

Presentation.

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues.

First of all I would like to thank the committee for this invitation and letting me speak about one of my favourite topics: the internet.

15 minutes is not much so I will try to give some crucial guidelines and basic knowledge.

Your homepage

Now either you do it yourself or you let it be made by a professional firm and pay for it. It all really depends on the exact purpose of your site. So try to determine that purpose as accurately as possible.

If you just want to make yourself known with text, documents, images or presentations with basic interactivity (for instance a feedback page or simple question forms that you users can answer) than you can make it yourself.

But then again if you want to go commercial by selling documents online the security and interactivity level surely needs a professional hand.

Today I will focus on the basics. Things you can do yourself with nice results.

How to make a website:

There are about 4 steps to consider:

1. the making itself
2. getting space on the net
3. putting your website on it
4. making yourself known to/on the net

2. getting space on the net

here you have also two possibilities:

either you pay for space or you take the free space with advertisements as a consequence (that can be popup screens or banners on your site).

Keep in mind that there is a difference between a domain name and your little spot on the server side.

For instance: my homepage is situated at the university server rug.ac.be under the directory blelie at allserv.

So you can get there by typing the exact location
<http://allserv.rug.ac.be/~blelie>.

To make it easier on my readers I could order a domainname for instance www.bartlelie.com or be or...

You can consider that domainname as a simple link to the exact location of my site.

I think it costs about 80€ per year.

3. putting your website on it

easy if your server is accessible via the internet. Just upload your pages and directories to the right place.

If your server, as ours at the University of Gent, is only accessible via ftp (file transfer protocol) with security measures you will probably need extra software. Just inform yourself with your helpdesk.

4. making yourself known to/on the net

I will not get into detail but just surf the net on all the search sites and inform yourself about the facilities. Normally it is without charge to get yourself in the enormous index of those sites, but that does not necessarily mean that you are easy to find. Just look it up.

I think that mouth to mouth advertisement or via email is in fact the easiest way to let your site be known by the right people.

Now...

1. the making itself

HTML stands for HyperText Markup Language and is not a programming language but pure text with codes in it. Those codes are recognised by the browsers and interpreted. It gives the details of the lay out of your page. The codes are between hooked brackets and represent a beginning and an end to the layout code.

For example: `bold`

To learn the codes buy a book about HTML! It doesn't have to be the biggest one on the market, on the contrary.

Since HTML is pure text with codes it can be read on each platform: Apple, Windows, Unix, Linux...

Do you need special software to write HTML?

A simple notepad is all you need for you just have to write text with codes.

However, the more complicated your website gets the more useful it is to have adapted software. You can download very good HTML editors for free or as shareware.

My favourite is Cute HTML.

When I created the website of the Department of Pathology of Gent, I made it at first with the very lovely background color orange. All went well except the color. I had to change the background color of all my files. I was glad to have Cute HTML at hand because HTML editors let you change many pages at once. You can create sjabloons or templates to get a uniform layout for your pages.

You all know about Microsoft Frontpage or perhaps other more sophisticated HTML programs.

It will help you a lot in creating a good website and even get a good view on more complex sites. CGI scripts and images or tables are more easy to manipulate.

But should you buy that kind of software?

One of the really basic rules on the web is to **KEEP IT AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE**. You will be tempted to write more and more complicated flashy pages when you are using that kind of software and more over you will lose the control of the HTML codes in your pages, because those software packages are very keen on lots of useless codes into your html documents.

It is your choice to make.

Now you have the software to write it, but still remember that there are different browsers on the market to read it: internet explorer, netscape navigator, opera,... Moreover not everyone uses the most recent version of their browser.

Always check if your site works on the other browsers. The more complicated a site, the more problems with different browsers.

The good news is that they are getting better all the time.

The skeleton of your website

Your homepage is your first page, the next pages are your website:

1. for your homepage: put in the title, an adequate image and an entering button. Keep it simple and plain and... call it INDEX.HTM or INDEX.HTML.

why index? For instance if you surf to American journal of Pahtology dot com you are in fact surfing to American journal of pathology dot com slash index dot htm or html.

