Management Section, 1997)

The Non-Designer’s Web Book: An Easy Guide to Creating, Designing, and Posting Your Own Web Site by Robin Williams (Peachpit Press, 1998)

Poor Richard’s Web Site: Geek-Free, Commonsense Advice on Building a Low-Cost Web Site by Peter Kent (Top Floor Pub., 1998)

Web Design in a Nutshell by Jennifer Niederst (O’Reilly & Assoc., 1999)

Web Design & Desktop Publishing For Dummies by Roger C. Parker (IDG Books Worldwide, 1997)

a program on your computer that can be used to create a Web site, such as Microsoft Word or Netscape Communicator.

The list of books and Web sites appended to this article should help you get started on creating a site, or provide ideas on how to improve one that already exists. *Poor Richard’s Web Site* (a book) is receiving rave reviews, and both the

Mining Company and c|net Web sites offer more information than you probably need to get that first Web site uploaded to your server.

Go forth and multiply.

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