

Epublishing-What is Available?

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Abstract

E-publishing has become an alternative and inexpensive method to compete with traditional publication. Educators have access to a myriad of applications software and web authoring tools to produce lively publications. This paper starts by covering HTML as the basis for creating a website. There is a discussion of DHTML and JavaScript and the ease of adopting pre-existing codes to suit the writer's needs. Other commercial software such as Adobe Acrobat Writer-Reader, PowerPoint and FrontPage will be discussed also. This research will examine the maturity and availability of e-books software in the market. Finally the paper will cover the implications of E-publishing regarding how we access and view information.

Introduction

This paper examines the availability of E-publishing as an alternative to traditional publication. The paper starts by discussing Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) as the main building block for the majority of existing websites. Considering the limitation of HTML in designing dynamic and interactive websites, Dynamic HTML (DHTML) is discussed. DHTML can provide the designer with additional tools such as the ability to view elements in a website as objects, to control page layout by using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), to utilize programming tools to add interactivity, and to create dynamic independent fonts. Also, this paper discusses the option of using existing code to save time and effort.

The paper shifts to discuss commercial software packages. It starts by discussing the difference between Dreamweaver and Frontpage as two common web-authoring softwares. PowerPoint as a commercial presentation and E-publishing software is also discussed. In discussing e-books, this paper examines e-book devices and software. It moves to examine briefly the industry's support of E-publishing. Finally, this paper attempts to collect different views of using E-publishing by comparing it to traditional print publishing.

Hypertext Markup Language- HTML

As the language behind most of the websites in the World Wide Web, HTML is and easy language to learn. Dekker and St. John (2000) state that millions of people can produce their own websites. The only skill needed is an elementary understanding of Hypertext Markup Language-HTML. The authors encourage users who want to publish colorful and interesting websites to learn HTML even though they use commercial web-authoring software. The writers add "HTML is a living, growing language; understanding how it works is critical to keeping up with its latest innovations."

To create a website by using HTML, no special software is needed. From the website of The National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), the author answers the question, “A Beginner’s Guide to HTML?” by stating that HTML is a file that contains “plain-text” also identified as ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange). The author adds that a user only needs a simple text editor, such as Notepad, to create HTML documents.

To become proficient in using HTML, you need to be familiar with most of the tags that form the key words or syntax for HTML. In discussing tags and how they are used in HTML documents, the author in the NCSA website states that elements are the main building block of a document. Tags are used with elements. “HTML tags consist of a left angle bracket (<), a tag name, and a right angle bracket (>). Tags are usually paired (e.g., <H1> and </H1>) to start and end the tag instruction. The end tag looks just like the start tag except a slash (/) precedes the text within the brackets. “ Further, some elements contain attributes that add extra information about a specific tag. For example, a publisher may use attributes such “top, bottom, or middle” to position an image within an HTML document.

If publishers are satisfied using HTML to produce static publishing, there are hundreds of valuable websites that provide decent tutorials and assistance in learning HTML and web development. “Static” is the lack of interactivity. A person can only view a page, read it, and notice the use of different fonts, colors and even organized information in a tabular form.

Learning HTML is worth the time invested in the process. Educators and students should take advantage of the existing websites on the WWW to learn HTML. As of March 24, 2003, there are 209 tutorials found in Google.com’s directory and there are 95 guides and tutorials in Yahoo.com’s directory. As a final note, it should be noted that most of the commercial application software, especially word processors (including Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, and other leading software) provide the user with the ability to save documents as HTML. The resulting HTML documents (WebPages) are ready to be submitted to an Internet server to be posted for viewing. However, knowing HTML allows the users to modify (in case they are not satisfied with the results) the HTML code generated by these software packages.

Dynamic Hypertext Markup Language- DHTML

For those publishers who want to publish their written materials on the web, but are limited by the static nature of HTML, Dynamic Hypertext Markup Language’s technologies can provide them with dynamic construction tools. By searching whatis.com- searchWebService.com, the site shows a comprehensive and detailed definition for DHTML. The site divided the definition into two main sections: definition of DHTML and the features and applications that are considered the building blocks of DHTML.

In defining DHTML, the author states DHTML combines HTML with new options and tags to be more responsive to the user’s needs. DHTML will enable the user to view animated and interactive web site. DHTML allows the user to view a website as desktop and multimedia applications. Further, the author provides two example of DHTML These are:

1. A user can change the color of a text by passing the mouse on top of it.
2. A user can “drag and drop” an image from one location to another.

