Publishing your page

Lesson 8

You've built your Web page and now you want to put it on the Web. There are two simple steps to publishing your page:

> Find a Web server to hold your page and to serve it to those who request it.
> Move the page from your computer to the Web server.

Although this is just a two-step process, many folks get stuck at this point simply because they aren't that familiar with how the Web works. The good news is that you have learned what you need to know about that subject in this course, so you're ready to begin building pages. Still, you've taken in that information over seven lessons, and you've packed your head full of new information during that time. So before moving on to publishing your Web page, take a few minutes to read this quick refresher.

How the Web works, revisited

The key things to remember about how the Web works are:

> HTML pages are just text, and any computer can read text.
> Web browsers interpret the HTML in a Web page and display it.
> Web servers store Web pages and Web clients (a.k.a. Web browsers) request those pages from the server over the Internet.
> For a Web server to serve Web pages it must be connected to the Internet and be running special software that can receive Web browser requests and respond to them.
> Because Web servers and Web browsers might be running on different operating systems, both servers and browsers have to speak the same language to communicate.
> Protocols are the common language that all Web servers and Web browsers speak. When a browser asks for a Web page, it phrases its request using the Web protocol HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol). When the Web server responds, it also phrases its response in HTTP and usually sends back a Web page.
> If your Web page isn't sitting on a Web server, no one on the Web can access it.
> The location of a Web page on the Web is exact. It is made up of the Web site address, the series of directories in which the file is housed, and the file's name.

Behind the scenes with Web servers

What it takes to publish a Web site

After you've published one Web page, you'll be ready to move on to an entire site. The How to Build a Web Site How-To Guide walks you through all of the steps associated with planning and implementing a Web site. You'll need what you've learned in this course to build the pages that will become part of the site.

In general, any computer can be a Web server if it has the right software installed and a connection to the Internet. The Web server that holds your site needs to have a permanent connection to the Internet that doesn't break and that has an Internet address (called an IP address) that other computers can find.

Suffice it to say that a computer can have a permanent address on the Internet -- as most Web servers do -- or a temporary one that changes often. Users who dial into the Internet using an ISP have a different address each and every time they log in, and the address is given to someone else when they log out. As you can imagine, a Web site would be difficult to find if its address kept changing, so Web servers have the same Web address all the time and their connection is constant.

Your Web page must sit on a Web server somewhere in order for others to request it via the Internet and view it in their browser. Right now, the ACME Widgets page that you just finished building is sitting on your local hard drive and isn't accessible to anyone but you. To change that you need to move the page to a Web server.

Hosting your pages on someone else's web server

Technically, you can set up your own Web server and host your Web pages, but as this is your first Web page, this isn't the time to be worrying about the technical issues associated with setting up a server. Hosting a Web server isn't inexpensive, either.

Since you're not going to run your own Web server -- at least not yet -- you need to find someone else's server. There are two Web hosting options:

> Web hosting for a fee
> Web hosting for free

Setting up your own domain

Both free and for-fee Web hosting services can give you Web space on an existing domain such as *http://members.aol.com* or *http://www.geocities.com*. Most likely your Web site's address will be something like *http://members.aol.com/~yournamehere/*. You don't automatically get your own full-fledged Web site name (called a domain name) like *http://www.mysite.com*. You have to pay extra for that.

Finding a place to host your Web pages and acquiring and setting up your own domain are two different things. To have a

If you need more guidance

If you're interested in hosting your site on your own server but you feel like you need more guidance, benefit from HP's expertise.

» Servers and storage expertise center

Web site with your own domain name, you not only have to secure a place to host your pages, you then have to register a domain name and have your hosting service connect it to your Web site. Most hosting services will secure and set up your domain for you -- for an additional fee, of course. Free Web hosting services don't usually allow you to have your own domain.

You can buy just about anything in the world these days, and space on someone else's Web server is no exception. Many entrepreneurs make their living selling Web site hosting, and buying Web server space from someone has some real advantages:

You have total control over what you put on your Web site (barring pornography and other unacceptable content).

Most hosting services have good customer service and can help you get your site up and running as well as help you tackle any problems that might arise with the site later on.

The hosting service can provide backup and recovery services so you won't have to rebuild your site from scratch if something happens to the host computer.

The hosting service employs professionals who know how to set up and maintain Web servers, so you don't have to.

Of course, nothing in this world is perfect, so there is at least one drawback to buying Web server space: It costs money. Enough said.

The fact that you are taking this class means that you have Internet connectivity of some kind. If you access the Web using an Internet Service Provider (ISP) -- as opposed to a corporate Internet connection -- you might already be paying for space on a Web server without knowing it. The majority of large ISPs, including AOL, EarthLink, LightSpeed, and others, all include some Web server space as part of their basic account package. If your current ISP package doesn't include Web space as part of the deal, you might be able to upgrade for a minimal fee to a package that does.

How much space?

