Bonus Chapter: Going Live

One of the best things about web design is getting your finished web site on-line for the entire world to see. All of your normal work in this course will be done on your local computer, but in this chapter, you are going to learn some approaches to publishing your website on-line.

Actually placing your website online is something that should be done carefully, with proper assistance and approval from your parent or teacher. This chapter is meant to give you an overview of the process, but does not provide step-by-step instructions, which will involve making payments to 3rd party companies.

Lesson One: Check Your Site

Before you do anything else, you need to check your site for errors. Go through it forwards, backwards and upside down to find and fix any spelling errors, spacing issues, or broken links.

Browser Checks

You should check your web design on as many different browsers as possible. Internet Explorer is the most used browser, so you should test your site on this software. You should also take a look at Firefox, Chrome and Mac's Safari browsers. For each browser, load your website and check the positioning, functionality and overall look-and-feel of the site. Just because your site looks great in Internet Explorer doesn't mean it looks great everywhere else!
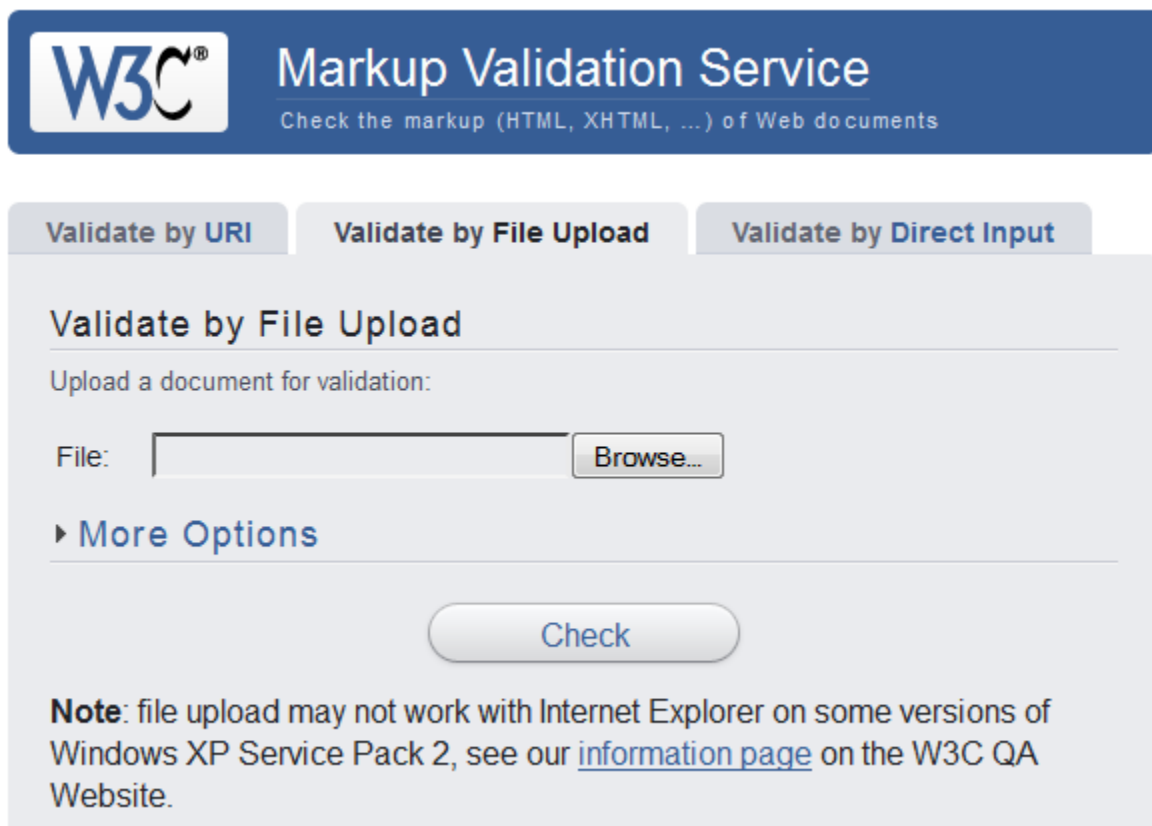
Outside Help

Friends and family are a great resource for extra website testing. It's always helpful to have someone other than yourself go through the web site and give you feedback. They will be able to see errors you won't because the material is fresh to them. Have others navigate through the site without giving them any specific instructions. You will quickly see if your navigation bar makes sense to other people. If they are having difficulty finding information on your site, you know you have more work to do!

