



<creative html design.2>

a hands-on web design tutorial

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<http://www.htmlbook.com>

● CD-ROM Mac®/Windows®/Unix

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By Lynda Weinman and William E. Weinman

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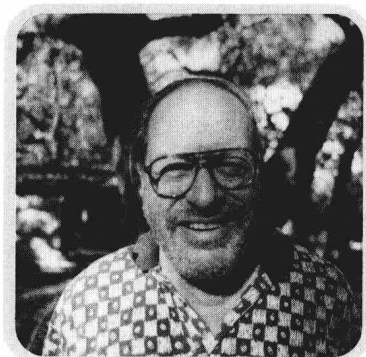
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Dad's Foreword

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When they were children, my son Bill and his sister Lynda already demonstrated clear signs of the exceptional talents they later revealed. Lynda, even in third grade, demanded every available color of Crayola the company offered, and later in her teens, purchased sets of Magic Markers with exotic and unusual shades.

Bill, on the other hand, quickly outshone his poor father whose successful construction of a HeathKit High Fidelity amplifier, tuner, and speakers gave himself such pride of accomplishment. Bill proceeded to build better and more powerful units from scratch, using parts he purchased at Henry's Radio.

All of us have been involved with computers from an early date. Bill owned an Altair, the first Personal Computer, built from a kit and described and featured in the July, 1975 issue of *Popular Electronics*. Lynda learned to hack on an Apple II Plus, and eventually bought the first available Macintosh in 1984. Bill became a DOS wizard, and I bought a Commodore 64 myself.

I was thrilled and proud of the opportunity to write a foreword to their book, and I read the chapters one by one as they emerged from the printer. As a casual computer user, not very deeply involved in the programming or technical side of it, I found this book amazingly clear and instructive.

I have "surfed" the web since being introduced to it about three years ago. But the details of just how and through what magic process I could find myself visiting the Louvre or researching the works of Shakespeare were a complete mystery to me. Now, they are not that big a mystery.

My hope is that you will enjoy reading this book as much as I did.

Lynda: Can HTML Be Creative?



One of the coolest things to happen to me in 1993 was my discovery of the web. One of the uncoolest things was the simultaneous discovery that I had to learn HTML in order to create web content. I was the product of the GUI generation (raised and bred on the Graphical User Interface), and in no way associated myself with programming languages or command line interfaces.

I'd always heard programming was a creative act, though as a visual-type person, I was highly suspicious of people who claimed this. I knew I kept wanting to do things with HTML that it wouldn't easily let me do, and the process of working with it felt far from "creative."

And yet, look at the web today, a mere few years later, and you'll find a creative playing field in full force. My brother and I hope to get you to the point where that's how it feels, and where HTML is a willing vehicle to help you communicate what you want to say effectively and creatively.

The web has an amazing way of bringing together divergent technologies, people, and practices. My brother and I qualify as part of this weird phenomenon. We barely knew

each other as we were growing up. I mean, he was a boy! Another species...but that's another story! He was the *build-MITS-kit, teach-yourself-assembly-language* and *hack-your-way-through-music-and-programming* type. I was the *I have-my-Mac-hear-me-roar-try-to-outdo-this* type. We both viewed each other in the nose-up position, and rarely discussed computers when we spoke.

So the web caught us off guard. Each of us at opposite ends of computer careers (myself a digital designer/ animator, and he a programmer) the web let us face each other squarely eye-to-eye to say, "Hey, I want to learn what you do! You're not so uncool after all!" I wrote some design books, he wrote some programming books, and we finally said, "Let's do one together!" And here it is.

When I wrote my first book in 1995 (*Designing Web Graphics*), I could barely get publishers to understand that graphic designers would ever want to publish on the web. It was not considered at that point to be a design medium. Things have changed—look around the web today, and you'll find stellar examples of beautiful visual design. (You'll also see some not-so-stellar examples, but more about that later.)