One of the most confusing issues associated with paying for Web hosting is how much space you really need. Even the most basic computer comes with a hard disk that can hold several gigabytes of information, so people tend to think that they need tons of storage space to house their Web pages. This is just not so.

Web pages are nothing more than text, so they don't take up much space. You could build a dozen or two Web pages and fit them all on a floppy disk. The biggest space hogs are not the

Host your site yourself

If you choose to keep your Web hosting in-house you will need robust and highly available servers. HP ProLiant servers combine the power of systems-class thinking with open architectures essential to building an always-on Internet infrastructure.

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Web pages themselves but the graphics and other multimedia that you embed in them. Pictures, sound files, and audio clips can each take up huge amounts of space on a hard disk. Because you're just getting started building a Web site, you probably don't have a huge media library that requires multiple megabytes of disk space.

You can easily get by with 1 MB of disk space for your first Web offering. Most Web hosting services offer packages with different amounts of disk space and you can always upgrade if your site grows rapidly. Until that happens, there's no sense in buying more disk space than you need.

If you're interested in Web hosting for a fee, check with your current ISP to see what its hosting options are. If you don't have an ISP, visit a search engine and type "Web site hosting" in the search box to begin looking for a Web hosting provider.

In general, you shouldn't have to pay more than $22 a month for ISP service, e-mail, and 2-to-10 MB of Web space. Most ISPs give you all three for this amount or less. If your current ISP wants to charge you more for your connectivity, e-mail, and Web server hosting, you need to find a new ISP.

Web hosting for free   Page 4 of 6

If you don't want to shell out big bucks -- or any bucks -- to get your site up and running, you can always host it on one of many different Web sites that provide free Web hosting services. The number of free Web hosting services is declining (these things cost money you know) but there are still a few out there. The good things about free Web hosting include:

It's free. You can test the Web page waters without investing any resources beyond your own time to learn HTML.
Most free hosting services target users who are new to the Web community, so they are user-friendly and make it as easy as possible for members to set up their pages.
It's free.

Of course, there are some disadvantages to using a free Web hosting service:

You may not be able to totally control visitors' experiences on your Web site. Often free hosting services make their money by displaying ads on your pages or in windows that pop up when your page loads. While this is fine for a testing and learning site, it can annoy visitors who frequent your site.
You get what you pay for. Free hosting sites have to keep their overhead costs low, so their tech support might come in the form of Web pages, and you may not be able to get support from a technical guru if you have a problem with your site.

If you're setting up a Web page for the first time, a free Web hosting service can give you a chance to become comfortable with the entire Web publishing process. Before you begin searching for free hosting services, check with your ISP to find out if you're already paying for Web hosting.

The most popular free hosting service is Geocities (www.geocities.com). To find other free hosting services, use your favorite search engine to search for "free Web hosting".

To upload your pages on a Web server, you must move your HTML files and graphics from your computer to the server. Some hosting services, especially the free ones, have Web interfaces that help you move files to your space on their server.

While some hosting services provide Web interfaces to help you post your files, others do not. If your ISP or hosting service doesn't have such a tool, you need to use FTP (File Transfer Protocol) software to move your files from one place to the other. FTP is a protocol similar to HTTP, the protocol that allows computers to send and receive Web pages. Using FTP, you can upload and download just about any kind of file over the Internet quickly and easily, as long as your computer and the Web server both speak FTP.

Check with your Web hosting provider to see if it has a Web-based file upload system. If it doesn't, you'll need software called an FTP client to move your pages to their Web servers. In the end, most Web developers have an FTP client in their software arsenal, so now is as good a time as any to find and become accustomed to one.

Almost every Web server speaks FTP, so you won't have to worry about the server being able to accept your files. For your computer to speak FTP, however, you need an FTP client to log onto the Web server and move your files. FTP clients come in all flavors, and there's an FTP client for your computer, no matter what operating system you are running. Internet Explorer 5.0 has an FTP client built in that allows you to log onto an FTP site and upload and download files. (Earlier versions of IE and other Web browsers only let you download files via FTP).

To find an FTP client, search your favorite software download site for "FTP".

Staying ahead of the game

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All the skills you've learned in this course apply to virtually all the Web page building you'll ever do. You haven't used all of the HTML tags, but you know how to use tags, and you'll find as you go along that one tag works pretty much like another. The biggest difference between one tag and the next is how a Web browser interprets the tag and the content it describes.

Before you leave the class be sure to visit the message board one last time to ask any last minute questions you might have and share your experiences in Web page building with your instructor and fellow students. Also don't forget to complete the assignment for this last lesson -- putting your page on the Web. What good is all of your hard work if you can't share it with the world.

In the end, the best way to learn more about HTML and become proficient at Web page design is to build pages. Build a Web site to share family news and photos, do work for a charitable organization, or find opportunities in your current job to develop Web content. The more real work you do with HTML, the more comfortable you become with it -- and in no time flat you'll be a Web guru.