Have your reviewers tell you what they think while looking at the home page. Find out if they are having trouble reading the text, if the images are too distracting, and so forth. It is also nice to hear their good comments so you feel good about your hard work.

Validate Your Site

It is in your best interest to follow the W3C website standards that we discuss in the course. The folks at W3C have made it easy for you to check your site with a validation tool to see if you have done a good job. You need an Internet connection, but your site does not have to be on a server.

The first step to validating your site is to go to the W3C validator web site: http://validator.w3.org/. Once you are there you can select the "Validate by File Upload" tab. On the next screen, you can click on the browse button and navigate to the web page file you want to check in the validator.
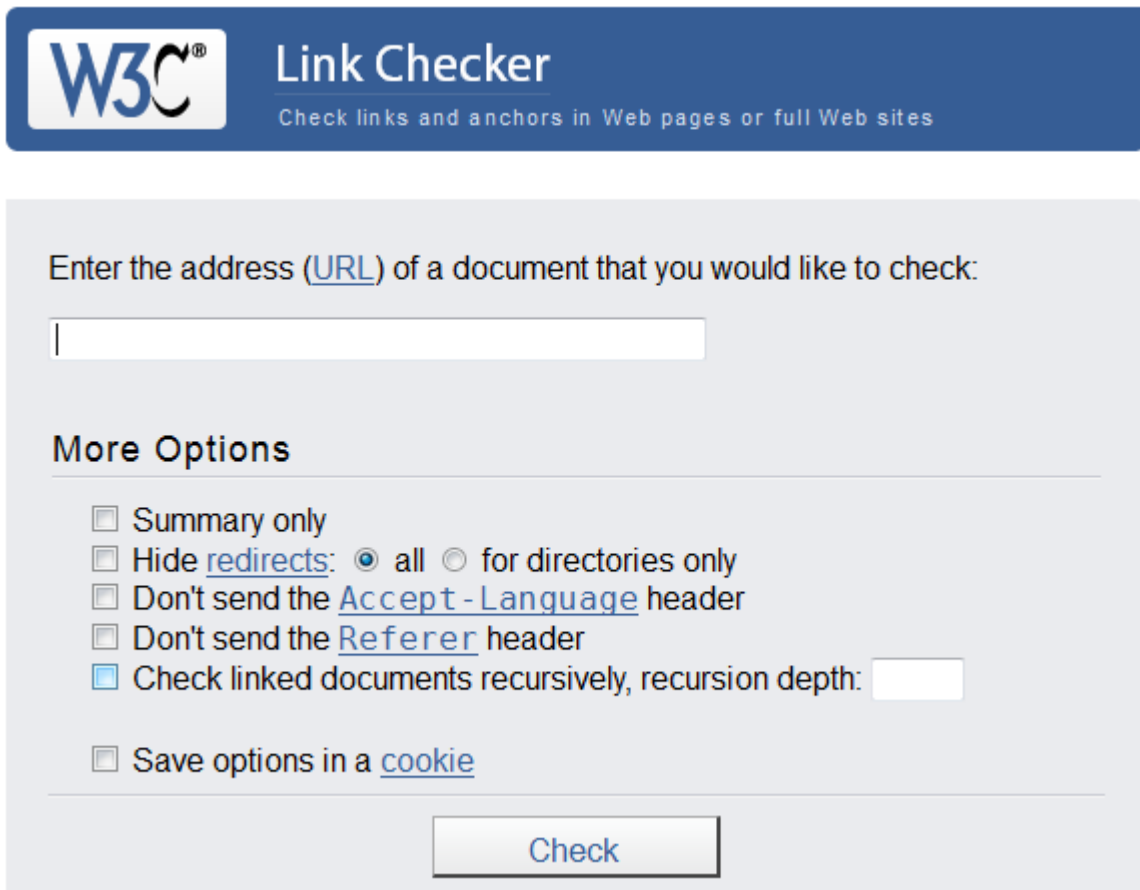

Once you have selected your file, the site will check your page and give you a report of any errors. Many of the errors are easily fixed, but some may be overly picky or not worth the trouble.