To be honest, there hasn't been an HTML book until now that I could wholeheartedly recommend. I like some of the visual quickstart guides, and the teach yourself guides, but they always raised more questions for me than they answered. It seemed to me that a different kind of HTML book was needed—one that walked the reader through the web site creation process—which contained lessons and source files handy to try out. Even though there are a

glut of HTML books in the bookstores, I saw a glaring need for a different type of HTML book that offered a more holistic approach to teaching the subject matter. I've never met anyone more knowledgeable about HTML than my brother, so when he agreed to partner with me on this book, I was thrilled.

Mitchell Waite (Waite Group Press and Waite Online) once pegged me perfectly. He said, "Oh, I get what you do! You write books for yourself!" He couldn't have been more correct. I write books in a way in which I would want things explained to me. There's a certain amount of

required organization, a certain amount of required detail and background information, and a whole lot of concrete, "Oh, so THAT's how you do it!" To be concise, I'm the practical type, not the theoretical type.

My brother and I are both well-worn travelers in this weird HTML/Web landscape, and hope to share our hard-earned lessons with you. We hope you get down, get dirty, and get creative with this HTML/Web stuff. We've learned a lot of tricks and techniques that will help you get past the tools and into the creative process.

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Lynda's Goals for This Book

My area of expertise is graphics, and my brother's is programming. To date, my books have included tips, techniques, and exercises to learn how to create web graphics. I look at the HTML books on the market and don't think they include enough information about graphics, but also see the necessity to focus on HTML as the main subject when first starting in web publishing. It's my hope with *Creative HTML Design.2* that we've bridged the two worlds—graphics and programming—and created a single resource that can get people started on the right track.

My brother and I really enjoy sharing knowledge with each other. This has been a fantastic opportunity for us to blend our knowledge, get it down on paper, and put it in one place. We both write conversationally, and in some respects, this book invites you to witness our lively and educated conversation about web design and web programming.

Artists care about how things look, that colors match, and that artwork aligns exactly the way we planned. The web is a disconcerting medium because it's been designed to be customizable by the end user and the browsers, creating a situation where the results of your design efforts can easily look different than you planned. This book will help artists and programmers control what they can and accept and identify what they can't.

Bill: Can Programming Be Creative?



Conventional wisdom says that programming is technical, and graphics is creative. That's the sort of thinking that got us into this mess. If more programmers (and project managers) understood that programming is first a creative act (not unlike painting or music), we would have more innovative software and less "me too" bloatware screaming at us to believe that, contrary to appearance, it's actually innovative.

It's worth repeating: Programming is first a creative act.

Technology is "The knowledge and means used to produce the material necessities of a society" (Webster's, 1981). Programming is much more than that—it's a tool of expression, a set of skills with which you can create the reality of a vision. It is an art that will not be recognized as such until our children are grown because our contemporaries don't understand it. That makes it a technology in their eyes.

I've spent most of my life in the creative application of new technologies. I'm a fundamentally creative person, who just happens to love playing with new technology. I started out life as a musician, playing guitar, keyboards, and drums in rock-and-roll bands. On the side, I built custom synthesizers and designed sound reinforcement systems. I never drew that much of a distinction between all of those activities because I see them all as creative pursuits.

When the web came along, I saw a new way to explore the creative application of emerging technology. With transistors getting smaller and faster, processor speed being measured in hundreds of MEGAFLOPS (Millions of Floating Point Operations Per Second), memory prices falling and high-end graphics display hardware following suit, the web couldn't have happened at a better time. Now we can start really having fun!

In bringing together the visual arts with the programmatic arts, the web has also brought me together with my long-lost sister. Lynda didn't mention the part where she spent 18 years in the Himalayas spinning yak wool with the Swami Bawgdhagda Dhogdhoo. But upon her return, with the web exploding like Krakatau on a bad hair day, it became necessary for her to finally look up her propeller-head brother. Isn't life strange?

Us programmers are so terribly misunderstood.

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Bill's Goals for This Book

Computers are obstinate about precision. Miss a period here or a semi colon there, and you'll get pistachios instead of caviar every time. That's why it's important to know how a language works before you try to write something in it.

