

h t m l

d o c u m e n t s :

c r e a t i o n ,

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m a n a g e m e n t

chapter

eleven

PageMill: The Web Page Builder

Adobe PageMill was originally released for the Mac and later for Windows. It is designed to give even beginning Web authors simple and powerful tools for creating Web pages. The graphical user interface exposes all of the variables and formats of HTML, freeing the author from the need to learn the coding scheme.

The most important thing to understand about authoring HTML documents is that you are creating *content*, not *appearance*. This is not a vague philosophical statement; it is a fact of the HTML standards. The author can control such organizational (content-related) information as levels of headers, as well as such presentation elements as bold, italic, underline and so on. But unlike paper document production technology, the author can't control the actual appearance to the end user.

This is because in HTML and browser thinking, the end user is encouraged to choose his own presentation. As an HTML page downloads, it calls for only general behavior, and the user can configure his browser to utilize certain fonts and attributes. A general language is transmitted to the Web client, whether that client be Mac, Windows, UNIX or even character-based clients like LYNX. The local client displays your "universal" HTML Web documents in locally available fonts and graphics.

Text Enhancements

Text can be typed directly into the HTML editor, or HTML documents created elsewhere may be imported into PageMill for editing and enhancement. Plug-ins are available for importing other popular document types. Also, applications that support drag-and-drop copying allow quick pasting of files into PageMill.

To make information more easily accessible, or to achieve an attractive appearance, HTML text can be modified and enhanced. The two types of modifications are paragraph formats, to indicate headings, body text, lists and so on; and character formats, which enhance selected characters and words.

Paragraph Formats

- Paragraph format is the standard plain format for body text.
- Pre-formatted format is used for displaying fixed-width spacing to maintain all original spaces from a source document, such as a financial report or the output from a mainframe print file.
- Address format is used for email or postal addresses or phone numbers.

- Heading formats are available for the six levels available in HTML. Heading sizes are relative to one another, and their actual display is determined by the browser. Relative sizes ranging smallest, smaller, small, large, larger and largest are the six levels available, and in general the largest header is used for the main heading on a page.
- The List formats allow the user to create various types of lists, including Bullet, Directory, Menu and Numbered. Outline style lists containing multiple levels can be formed with the Indent command, and PageMill automatically assigns a different bullet or numbering style to each level. A feature that is very handy for glossary-type lists is Term and Definition List format, where the term appears flush left and the definition is indented beneath the term.

Paragraph alignment can be selected as left, center or right alignment, but not all browsers support the latter two displays.

Character Styles

There are two types of character styles, called physical and logical character styles. In Adobe PageMill, characters or words can be selected through the familiar method of using the mouse to select text by highlighting. When a style is selected by button or pull-down menu, it is applied to the highlighted text.

The physical character styles display the same across most browsers and allow the author to determine how specific text will appear. The four physical character styles are the familiar text attributes of plain, bold and italic, with the addition of a monospaced font called Teletype.

The logical character styles will appear in the flavor of the particular browser based on the way that browser interprets the label. The following logical styles are available:

- *Emphasis* calls attention to text, often represented as *italic*.
- *Strong* is a stronger form of Emphasis, often represented as **bold**.
- *Citation* is intended for titles of published documents and other media.
- *Sample* is used to depict computer status messages, usually monospaced.
- *Keyboard* is used to indicate where the user would enter text, monospaced.
- *Code* is used to represent computer code, monospaced.
- *Variable* is used to represent where text should be entered in an application.

Font sizes, like heading levels, are relative. Right now, only Netscape supports font size changes, so other browsers will not display this effect. For that reason, you should consider restricted use of this feature for special effects.

Relative font sizes allow the author to change font size in relation to surrounding text, even though HTML does not allow specifying the actual size for every browser. When absolute presentation control is required, Acrobat PDF is the Web format of choice.

Page Enhancements

Frames

Frames divide the browser window in separate sections, which can be edited separately, and the end user can sometimes scroll through a frame separately while other frames remain in place.



Frames are used on this page to allow user to point to the slider on the right to read a column of independently scrolling text while the graphic and JavaScript buttons at the bottom stay in their original places. Notice there are no borders on the frames. In this screen, the JavaScript pull-down on the left has opened a menu for quick navigation or other functions, such as making online purchases from the gift shop.

