

MCM 545 Web Design

with your host Joshua Logsdon

How Does the Web Work?

1. Internet connection (to access the Web)
2. Web browser (to view the Web over an Internet connection)
3. Web address (to find your website using a Web browser)
4. Web server (to host your website at the Web address)
5. Files (static and dynamic web pages, images, audio, video, and database connections, etc. that make up components of your website hosted on the Web server that are accessed via an Internet connection)

The Internet is a massive network infrastructure. The Web utilizes the Internet across the HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) to communicate information.

More about a web address...

A domain name, like google.com, "points" to a web server. A web server, along with other computers on the Internet, are assigned an Internet Protocol (IP) address, a set of numbers that will uniquely identify your computer. There are domain name servers that store this information and make it available to other domain name servers so that the "pointing" information can be updated throughout the Internet. These domain name servers can take as much as 72 hours to be updated.

Sound confusing? Think of a telephone book. To call John Smith, you would have to first look up his telephone number, which would be unique to him. What if John moves? The proper authorities are notified, the information is recorded, and a new telephone book would be provided (ideally).

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Web Standards

w3.org - World Wide Web Consortium

The above links are for coding standards and guidelines in many web technologies. These standards are ever-evolving and have some big name corporations that participate in organizations that decide what well-formed documents are and how they can be transitioned for anticipated advances.

Web Accessibility Standards

w3.org/WAI/ - Web Accessibility Initiative

Check your website for friendly accessibility by people with disabilities. Doing so will further your understanding of designing to all potential audience members.

Web Design Standards

Surprise! There are no official design standards. This leaves you creative control over content and its presentation using web standards and accessibility guidelines. However, there are some limitations you may need to be concerned with, such as browser resolution, monitor color setup, print margins, and bandwidth to name a few.

Cross-browser and Platform Compatibility

While working with normal web documents, sticking to their standards will take care of compatibility issues. You will experience situations, with Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) for example, where Internet Explorer supports additional elements that others do not and vice versa. Researching the problem or the technology should lead to solutions others have found. In order to find specific site problems, you should check your website on various browsers and platforms.

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Mommy, Where Do Web Sites Come From?

Let's think of books as the precursor of information to the Web. Books have designers, printers, publishers, copyright information, editors, authors, and varied audiences. From another perspective, books can have a table of contents, indexes, covers, layouts, pictures (if you are lucky [just kidding {not really}]), titles, chapters, and page numbers. Heck, books even have to have a place to occupy after they are published so that they can be seen and enjoyed. Web sites have just as much that go into them, but they can also offer digital interactivity that a printed page or linear book cannot.

How Web Sites Work Primer

Imagine ripping the pages out of a book; let's think of them as HTML pages. The pages already have a unique identifier, the page number, that can thought of as the page name. Instead of the table of contents being on just one page by itself, it will be included with every page and link to all pages. Instead of immediately processing one page after another, you now have a choice of what to enjoy next. This gives way to a non-linear, interactive experience, the Web.

In fact, that is how the Web started out, as text like pages from a book. You may have gotten a picture here or there, if you were lucky.

Remember, you are giving choices and presenting content that may not always be seen and may not always be viewed in a pre-defined order... think of "Choose Your Own Adventure" and other gaming books.