Before we wrote this book, I had not yet seen a thorough and accurate book on HTML and its associated disciplines. There were some good books on graphics, but their HTML was weak; there were some technically accurate books on HTML, but they weren't really complete, or they just didn't teach the subject well. So when Lynda and I realized that we each wanted to write the same book, we both got really excited about combining our disparate skills and perspectives to create a uniquely useful book about HTML and how to build a web site.

Building a web site is more than just HTML. If you want to learn how to use tables to stitch irregular parts of a graphic together, you need to also learn how to make the graphic; or, if you want to learn how to use JavaScript to make rollover controls, it's good to also know how to make rollover graphics that invite the user to engage them.

My sister Lynda is the undisputed master of on-line graphics, and she has added generous tips, tricks, and insights where necessary to help you accomplish your

ultimate goal: a web site that says what you want it to say—with compelling graphics and flawless HTML.



Lynda and Bill rode together long before they wrote together.

In the process of writing this book, I have learned what a wonderful teacher my sister is. She has a knack for teaching like Mozart had a knack for a catchy tune (I don't hear too many people whistling Mahler on their way to work). Combined with my propensity for bits and bytes, I hope we have created a book that will inspire you as much as it educates you.

In short, I want to see some more innovation. Make something new, and send me the URL.

How This Book Works

This book is designed to work on a number of levels. It can be read in linear order, or it can be surfed, much the way you would gather information on the web. Everyone learns differently—some people learn from theoretical books, others from manuals, others from step-by-step exercises, and some from simply diving in head first and doing. We have tackled this book from all these angles. We wanted to do more than a how-to book, more than an exercise book, and more than a theory book. Our goal was not simply to present information, but to also explain why it was necessary, how you would do it, and where could you find resources related to it.

Creative HTML Design.2 walks you through building a real working web site, specially created for the lesson plans in this book. In the process, you will have a chance to read about all the phases of site design. This book includes a complete HTML 4.0 reference with details on all current HTML elements.

What's New About Creative HTML Design.2?

A lot has changed since we first wrote this book in 1998, so our goal with this second edition was to update its content with new information about WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editors, new graphics applications, and new HTML and graphic techniques.

As HTML and graphic editors are writing HTML automatically, many might wonder why a book on HTML is needed at all. I (Lynda) tend to adopt these sorts of WYSIWYG tools much more readily because I am not a programmer like my brother, and they are fast and convenient to use. We've decided that there are likely two distinct camps of people who will read this book: those like me and those like him!

This book is useful to those people who plan to use HTML and web graphic editors because it will give you the knowledge of what those tools are doing behind-the-scenes. If you plan to do this work professionally or interact with other professionals, that knowledge will at minimum make you feel more confident, and at maximum will help you troubleshoot a problem down the road.

More than learning to write HTML yourself, our goal was to show how to integrate graphics editing with HTML editing and share tips and techniques that will make your work easier and sites more creative. Trial versions of Adobe's Photoshop and ImageReady are included on the CD-ROM, so you can follow along and learn to make all kinds of web-specific artwork while you're writing code.

System Requirements

To do most of the exercises in this book, you will need a computer with a Windows or Macintosh operating system capable of viewing and creating both graphics and text. Because the graphic exercises are conducted in either Adobe ImageReady or Photoshop, the RAM requirements for those programs are at least 64MB. You will sometimes want to have a browser, an imaging application, and a text editor open at the same time. This may cause you to want more RAM than 64MB, especially if you are using a Macintosh computer. That's because the Macintosh operating system doesn't manage RAM as flexibly as Windows.

While it's possible to write HTML on any operating system, Adobe ImageReady and Photoshop is only written for newer Macintosh and Windows operating systems (Win 95, Win 98, OS 7.1 and above).

For those of you using Linux (or virtually any X-Windows system), it is possible to do the exercises using The Gimp (<http://www.gimp.org/>). While The Gimp is conceptually similar to Photoshop there are some differences in its capabilities and user interface, so the Photoshop exercises will not work step-for-step.