Check your links

There is nothing more frustrating than a broken link. At this stage, it is easy to open your file in a browser window and test each one of your links by clicking on them. If the link is broken, a browser screen will appear with the words "File Not Found" on it. For small sites, you can methodically go through and click each link. If you are a smooth talker, maybe you can convince your little brother or sister to do it for you. But once your web site starts to grow, it takes much more time to click on every link. There are programs available that check your links for you. Some come with purchased software, like Dreamweaver and

FrontPage, and others are free. The W3C even has a free online tool for checking links at http://validator.w3.org/checklink. Unfortunately, most online link checks will only work if your web site is hosted on a web server.

Lesson Two: Domain Names

You don't need a personalized domain name to have a web site, but it does make it easier for readers to find your site. A **domain name** is just a word or phrase that can be assigned to the location of your web site. The domain name for Homeschool Programming, Inc. is "homeschoolprogramming.com", and you can find our website at www.homschoolprogramming.com.

Getting a Domain Name

The first step in getting a domain name is to find a name that is not currently being used by any other person or company. There are many different tools available on the Internet to help you find a name that is not currently in use. In fact, most hosting companies are jumping to help you out with this and many will include some kind of hosting package if you use their services. It doesn't cost anything to look but be careful looking at the same domain name too much. There are people watching constantly and if a domain name suddenly gets a lot of attention, someone who is watching may buy it before you get a chance.

Use a search engine to find "available domain name" and you will be treated to hundreds of companies wanting to help you find a domain. If you want a non-commercial company, you can search a list of currently taken domain names at http://www.internic.net/whois.html.

The InterNIC site is run by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers). ICANN is in charge of keeping track of all current domain names world-wide. InterNIC will allow you to type in your chosen domain name to see if it is currently being used by anyone else in the world. If it's not, you can choose to register it with any number of registration companies.

Domain Types

There are many different types of endings for domain names: .com, .us, .info, .ca, etc. Does the domain really make a difference? Not necessarily. The extension at the end of your domain name doesn't really

matter if you are not a big business. The rules for owning each of the extensions are changing, so it is easier and easier to get a specific extension. Country extensions, like .ca, do require you to be a Canadian to use them and certain endings imply certain types of companies. .org means an organization, .com means some kind of company, .net means some kind of network, .info implies an informational site, and .tv tends to be multimedia sites.

Shop Around

The type of domain you register will depend on the price. Some domains, like .com, are often more expensive than newer domain types, like .info, but not as expensive as more specialized or regional domains like .ca. The prices for domains do vary dramatically from place to place so make sure you shop around.

One trend is for companies to package a domain name with other services, so if you buy a domain name with them they will give you free hosting (or vice versa). There can be some really good deals this way, but make sure you compare it to other place so see if it is reasonable.

The value of referrals

With so many places to choose from, one of the easiest things to do is ask your friends, relatives and neighbors which company they use and recommend for buying domain names. You will get all kinds of stories this way about both amazing service and terrible horror stories. You should pay close attention to these stories! It is better to learn from someone else's mistakes than to have to experience them yourself.

Pick up the phone

If you like talking to humans, see if one exists at the company you are considering. First check their web site to see if there is even a phone number listed. Is it a local number or do they provide a toll-free service? These are important if you like getting help. If you do find a number, give them a call. If you get someone right away, that's fantastic. If the person who answers the phone speaks the same language as you, that's even better. If they understand your questions and know the answers without having to send you somewhere else you may have just found your winner.