In discussing the features found in DHTML, the author mentions that both Internet Explorer (Microsoft web browser) and Netscape browsers support the following technologies:

Viewing Elements as Objects

Within each page, any header, paragraph, list or any other element is looked at as an object. To illustrate how the concept of object-oriented technology is applied to elements in a website, the author gives an example of using headers as objects. Since a header is looked at as an object, it possesses dynamic characteristics. Every header can be named with a unique name. These headers have properties of color and style of text. By focusing on these properties, a small script or program can address a header by its name and the selected events associated with it. For example, the event of passing a mouse over a header might change its color.

Cascading Style Sheets, CSS

The author of the article continues to discuss CSS by stating that it “describes the default style characteristics (including the page layout and font type style and size for text elements such as headings and body text) of a document or a portion of a document.” DHTML allows the use of multiple cascading style sheets within the same or across multiple related documents.

Programming

The website, [whatis.com-Dynamic HTML](#), notes that DHTML uses programming heavily since most elements (objects) found in a page can be manipulated by programming. There are three major programming or scripting languages. These include JavaScript, Java applet and ActiveX. To understand the impact of these programming tools, additional search beyond what was found in [whatis.com-Dynamic HTML](#) is needed.

JavaScript. In the article “Introduction to JavaScript,” the author distinguishes between Java as a full-fledged language designed by Sun Microsystems and JavaScript as scripting language that was designed by Netscape to add dynamic capabilities to websites. The author lists some of the features that pertain to lively Epublishing. These include “pop-up boxes,” “mouse rollover effects,” menus, changing text found in the status bar, and drop-downs with linking capabilities. It should be noticed that with the availability of many websites that maintain JavaScript code, it is rarely necessary to write your own script from scratch.

Java Applets. From the University of Washington, by responding to the question, “What is the difference between a Java Applet and a JavaScript?” the author states that Java Applet is a complete program that is customized and includes more powerful features than those provided by JavaScript. Similar to JavaScript, the author encourages the user to look for free and pre-written Java Applets.

ActiveX. In defining ActiveX, [searchWin2000.com](#), which is supported by [whatis.com](#) states that ActiveX is “roughly equivalent” to a Java Applet. The advantage of using ActiveX is the ability of using it in multiple Windows or Macintosh applications. An Epublisher can design or contract a developer to create an ActiveX program as part of

their work. The resulting object can enhance the understanding of a concept greatly. The difference between Java Applet and ActiveX is that Java Applets can run on all major browsers, where you must have Windows or Macintosh machines to run an ActiveX.

Dynamic Fonts

In the article “Dynamic HTML,” the author mentions that Netscape’s Communicator suite contains dynamic fonts where a web designer can include files that include specific font style, size and color. These fonts will be downloaded with the viewed page independent of the browser.

Obviously not every Epublisher needs all the features provided by DHTML, especially if there is a learning curve associated with some of these technologies. It is good idea to keep in mind what is available because sooner or later you may need to publish some materials that require more than one perceptual faculty of the reader. At that time, DHTML will come in handy.

Using Existing Code to Create Dynamic Publishing

Noticeably JavaScript, by the number of the websites that support it, is still the most widely used scripting language to create dynamic websites. Fortunately for most Epublishers, there is a great amount of preexisting code written in JavaScript. Fiedler and Clark (1999) state that “there are probably enough free programs at places like javascriptsource.com and scriptsearch.com to let you go on for years without writing a line of code, but it's not that hard to learn, either.” The authors encourage the readers to start learning JavaScript by visiting two websites: <http://www.webdeveloper.com/javascript> and <http://wdvl.com/Authoring/JavaScript>.

Giving credit to the programmer or the developing website when using preexisting code is an understandable obligation. Fiedler and Clark warned about the “difference between stealing someone else's scripts and using a pre-made script (and giving the proper credits in a comment tag in the script).” The authors state that professionals do not attempt to claim someone else’s code as their own.

Commercial Software Packages

This section will discuss three major commercial software applications that are commonly used to produce Epublishing materials. These include FrontPage, Dreamweaver and PowerPoint. To make it an interesting discussion, this paper compares Dreamweaver and FrontPage.

