Painting Software in the Digital Studio

Database Publishing

Eco-Friendly Imagesetters
Spinning the DreamLight

Welcome to the DreamLight WebSite!

DreamLight WebSite Contents

DreamLight, the Interactive Multimedia Studio
Everything you ever wanted to know about DreamLight including information about DreamLight's background and services
The main purpose of a Web site is to establish your company or product as a leader in its field. This is accomplished by using a variety of content to draw visitors into the site, to demonstrate the capabilities and techniques of your company or product, and to provide downloadable items that will carry the name and logo of your company out into the world. We used these guidelines when designing the DreamLight WebSite.

The first step in designing a Web site is to surf the Net and look at existing Web sites. Take notes about what makes a site easy to navigate and what makes a site interesting enough that you stop and explore it. On my first major exploration out onto the Net, I was struck by the lack of navigational design on most sites. It was extremely difficult to know where I was within a particular site and to explore a site quickly.

Since our company’s primary goal on the Web was marketing and name recognition, we needed to draw people into our site so that we could make our sales pitch. This entailed identifying what users’ goals would be when visiting our site. Keeping in mind what our goals were for building the DreamLight WebSite, we tailored all of the main sections to the goals of our users.

How do I steer this thing?

Once we had determined the major structure of the DreamLight WebSite, we set about designing a way to navigate that structure. We needed visual feedback to let users know where they were at all times, easy access to all sections and inviting reminders of the other content available. We wanted to use an imemap as a means of navigation because the same image can be used for all sections, but we wanted our control strip to be different in each section. We also wanted the users to have the ability to view the URL of each button’s link with their browsers. In an imemap, that is not possible. So we created the DreamLight WebStrip. This enables us to dispose of the secondary text menu that accompanies most imagemaps and gives us a cleaner interface.

We designed icons using DreamLight PixelPalettes with Macromedia Director, but specific icon design tools are available. The DreamLight PixelPalettes—shareware that is available on the DreamLight WebSite—gave us easy access to icon colors directly on the page through the use of the Eyedropper tool. Once each button icon had been designed, we created both an up and a down version of each button. Then we copied and pasted each image into GraphicConverter, where they’re saved as individual GIF 89a interlaced images. Interlacing allows Netscape to display the image roughly at first and then to start refining it during the download of the image file.

Since the browser handles most of the formatting, be careful to design for content and structure rather than for the look of the documents. What the users see will depend upon which browser is used, the platform upon which the browser is running and any preferences the users have specified for how structural elements are to be displayed. Avoid using bold, italic and similarly specific tags. Stick with emphasis and strong type tags that define the structure and meaning. Keep most pictures small, providing links to larger JPEG images. In that way, you are forcing only small images on everyone, and users can choose to download the larger versions if they like.
Design backgrounds for maximum readability. If you're using dark text, design your background to be very light. Design it as a small square that will download faster than a larger one. Since it will be tiled, make it as seamless as possible. We used Photoshop to create our background and the offset filter to help make it seamless.

At the end of each page, we include our address and copyright notice along with links to our e-mail address and the DreamLight WebSite itself. This allows someone who saves your page as text or prints it out to find your e-mail and Web site address easily. Since each page on our site includes both the DreamLight WebStrip and the address information, we built a template file to save time and to eliminate the possibility of inadvertent errors through repeated typing of the same information.

Ready for the Net
Once all our pages are ready, we upload them to the remote Web server. It's important to upload all the HTML files as text files with the .txt extension rather than a .text or .txt extension. This lets browsers easily identify the pages as HTML files. All of the images are uploaded as raw binary files with a .gif extension or a .jpg extension. You must continue to use the same filenames; if you change the extensions or names of any files when you upload them, you will break the links.

Once everything is online, dial up the Web server and test all of your pages thoroughly, including every link. You also should test your Web pages in different browsers. You will be surprised at how different everything will look depending on which browser is being used.

If you're looking for more information about designing your own Web page, here are a few useful locations:

- Netscape Extensions to HTML—http://home.mcom.com/home/services_docs/html-extensions.html
- DreamLight WebSite—http://www.shore.net/dreamlt/

The DreamLight WebSite was created on a Power Macintosh 8100/80AV/CD with 104MB of RAM, a 500MB internal hard disk and a 2GB external hard disk. The system was configured with a Radius Intellicolor Display 20CE, LaNes GT Graphics Accelerator, NEC MultiSync 5F aft display, a camcorder for video input to the AV card, Kurta XGT/ADB Pressure Tablet, 230MB MO drive and a Zoom V144 modern. Software used included Adobe Photoshop, Macromedia FreeHand, Macromedia Director, Mac P/P MacTCP, Netscape Navigator, HTML Editor and GraphicConverter.

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