If no one answers the phone, that's not necessarily a deal-breaker. In this case, you can simply leave a message and see how quickly they return phone calls. Once you get to talk to them, you be able to judge their capabilities. If they never call back, you can cross that company off your list.

Help tickets and email

Many of the on-line companies these days give you several ways to contact them. A phone contact is great, but online help tickets or email contacts can also work well. See what methods the company has available and give them a try! Send them a message and see how long it takes them to get back to you. If there is a prompt, understandable, and hopefully personal reply, you know they value their customers. If they never

respond back, they may not be the best company for the job. If they can't answer your questions then it's not likely they are going to help you much when you have signed up as a customer.

Multiple Domain Names

Some people think that it is important to get all the domain types you can for your domain name. That would mean buying mydomain.com, mydomain.us, mydomain.org, mydomain.net and so on. If you are running a large business or trying to protect a brand, there is some merit in this process. If you own a company that is on-line and you can get your domain name with a couple of the main extensions, it doesn't hurt to pick them both up so buyers don't accidently go to the wrong place.

Company owners might also be wise to buy other domain names that include words that people may use to search for what they sell. So a dog groomer may want dogcleaner.com, dogwash.com and beautifuldog.com. You don't need a different web site for each of them though! The beauty of domain names is that they can all point to the same web site.

Of course, if you are just creating a fun website for your own use or for general information, there is may be no need to reserve more than one domain name.

Password Protection

Once you finally pick a domain registration company, you need to know some essential tips. The first is to keep your login, password and any secret numbers that are important for your account. Keep this information safe and secure. Tucking a printed copy into your lock-box or safe is a good start. You can also keep a simple text file somewhere on your computer so you can get the information quickly. Just be sure the information is not readily available to anyone who is on the computer. If you have multiple users on your computer, see if you can put a password on the file where your information is stored.

The next essential piece of information the registration company needs is a valid, permanent email address where you can be contacted. The ownership of a domain name is tied up in the administrator email address. The person who controls this email is the one who ultimately controls the domain name. If you lose your email, it is very difficult to interact with your domain company. If you don't check your email, you may miss important information like expiration notices. It is almost impossible (and often expensive) to get the domain name back once it has expires. The bottom line is to make sure you use a permanent email address that you control.

There is some concern about privacy when using your personal information. Domain name information is published openly on the Internet so anyone can find out who owns a domain name unless it is hidden. Having the information hidden is a service many domain name registers provide for an additional cost. It is not recommended to use false information but if you have a PO Box number, that could be used to avoid having your home address listed in the public domain.

Lesson Three: Web Hosting

You have learned about **web servers** and their role in the Internet. If you plan on setting up a website on the Internet, you will need to place your web site on a web server. It is possible to run your own server, but they are very time consuming and require a lot of knowledge to run effectively and securely. It is much easier to buy some space from a company that specializes in servers.

Shop around

Searching for a web hosting company is a similar process to finding a domain registration company. In fact, you may have stumbled across some great web hosting companies during your domain searches. If not, you should follow the same steps of asking others, phoning, emailing, checking out their web site, and maybe searching the Internet for reviews. You will also need to compare prices. Hosting fees range from a few dollars a month to several hundred per month, depending on how much traffic your web site will see and what extra services you need.

What to compare

With all the choices, you need a few guidelines on things to check when reviewing hosting companies.