Dreamweaver vs. FrontPage

Jorge (2, 2002) compares Macromedia Dreamweaver 4.0 and Microsoft FrontPage 2000. The following points were extracted in relation to FrontPage and Dreamweaver.

FrontPage is one of the most popular web-authoring software applications in the market. FrontPage

1. Is good for building uncomplicated websites.
2. Is integrated with other Microsoft products such as Microsoft Office. FrontPage is similar in its functionality to MS Word; therefore it is easier to learn for most people.

3. Can organize files and folders as a “tree-structure” in a website.
4. Comes with tools for uploading files to a website without the need for File Transfer Protocol (FTP) software.

Jorge states that Dreamweaver is very popular web-authoring tool because it is

1. A stable and extraordinary software for meeting advanced users needs.
2. Capable of changing between tables and layers. Dreamweaver allows users to develop their web sites with layers and transform the results into tables without losing structure.
3. Capable of creating image maps with a large number of links without the need for JavaScript.
4. Integrated with other Macromedia products including Flash and Fireworks (see the definitions of Flash and Fireworks in the Definition of Terms section).

PowerPoint

The main function of PowerPoint is to create slides presentation. Fay-Wolfe, from the University of Rhode Island, states “PowerPoint offers word processing, outlining, drawing, graphing, and presentation management tools- all designed to be easy to use and learn.” From the Microsoft website, the author of the article “PowerPoint 2002 Product Guide” states that PowerPoint has been used by many people to communicate their ideas. From the online help that comes with MS Office, the writer states that PowerPoint has the ability to edit and format documents in more than 80 languages.

Similar to all MS Office Packages, PowerPoint can easily save your presentation as an HTML document to be viewed on the WWW. In addition to all the benefits of PowerPoint as an E-publishing tool, users can further enhance their publication with multimedia features such as 3-dimensional features, sound, animation, video, graphic and text.

eBooks

This section will discuss the maturity and availability of e-Book in the market. Also it discusses the benefits of using eBooks vs. pBooks (paper books). Since there are varieties of ways of using the term eBooks (Ebook, E-Book, e-Book, etc), this paper will be using the term eBook for consistency.

Definitions of eBooks

From e-Books.org, the page by the title “frequently asked questions,” one of the questions was, “What is an e-book?” The author states that the term eBook is short for “electronic book.” The author mentions that the term eBook might refer to an electronic device or the software used to read an eBook. From the website “Writer’s Write,” Van Buren and Cogswell (2002) discuss eBooks devices and eBooks software as follows:

eBooks devices. Van Buren and Cogswell state that eBooks devices are small electronic devices. Some of these devices are no bigger than a sheet in a notebook and don't exceed one inch thick. Further, these devices mostly use LCD screens, color or black-white screen, and usually come without keyboard. The authors point out three brands that are available in the market. These include Softbook Reader, Rocket eBook and Franklin eBook

1. Gemaster. The first two books were purchased by Gemstar, found in <http://www.eBook-Gemstar.com/>. By going to the Gemstar website, there is no mention of Softbook or Rocket eBook, instead there are new models: GEB 1150 and GEB2150. By giving a call to the technical support (1-800-386-7389), the help-desk person states that GEB 1150 is the newer model of Softbook Reader, where GEB 2150 is the newer model of Rocket book. They both have similar features with minor differences mainly in the battery capability. These styles of eBooks include the following features (as of March 25, 2003):

- a) A battery that lasts up to 20 hours for GEB 1150 and 10 hours for GEB 2150
- b) Larger memory where you can store dozens of reading materials
- c) Built-in modem. You don't need any computer or need to pay for delivery charges. In addition to the modem, GEB 2150 has a built-in Ethernet card.
- d) Adjustable brightness and contrast for reading even in the dark
- e) USB connection
- f) Change of font size for easy reading
- g) Search capability, bookmarks, and making notes
- h) Pre-installed dictionary- Webster's Pocket American Dictionary
- i) Comes with many accessories

2. Franklin Electronic. Franklin Electronic calls their device eBookman. In their web site, there are three models with the following numbers: EMB 900, EMB 901, and EMB 911. All the models can display 16 grayscale colors, run their operating systems, are PC system compatible, support MP3 format, use stylus, and they come with multiple accessories. The interesting part of Franklin eBooks is that their devices are capable of reading books. There are over 12000 audio books that these devices can play back. Also a user can download thousands of free books from Franklin Electronic website.

eBooks software. In discussing eBook software, Van Buren and Cogswell state that various companies are developing software that runs on different sizes of computers ranging from palm-size to desktop computers. By researching many websites pertaining to eBooks software, this paper will focus only on the most common three formats. These include Adobe (PDF), Microsoft Reader, and Palm Reader.

1. Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). From about.publishing.com, the author states that Adobe (PDF) has multiple features. These include "Full text search, variable font sizes, zoom options, external HTML linking, internal hyperlinks," and "bookmarking." Further, the advantages of PDF are found in its popularity, hardware independency, and its utilization of "WYSIWYG" for printing. As disadvantages for using PDF, the author states that this format is hard to read on the screen and has weak security measures.
2. Microsoft Reader . From about.publishing.com, the author discusses the features included in MS Reader by noting its advantages: "ClearTypeTM display technology improves on-

screen reading, external HTML linking, audiobook interface, adjustable font size, full text search, bookmark and highlighting capabilities.” The author states that documents in this format are easily created. The size of these files is small and they look great. Discussing the disadvantages, the author states that only Windows-based machines can read the MS Reader format and “text is not printable under any conditions.”

3. Palm Reader. From palmdigitalmedia.com, the author discusses Palm Reader software by noting that “Palm Reader is an intuitive and powerful program for viewing Palm Digital Media electronic books (eBooks).” The advantage of Palm Reader is its ability to read text in a similar fashion to reading pBooks, one page at a time. This enhances the reader’s experience compared to other software where a user has to use scrolling features. As a disadvantage of Palm Reader, the writer, from palminfocenter.com, discusses Palm Reader Pro by noting that it lacks some features found in other eBook readers. Also, it is not free.

Benefits of Using e-Books

Harris (1999) states that eBook has become a buzzword among publishers and writers. This is due to the inexpensive production and ease of updating the materials found in such media. In the article “E-books and eguides-ebooks,” the author states that “the main difference between eBooks and pBooks (paper boks) is the elimination of the costly printing, binding and distribution process. This results in faster publishing and lower prices for the eBooks.”

There is a clear indication that people start to benefit by using eBooks as a source of reading materials. In the Electronic Text Center in the University of Virginia (2002), the author states “6.4 million free eBooks shipped from this site August 8th 2000 - May 20th 2002 [or 6.8 per minute every day for 21 months!].” The number of downloaded eBooks indicates the high appeal of eBooks to many people. From the website Reading for the Future, an article with the title “Introduction to eBooks” discusses the advantages of eBooks over traditional ones. The author includes the following points:

1. eBooks are available 24hours/7 days a week through accessing the web and directly downloading.
2. eBooks are never out of print.
3. eBooks require no postal expense since they are delivered electronically.
4. eBooks are very portable and can be read anywhere.
5. eBooks have searching capabilities by keyword or phrase.
6. eBooks utilize a built in dictionary.
7. eBooks allow the addition of bookmarks and notes to the reading materials.
8. eBooks save physical space.
9. eBooks are usually 20-30% cheaper than pBooks.
10. eBooks are available all over the world.

Industry Support for E-publishing

From the article “Ebooks in the Classroom,” the author states that DigitOwl, a software company based in Florida, is one of the pioneer companies to explore “digital textbook market.” Digital

Owl, through sponsoring Florida Digital Textbook Initiative, is attempting to replace conventional textbooks in Florida School with “e-textbooks”. These eBooks will be available on laptop computers and eBook reading devices.

Other companies have taken a daring step in the direction of providing students with electronic version of their textbook. WiseUp, as a featured link in about.com, provides students with interactive digital textbooks. WiseUp works with leading publishing companies. The author emphasizes the advantage of their electronic textbooks by stating that “the original textbook is provided in full, page-by-page, graphic-by-graphic—while providing the student with a rich new interactive experience.” The student “can take notes electronically,” link to the Internet directly, “highlight key passages digitally”, and use a search capability.

Views on E-publishing

To search how we view and access information, there is no better way than examining and contrasting the methods of producing reading materials. These are print technology and electronic textbooks and publications. This section attempts to collect some views on printed materials and eBooks. There are two contradicting views to which one is the preferred approach.