Bill has tried The Gimp he sees it as a tremendous step forward for people who want to step outside the box of commercial software while retaining the power and flexibility of today's high-end applications. The Gimp combines the features of Photoshop with the power of an open-source development model to provide a user-driven graphics program that out-performs the commercial competition in speed and reliability. bill has seen the future and it looks very promising.

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Web Site Information and Email Contacts

The *Creative HTML Design.2* web site (<http://www.htmlbook.com>) is there to help you by providing updates to the book and tips and pointers that will be kept current as new technology emerges.

The Ducks In A Row web site (<http://ducks.htmlbook.com>) is a live implementation of the examples and exercises in this book. In fact, this book represents the actual process that we went through in building this site.

Lynda and Bill both live active email lives. Lynda's email address is lyndachd@lynda.com; and Bill's is chd@bw.org. Please feel free to contact us with questions, comments, complaints, and even kudos. We love kudos.

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we've enjoyed writing it. We both learned a ton from each other, and it's our hope that you will benefit from the results.

Our Lesson Approach

Once you're up to speed on web publishing, you will design your site in the following stages:

- Concept
- Planning
- Collecting Assets (artwork, text, etc.)
- Producing Graphics and Layouts
- Writing Code, HTML Editing, Scripting, etc.
- Publishing to a Server

We did not choose to teach you how to create your web site in this order because we agreed that it would not be the best order to learn from. How can you develop a concept if you don't understand the limitations of the medium? How can you plan a site if you've never built one before? How can you collect assets if you don't understand what you need? How can you produce graphics and layouts if you've never authored for the web? How can you publish something you don't know how to make yet?

For this reason, we organized the materials in a logical manner for learning web publishing with HTML and graphics. If you find that there's something you already know, feel free to skip ahead to the next section or chapter. If you're curious about something that hasn't been discussed, turn to the Index to locate it and flip ahead.

You will find all the related files to each exercise in its respective chapter folder on the <chd.2> CD-ROM.

About the Ducks In A Row Site

The Ducks In A Row web site (<http://www.ducks.htmlbook.com>) was designed for the educational purpose of this book. The rubber stamp company is real and is owned by Mainway, Inc. The Ducks In A Row artwork on the <chd.2> CD-ROM was created by Joan Farber, and can be used for the exercises in this book only. You may post this artwork to the web in the context of following our exercises, but you may not freely distribute this art or resell the artwork in any form or manner. **Hint:** If you like Joan's artwork, she is an independent illustrator and will be happy to consider any projects you, might want to hire her for. Joan Farber's artists representative for national/international advertising campaigns and private commissioned fine art is:

Vicki Prentice Associates Inc.

630 5th Avenue (20th floor)
Rockefeller Center, NY NY 10011
212.332.3460 / fax: 212.332.3401

Creative HTML Design.2 walks you through creating the Ducks In A Row web site. The CD-ROM includes all the art and programming files needed for the book's step-by-step exercises. In the process, you'll learn about seamless tiles, rollover buttons, navigation bars, frames, tables, cascading style sheets, fragments, animation, sound, transparency, web typography, site organization, and more. The lessons in the book start simple, and advance to more complex assignments. In the end, you will create a real working web site, and will be able to apply the process to your own site design projects.

Ducks In A Row

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The Second Edition of Creative HTML Design

The preliminary layout design of *Creative HTML Design.2* was sketched on paper, and then produced using QuarkXPress 4.1, Adobe Photoshop 6.0, and Microsoft Word 2001 on a Macintosh G3 running System 9.4. The text was set in the Adobe Utopia family, main heads were set in Universe Bold Condensed, HTML/CODE was set in Courier New. The color was produced using CMYK mixtures, and the images were all converted to grayscale. The cover illustration was painted with acrylics and crayons, and then drum scanned. *Creative HTML Design.2* was printed on 50-pound Husky Offset Smooth, and was produced digitally using Adobe Software. Prepress consisted of Postscript computer-to-plate technology (filmless process) printed by R.R. Donnelley & Sons, Crawfordsville, Indiana. The cover was printed on 12-point C1S Carolina at Moore Langen in Terre Haute, Indiana.

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