On many popular pages, such as the search engines and constantly updated vendor home pages like Adobe's, frames are used to constantly bring new articles to the user's attention. Pages such as these naturally draw mostly repeat visitors, so the Webmaster is challenged to keep the site interesting and attractive. Once again, this process is very much like a that of magazine or newspaper, where the basic format stays the same but the content is always changing.

Tables

Tables are the spreadsheet format of HTML, and they are likewise comprised of cells, columns, rows and a caption. But tables are not just for numerical information or lists; they can be used to organize many forms of information on a page.

TIF #	DESCRIPTION	WORD COUNT	XEROX TB96	CAERE OP70	ACROBAT CAPTURE	ACROBAT CAPTURE
OFOCR Lab						
Top Ten Tests						
TIF 1	3COL	915	11	3	1	1
TIF 2	AWST	850	41	41	10	14
TIF 3	BIOL	673	17	11	13	11
TIF 4	CHRT	319	30	22	18	4
TIF 5	FAX 2-Ocron	309	37	21	33	4
TIF 6	FAX 3-Spec	361	16	93	27	3

Tables can be used on simple charts to assure that columns of numbers will be aligned and easily readable on any browser.

<h1>FUR and FEATHERS</h1> <p>Purrveyors of Hard-to-Find Pet Supplies</p>		
 <p>Fabulous Felines</p> <p>Reading Feeding Grooming Playing Training Related Services Friendly Faces Order Form</p>	 <p>Alpha Dogs</p> <p>Reading Feeding Grooming Playing Training Related Services Friendly Faces Order Form</p>	 <p>Tropical Feathers</p> <p>Reading Feeding Grooming Playing Training Related Services Friendly Faces Order Form</p>
<p>Can't remember where you bought the only brand of milk bones that Lady or the Tramp went wild for? We know where all the best bones are buried. Just drop a line to bloodhound@fur&feathers.com telling us as much as you can about the item you need. We'll let you know if we can supply it, and if not, where to try digging.</p>		

Richer tables can contain graphics, columnar text, links, backgrounds and other elements in a clear presentation layout.

Tables can be imported Microsoft Excel tables, or they can be easily built with tools that will be familiar to anyone who has ever used a spreadsheet. PageMill offers simple visual tools for creating and modifying tables. A click on the Create Table icon allows the user to specify the number of rows and columns, along with such other basics as cell spacing, padding and border size. Cell spacing determines the amount of space between cells, which is the shaded line between cells. Cell padding specifies the distance between a cell's contents and the edge of the cell. Spacing and padding are measured in pixels.

A border can be added to a table to distinguish it from the rest of the page, and both the table width and the cell widths can be specified in pixels or percentages. Individual cells can be resized with the mouse by dragging the double-arrow pointer on the cell edge. Cells can also be joined to create larger cells that span multiple rows and/or columns in the original grid of same-size cells. These larger cells are typically used to include headings or images or other special elements. A caption can be added to either the top or bottom of the table to describe the contents.

The contents of a cell can be text, images, links or any other valid HTML element. Text can be entered directly, or objects may be simply dragged and dropped into a cell using the familiar cut-and-paste method. Each cell must be formatted separately, using the same techniques as those used to format text on a page, which means that character styles and paragraph formats can be applied to cells, as well as the alignment, color and relative font size of the cell's contents. In Adobe PageMill, the Inspector offers radio button convenience for specifying cell width, vertical and horizontal alignments and backgrounds, as well as check boxes to specify a header cell or no wrap within the cell.

Efficient Editing

Many elements can be used over and over in the Web site. Often-used specific objects such as navigation bars, logos and indexes can be easily referenced rather than copied to each page. The philosophy should be along the lines of, "Build it once, use it forever, as needed."

In PageMill, objects can be copied to the Pasteboard and used repetitively as needed throughout a page design and building session.

Backgrounds, Graphics, Multimedia

John Warnock, Chairman and CEO of Adobe, demonstrates easy animated GIF creation using Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop and GIFbuilder shareware at:

<http://www.adobe.com/studio/tipstechniques/GIFanimation/main.html>

tip

A good practice is to limit images to 480 pixels, which is the default width of a Netscape window when displayed on a 13-inch monitor. This is the lowest common denominator of Web browsers and ensures that the images will be useful for the greatest possible number of people.