1. **Customer Service:** Do you like phone contact? Email? Online chat? Make sure the company will be able to handle your questions!
2. **Multiple Levels of Hosting:** Beginner or economy hosting is a great way to start for around $5 per month, but it is nice to be able to expand your web site without having to move locations. See what the company has to offer for simple, midrange, and full service web hosting.
3. **Price:** Know your budget and stick to it. A simple web site on a decent server can cost as little as $20 per year without any outside advertisers. It may be worth paying a bit more, though if you want databases or processing abilities (required by web sites that use technologies like PHP or ASP.NET to produce the final HTML pages.
4. **Bandwidth:** This is how much data can be transferred from your web site to the rest of the world. Think of it like hoses. Some companies provide garden hoses to transfer the data, some offer fire hoses, and others offer those big tubes that go under the road to let rivers pass. The larger the bandwidth the better, but not if you have to pay for it. A simple web site doesn't need a lot of bandwidth, but if you get a lot of visitors or start putting videos and other downloads onto your web site then you may need to consider more bandwidth.
5. **Setup Fees:** If the company has them, they are probably the type of company that charges you for all kinds of other upgrades. It is better to stay away from extra fees for setting up your hosting space.
6. **Contract Length:** some companies like to tie you up for several years if you can, but paying monthly can be quite expensive. Try to start with a year and then if you like the company you can stay. If you hate the company it is a lot easier to leave if they don't have a bunch of your money.
7. **Email Accounts:** It is nice to have at least one email account provided with your web hosting but some companies will provide email service as an add-on. Check the price, though, because add-ons

can add up. You can also check to see how usable their webmail service is and whether they have good instructions for linking the email into your phone and home computer.

8. **Server Types:** Do you choose a Linux server or a Windows server? Some people say it matters, but most consider it a personal preference. Linux is an open source operating system with a strong following. Windows, you will recognize as the computer icon that runs most PC computers.

9. **Administration:** How easy is it to log into your account and change your settings? Some web hosts are painfully complicated and you can't do anything by yourself. Others are so simple and thorough you can do everything with a click of a button. You should, at a minimum, have the ability to change contact information and site content on your own.

10. **FTP:** Once you get involved with web designing, the easiest way to put your site on-line is using FTP. See if the hosting company allows FTP transferring of files and has easy instructions on setting up your connection.

11. **Check out their web site:** You should read about the company, skim their FAQ pages, and check out their advertising. If their site is professional and contains helpful information, chances are they know what they are doing and can provide good service.

Lesson Four: FTP

Once you have a hosting provider, you will need to put your web site files onto their server. The easiest way to do this is with FTP (File Transfer Protocol). This is a standard way to transfer files from your local computer to the web host computer over the Internet.

To use FTP you need three pieces of information from your web hosting provider: your host name, your FTP user name, and your password. You should have received all three of these when you signed up with the hosting company.

You will also need to have some kind of FTP software in order to take advantage of the FTP transfer process. Internet Explorer has the ability if you use the right settings in the advanced tab in the Internet options. Firefox has an add-on that works with the Firefox browser and there are several free FTP programs like CuteFTP, SmartFTP, and FileZilla that can be downloaded and installed. Any of these software programs will do the same thing, but some are easier to use than others. FileZilla is one of the more popular free tools among web designers.