It's a convention.

2. the next pages should really be practical. So use frames, that is divide one page in several pages. The most used form is an index in one frame and heading and body in the other frame. cf. image.

Images and other flashy items.

A site should be good looking and be able to keep the interest of your reader.

1. images: keep them small sized and use therefore JPG or GIF extensions. Pathologists are keen on good images. The higher the resolution the better, but the bigger the file. Remember that big sized images download very slowly so you might consider using a two step system with a smaller image that can be enlarged when clicked on.

Animated gif's are very useful images that can be created easily with some shareware software, i.e. Gif Construction Set.

cf. image. Do not overload it, for it will get enervating to your readers.

2. javascripts: not to be confused with java itself. Javascripts are little text based programs that can be inserted in your pages. Easy to use and very useful to add special effects to your site.

I advise you to surf to <http://www.javascripts.com> where you can search some nice scripts and download them for free.

I recently downloaded a very nice script for making a calendar.

You see this is one webfile with a javascript based calendar which can change when clicked on. I can show you the source code. It's very long and looks difficult. But just read the file and change the variables to your needs.

Again, do not overload your site with javascripts. I did it once... it's rather tempting but the results are in fact awful.

Just experiment a few times before you put it online and use the ones you really need.

3. CGI scripts:

CGI stands for Common Gateway Interface and is a kind of a program which runs on the server side. Contact your server provider to know if you can use CGI scripts on the server.

Either you write them yourself and you are a genius or you copy them from the web!

Why would you need CGI? For more interactivity!

I cannot show you a working CGI script for I am not online. But I have a searchengine as an example.

Other useful scripts are a guest book or news forum.

4. CSS:

this stands for cascading style sheet. These sheets contain a "logical" structure and layout for your web files. I can show you a simple one in the source code of this page.

You can make it an external kind of text file where all your other files refer to so that when you change the file, you change all your other files with it.

Negative mark: not all browsers use all the available feature of css.

5. your own documents on the net:

You can make them downloadable just by putting them on the server with a link to it.

Many browsers have now special viewers so that downloading and saving the file on your own computer isn't necessary anymore and make it possible to view word or powerpoint documents immediately online!

You could however convert your documents to HTML documents and putting them online as a kind of a website.

Powerpoint for instance has a very strong converter now, so it is easy to publish your presentations immediately on the net. You could in fact make a powerpoint presentation, convert it to HTML and let it function as your homepage.

Another nice way to publish your documents is to print them into PDF (portable document file) as do most of the journal sites. This has an extra advantage: not only is the layout marvellous, moreover the file cannot be changed in any way by the reader.

Of course you have to buy the software and learn to work it.

6. others:

I will not get into these ones, but It wouldn't be right not to mention them:

Java itself with Java applets, SMIL or synchronized multimedia integration language (RealPlayer), XML or extensible mark-up language, Visual basic script (a Microsoft alternative for javascript), Flash (very nice effects and interactivity though you need to buy the special software and learn to work with it)...

You see that there are many possibilities.

Rules of thumb for a great site:

1. original and updated content
2. target your site to your users:

make it readable by all browsers, keep in mind that some use modems with low speed, do not overload your site (use graphics sparingly, break up tables, optimise graphic file size and html), be easy to read (do not use LSD like colorschemes).

Some guidelines:

- html file size should be around 15k
- graphics file size should not be more than 20k (this is for navigation purpose)
- do not use graphics if you can use text

3. interactivity:

- use a feedback form for your users
- use a search engine

4. be well organized: use frames and give your users an overview of your site so that he doesn't get lost

In conclusion:

- what is the purpose of your website? Can you make it yourself?
- buy a book on HTML and learn the codes
- create a homepage and use a frame structure for the next pages
- always keep it simple and usable
- keep it updated
- use interactivity: feedback form, search script (CGI)

References:

To end I would like to give a little demonstration if I may, it won't take long. I'll just create a webpage from scratch.

...

You see it is easy. Everyone can do it as long as he learns the codes.

I thank you for your attention

And

Are there any questions?