The Adobe PageMill 2.0 Guide lists the following link for a 216-color non-dithering palette that is completely compatible with both Mac and Windows browsers. This palette has been posted by Lynda Weinman, author of *Designing Web Graphics*:

<http://www.lynda.com>

tip

An invaluable resource is available that compares various image treatments for online display of every type of image from photos to text. There is no substitute for seeing exactly how it looks on the Web. This set of pages will save you tons of time, and the sturdy conclusions are supported by a dozen samples of various treatments on the same image.

- **Continuous tone images: JPEG with medium or low quality**
- **Flat-color images (anti-aliased): GIF with a minimum of colors, no dither**
- **Black-and-white images: GIF with very few colors, six colors work well**
- **Gradients: JPEG medium is best for maximum number of colors**

<http://www.adobe.com/studio/tipstechniques/GIFJPGchart/main.html>

(Photography by Doug Menuetz/Illustration by Woods & Woods Design/B&W image from Image Club.)

Embedding PDFs And Other Media Elements

Adobe PageMill uses the same plug-ins as Netscape Navigator to handle multimedia elements such as Acrobat PDF, Quick Time video, and various sound files such as AU, AIFF, AIFC and WAV, as well as other media elements. As long as the supporting applications are installed in the PageMill Plug-ins folder, the process for embedding such media objects is very straightforward.

The toolbar offers the Place Object button, or the user can pull down the File —> Place option to enter an object at the cursor point on the page. Images, movies or sounds can also be copied from the Pasteboard, which is handy for repetitive objects that are used on many pages.

When adding images to pages, users with character-based browsers, or those who choose to turn off graphics, should be accommodated by inserting an image label within the browser. This gives the reader of the page an idea of what appears in the missing image space. Parts of images may be made transparent to blend with the page, and the images may be resized to better fit the page. It must be noted that re-sizing does not affect the size of the image because it is not downsampling the image to a smaller file. Adobe Photoshop can be employed for such advanced manipulations. Images can also be used as page backgrounds to create a dramatic effect. This technique must be carefully employed so that text is not difficult to read.

Interlaced images are specifically designed to enhance the end user's experience by downloading the entire image in a form that gradually reveals the details of the image rather than painting it line by line over an empty white space. Adobe PageMill offers a clickable icon that creates interlaced images from standard GIF images.

tip

The Download Statistics tool under the Edit menu in PageMill shows approximately how long it will take to download a particular object at a range of connection speeds, from a slow 9.6 KB per second (9600 baud) to full ISDN speed of 128 KB per second.

Working With JavaScripts

PageMill 2.0 does not test or preview JavaScripts but may alter HTML inside the scripts if Tags are included. To avoid this, the place holder feature of PageMill 2.0 should be used:

To add a place holder:

1. Open the page in a text editor before you open it in PageMill.
2. Immediately before the script, add the comment `< !—NOEDIT—>` to your file.
3. Immediately after the script, add a `< !—/NOEDIT—>` comment.
4. Save the page; then open it in PageMill.

The NOEDIT comments tell PageMill to leave the enclosed HTML alone so that your script can not be altered.

Management with SiteMill

Adobe SiteMill brings drag-and-drop functionality to the task of managing large and complex Web sites. The contents of most Web sites will follow the model of a magazine, where the collection changes constantly, rather than a model of books in a library, where the information remains static. Even Web sites that primarily serve the role of digital libraries will most likely have changing contents such as updates and new additions. And of course, just as with magazines, there is a need to provide access to archives of previously published articles. (Adobe SiteMill for Mac and Windows includes all of the page-authoring and editing functionality of PageMill.)

In a state of such dynamic flux, it becomes a challenge to maintain the links between growing collections of interrelated documents. In a traditional database management approach, all of the links within a collection of HTML documents comprise singular indexes of links between individual documents.

For example, a technical manual often contains many references to certain drawings, procedures or further reference materials. Adobe SiteMill provides a site view that examines all of the links within a collection and provides great help for managing changing Web collections, and repetitive links.

Whenever either end of a link is changed, SiteMill alerts the Webmaster and provides a simple drag-and-drop means of cleaning up any broken links.