Somewhere on the FTP program you will have a place to enter your your host name (usually your domain name with "ftp". at the front instead of "www"), your user name, and your password. In FileZilla, this space is along the top below the tool icons. Once you enter your access information, you click connect (FileZilla has a "QuickConnect" button).
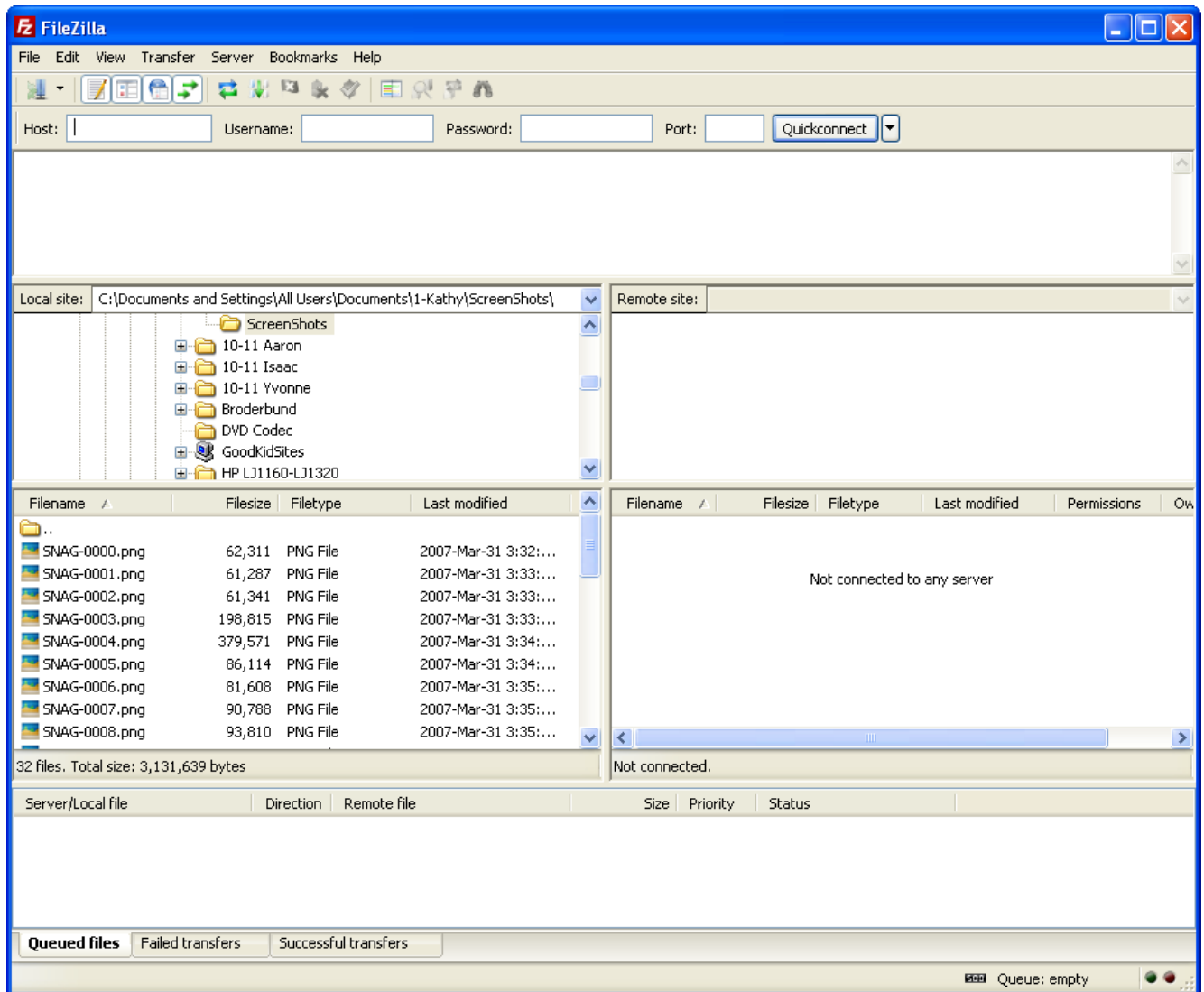

There is often a progress screen that gives you information about what is happening. It will say whether a connection was successfully made and if the program is ready to transfer files.

On one side of the screen, your local files will be shown. On the other side of the screen, the hosting server space will appear (these are called the "remote files"). The easier software programs will allow you to drag and drop your files from one window to the other. Better tools will help you keep track of which files are newer and may even map the paths from one screen to the other so you just need to press a button to "upload" changed files.

Upload: moving the files from your local computer to somewhere on the Internet (often to your server space).

Download: bringing files from somewhere on the Internet to your local computer.

Copyright© 2013 by Homeschool Programming, Inc.

Once you have put your files onto the web server, you should be able to see them by typing the URL to the files into a web browser.

Chapter Review

- Before you put your site on the Internet, check it for errors.
- Check your HTML pages in at least three different browsers to make sure the site looks the same and works properly in all of them.
- Have someone else go through your web site and give you feedback.
- "Validate" your site to ensure you have followed the W3C best practices for HTML design.
- If a link is broken, a browser screen will appear with the words "File Not Found" on it.
- The prices for domain names can vary from place to place so make sure you shop around.
- Keep your login, password and any secret numbers you get for your domain and hosting safe and secure.
- When signing up for a domain name, use an email address you control as the administrator email.
- FTP (File Transfer Protocol) is a standard way to transfer files from one host (your local computer) to another (the hosting company) over the Internet.