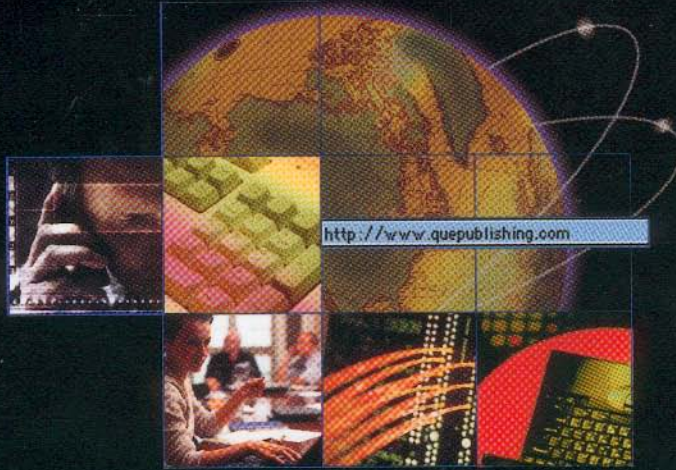


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Neil Randall and Dennis Jones

# CHAPTER 4

## DEVELOPING TEXT, LISTS, AND HYPERLINKS

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*by Dennis Jones*

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## THINKING THROUGH YOUR PAGE DESIGN

Compared to writing HTML code with a text editor, making a page in FrontPage's Page view is easy. You just drop in a few headers, some paragraphs of text, three or four images (and maybe an imagemap), a list, a form, a table, some Dynamic HTML effects, some sound, and as many hyperlinks as you please, all in a very short time. Now you've got a home page. Then you create another page, and another, and soon you've got a wonderful Web site ready for the world to visit. Don't you?

- ⇒ For information about imagemaps, see "Enhancing Pages with Graphics and Multimedia," p. 117
- Well, maybe, but bad design is the nemesis of many, many Web pages, and you risk producing an unattractive page if you don't know and follow a few common sense guidelines. Most importantly, you have to think about your visitors and how they're likely to experience your site.

### ATTRACTING AND KEEPING YOUR AUDIENCE

If you've spent any time browsing the Web, you've already encountered plenty of sites you won't revisit because the first page you went to had one or more of the following problems:

- Took too long to load
- Had no clear purpose
- Was poorly laid out or badly written
- Had obscure navigational tools
- Didn't link to other sites as it said it would
- Had no useful information

Do your best to hook your audience from the moment he first sees your site. A hook goes at the very beginning of a work, whether it's a novel, a film, or the home page of a Web site, and it's designed to seize the reader's attention and keep it. So, put yourself in the mind of the person who's seeing your site for the first time and ask, "What's here for me?" If the honest answer is, "Not much," you need to rethink your approach. You need a better hook, one that makes your viewer want to look around the rest of your site; but, how do you make a hook?

### AVOID TECHNOLOGY EXTREMES

The first temptation is to pull out all the stops on the technology. It's fun and simple to produce decorative or animated marvels on a Web page, but all this fun can make your audience very impatient with the increased download time. Plus, a visually spectacular page needs to keep the viewer's interest, but if there's nothing to it but spectacle, it's a failure as a page.

At the other extreme, a page crammed with solid text, scrolling on and on without white-space or other elements to relieve the eye, is almost as bad. You need to find a balance.

## FINDING A BALANCE

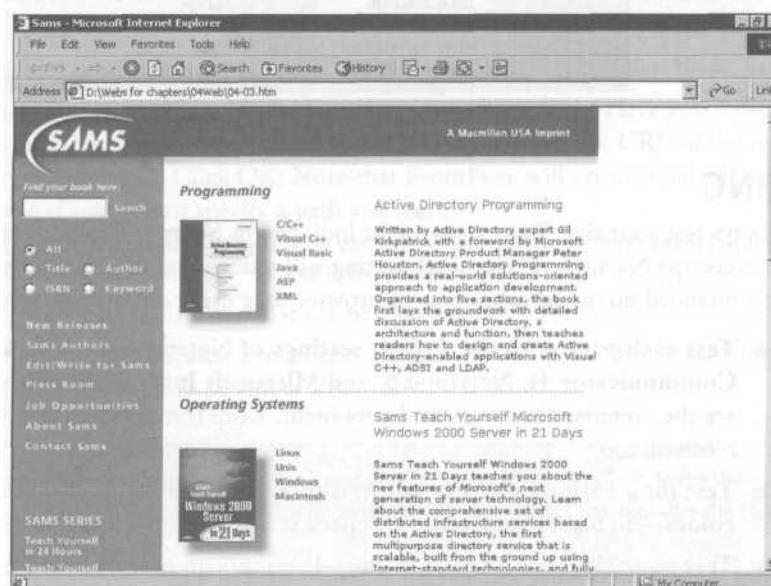
When you try to identify the best hook for your site, ask yourself, "What does my viewer want, and how do I show the viewer, in a hurry, that it's there?" Reversing the earlier list of reasons for not staying on a Web site, you get the following:

- The first page appears quickly.
- Its purpose is immediately and clearly identified.
- It's well laid out and well written.
- Its links accurately suggest what the viewer will find.
- Its links behave as advertised when the viewer does use them.
- It supplies the content the viewer expects or a quick path to that content.

An example of these principles appears in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**

This page integrates images, text, and navigation links to make an attractive and functional whole.



You also can produce a very efficient and useful page without using many images and graphical controls (see Figure 4.2).

The example is almost entirely text, but its content is balanced by a presentation that directs the user quickly and efficiently to the resources.