File Name	Page Title	Modification Date
EVHome.html	Earth & Vware Home Page	Thu, Dec 7, 1995, 10:52 AM
EVOrder.html	Order Form	Fri, Jan 19, 1996, 9:49 AM
EVPlants.html	Plants Catalog	Fri, Dec 15, 1995, 2:43 PM
Images		
default.logi	×	Thu, Dec 14, 1995, 5:42 PM
Floral.gif	Ⓜ	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 3:37 PM
Fruit.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 10:30 PM
FruitType.gif	×	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 3:50 PM
Gradient.gif	Ⓜ	Fri, Jan 19, 1996, 6:25 PM
Herb.gif	×	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 4:06 PM
Herbs.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 10:37 PM
HerbsType.gif	×	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 4:06 PM
HomeLogo.gif	×	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 1:40 PM
Logo.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 10:17 PM
LogoTypeBanner.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 11:06 PM
More.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 7:51 PM
OrderType.gif	Ⓜ	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 4:13 PM
Pear.gif	×	Wed, Nov 22, 1995, 10:54 AM
Plants.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 5:42 PM
PlantsBanner.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 11:13 PM
Tomato.gif	×	Wed, Nov 22, 1995, 10:19 AM
Tools.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 2:26 PM
Vegetables.gif	Ⓜ	Wed, Nov 29, 1995, 10:36 PM
VegetablesType.gif	×	Thu, Nov 30, 1995, 4:03 PM
PlantsCatalog		
Fruit.html	×	Tue, Dec 5, 1995, 1:48 PM
Herbs.html	×	Tue, Dec 5, 1995, 1:49 PM
Vegetables.html	×	Tue, Dec 5, 1995, 1:49 PM

SiteMill provides vital information about links between pages in your site, all in one bird's eye view.

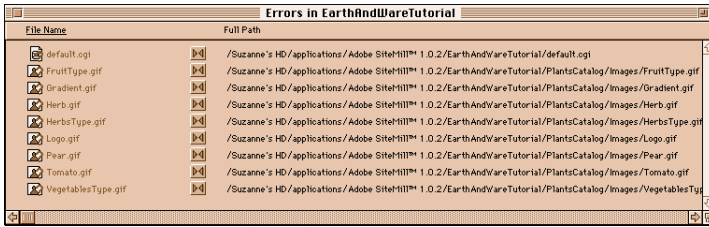
Links In Large HTML Collections

HTML links will be subject to dynamic change as new documents are added to the collection. The entire concept of "new" documents should be directed to all documents entering the collections, not necessarily just the latest "new" documents added to the collection.

Adobe SiteMill provides a visual layout of all of the connections between various links and pages, including error views that indicate broken links and stranded, unlinked documents.

Compared with simply adding files to the directory or file structure, this organizing software provides views into the relationships between files. This type of view of the entire site should be considered an absolute requirement for any successful, ongoing Web site.

As files change, and even as versions of files replace earlier versions, it is crucial to maintain links to the most valuable information on a site. As both source and reference sites evolve and change their contents and URL addresses, Adobe SiteMill tracks these changes programmatically and offers fixes in a graphical display.



SiteMill summarizes error messages and shows file paths to facilitate site management.

Summary

The enhancements discussed in this book are primarily directed at making the information within a Web site more accessible to end users, rather than concentrating strictly on the presentation of the information. However, tools like Adobe PageMill serve both purposes by vastly simplifying the tasks of the Web page author.

Drag-and-drop functionality encourages experimentation, and the ability to easily copy and reuse elements throughout a Web site or HTML document not only saves time, but also adds an identity that allows the user to feel comfortable. For example, a navigation bar, like that seen on the Adobe Web site and others, offers a quick and convenient way of taking full advantage of all of the resources on a site.

Most Web authors will already be familiar with using the mouse to select text and graphics and using drag-and-drop techniques for copying. These simple techniques are extended to all of the functions necessary to create Web pages and manage Web sites with Adobe PageMill and SiteMill.

Dynamic change is the nature of the Web, and every Webmaster will face the responsibility of maintaining order and functionality in this environment. Adobe SiteMill provides a graphic depiction of all the documents and links on an entire Web site, making this a very manageable task.

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advanced
resource
guide

