



Care & Feeding of Your Website

For better or worse, publishing a web site is *not* like publishing a book. You will find that as time passes, you'll need to make changes to your site: you'll add new pages as old ones will become obsolete, links will change or go "dead". This little primer seeks to help you maintain your pages easily and efficiently.

Organize.

Organizing your site effectively from the beginning will make maintenance much easier later on. Some people like to use the site's structure to create a folder hierarchy, For instance, one folder contains the home page and a folder of graphics for that page. The home page folder also holds folders for subsidiary pages each with a respective graphics folder. Another system is to organize files by type: one folder for HTML, one for graphics and other "assets". Larger sites often benefit from a hybrid approach that separates large content categories from each other, and then organizes each sub-section by type.

From a maintenance point of view, which method you choose doesn't really matter. What's important is that you choose a method and stick with it. That will help you and future generations keep things straight.

One caveat, moving existing files from folder to folder can break links. The best way to avoid this is to do your file management from within Dreamweaver. That way your links will be automatically updated.

Prune.

Deleting unused pages does more than make maintenance easier and save hard disc space on the server. Reed's search engine indexer picks up every page on the server, thus users can get access to your out-of-date pages even if you have no links to them. This presents an obvious problem: people are seeing pages containing out-of-date or incorrect information. Fortunately, the solution is simple, delete old pages.

Hint: deleting from a shared volume is just like deleting a document on your own, local drive: simply drag the file to the trash (or press cmd-backspace).



Store.

What's that you say? You don't want to trash your old pages because you might want to teach the class again and re-use the pages? No problem. In that case, copy the pages to your local, desktop computer and then delete the versions on the public server. That way you'll have easily accessible archives and they'll be backed up by your normal back-up routine. You do have a back-up routine, right?

Check.

You should periodically test the links on your site, especially those to external pages (that is, pages located out there in the world rather than simply elsewhere on your site). Sites on the web tend to move or go away over time and you don't want your visitors frustrated by lots of bad links.

Dreamweaver can help you accomplish that goal. First, as suggested above, you can use Dreamweaver's link checking tools to test all of your internal links. The same tools will also generate a list of external links. You can use this list to test each of the links.

(Hint: save the list as text-only, open it in MSWord and "autoformat" the list. This will change it to clickable links you can use to avoid typing all the URL's into your browser.)