Print

It would be unfair to ignore the benefits from printed materials over the years. Rawlins (1998) discusses the great benefits of printing and how it has made information available over the last five hundreds years. Printing “led to pagination, indices, and bibliographies since they were now possible and they made searching easier.” The rewards of using print as a medium to exchange knowledge have been cultivated in multiple forms. Rawlins notes that print has “democratized knowledge, increased accuracy, made fiction possible, made propaganda possible, created public libraries, and created the idea of authorship.”

Some readers still feel that reading printed materials has unique advantages that cannot be found in electronic materials. From the article “Ebooks in the Classroom,” the author states that in 1998, a study published in the Human Factors & Ergonomics Society Journal found that readers experienced “decline in speed and accuracy, and an increase in fatigue, when reading from a screen rather than paper.” Further, the author adds that subjective evidence gives favor to print. To support his previous statement, the author notes that proofreaders prefer printed materials, and most eBooks readers tend to “print before reading.”

Electronic Books

There is evidence that eBooks can result in the same outcome as pBook when students use them. From the article “Who’s Reading Ebooks,” 91 students took a survey at Ball State University to verify whether students studying from eBooks instead of pBooks resulted in higher grades. After reviewing grades from 543 quizzes, the study showed that there was no difference between the two methods of studying. The professor, Richard Bellaver, who conducted the study believed that eBooks are practical tools for academic use.

Some readers have adapted to eBooks and they prefer accessing reading materials electronically. From an interview with Glenn Sanders –founder and director of eBookWeb.org, Spiccianti (2002) asked the question in reference to reading an eBook, “How would you compare the experience to reading a traditional book?” In answering the question, Sanders notes that he enjoys reading electronic books. Also Sanders states that lighting, “holding the pages open” or remembering his place are not problems anymore. He adds that the best reason for reading electronically is the use of the “find” feature to locate information much more quickly. In addition, Sanders mentions his ability to download a lot of information from the Net to read them later in his “Rocket eBook” or Pocket Pc any place away from his computer screen.

In discussing electronic scholarly publishing, Treloar (1995) notes that print publication is associated with the following advantages:

1. In referring to Harnard, the author states that journals are slow to produce since it takes a longer time to print a new publication.
2. Print publication cannot be searched easily, resulting in a second market to handle indexing and abstracting.
3. Information in print is only available statically.
4. If hyperlinking ever exists in printing, it is awkward.
5. In referring to Odlyzko, the author states print materials are hard to store, circulate, and in addition to that, they are costly.

The author adds that for all these reasons, pioneering companies, with the availability of technology, start to produce their prints electronically. “Such electronic publishing is sometimes referred to as e-publishing.” In a final note, there is strong support for E-publishing. It is found in the many websites, both in industry and academia. E-publishing “is here to stay. It’s up to the writers, themselves, to raise the standard of writing through conventional means- writing workshops, analysis and writing.”(Zaidman, 1997)

Definition Of Terms

FTP

FTP stands for File Transfer Protocol. It is a subset of the Internet that allows uploading and downloading files.

Flash

From www.macromedia.com, the author defined Flash as “ the solution for developing highly visual interactive content and applications that deliver breakthrough experiences with significant return on investment.” Also there are 497 million users who use Flash player on the Internet.

Fireworks

From www.macromedia.com, the author states that Fireworks is a creative and powerful tool. It includes “extensive format and standards support” to create “interactive graphics in a single, web-centric environment.”

Conclusion

This paper discusses the availability of E-publishing software and devices as another alternative to traditional publishing. Educators can utilize myriad varieties of technology to publish their materials quickly and inexpensively. This paper researches HTML as the basis for most web sites. Considering the limitation of HTML, the paper covers DHTML technology as an addition enhancing interactivity.

The paper finds that there is no need to reinvent the wheel in designing websites because of the existing code that can be reused. Educators can use commercial software packages to easily publish their work. This paper discusses Dreamweaver, Frontpage, and PowerPoint as commercially available software.

EBooks (short for electronic books) are available on the market. This paper discusses three devices including SoftBook Reader, Rocket eBook, and Franklin eBook. In discussing eBook software, this paper covers Adobe Reader (PDF), Microsoft Reader, and Palm Reader. Ebooks have multiple benefits, primarily in the freedom of carrying around, and the ability to view reading materials in a multi-media form.

There is evidence that the industry supports E-publishing in general. There are contrasting views on how E-publishing is used. Although the industry is clear about the benefits and historical value of traditional print, it sees E-publishing as an additional delivery system for published material.

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