

# THE SEYBOLD

REPORT

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## Web 2.0 Comes to Newspapers

By L. Carol Christopher

To be competitive, newspapers not only have to attract an audience, but they have to retain their subscribers through interactive tools such as citizen journalism, blogs, wikis and other “social networking” activities that help the newspaper maintain its franchise as the local go-to source for information of all kinds. Web 2.0 technology offers new ways for newspapers to benefit from the Internet, whether to be more efficient or to be more effective. Several companies — many of them familiar names in the newspaper industry — are helping to introduce newspapers to the world of social networking. We see Web 2.0 approaches as divided into two aspects: the social media/networking aspect and the AJAX/mashup/RubyonRails aspect. Page 4

## Dreamweaver Casts Its Spell

By Ron Roszkiewicz

Not only is a Web presence important for displaying a company’s mission and products, but its fit and finish is to many an indication of the level of professionalism of the company behind the digital curtain. Building and maintaining a polished Web site often falls to the designer on staff, someone in marketing or even a new team glommed onto the IT department. Users on both the code side of site development and on the graphic side of page design appreciate applications that relieve them of repetitive tasks, inadvertent sloppy code and circuitous routes to transforming content to prepare it for Web inclusion. In this issue, we discuss Dreamweaver, the most important Web site development tool made today. Page 11

## Is Print Sexy?

by Laurel Brunner Page 3

Perhaps the reason for all the passionate debate over print-vs-online is a subliminal one. One might argue that print is sexy because it is about life.

## Social Printing

By Eliot Harper Page 9

Social networking online, part of the Web 2.0 experience, is virtually all around us in sites such as MySpace and Second Life. But some innovative printers are getting involved, too, making the connection between the Internet and the material world.

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

#### EDITORIAL

##### The Future of Magazines

2

At this year’s Folio and Spectrum events, the upbeat attitude toward print was tempered by serious discussions about online media and user-generated content. Sessions on e-media drew the biggest audiences at Folio

#### NEWS

##### MediaBytes

15

News organizations set up shop on Facebook; publisher IDG is bringing back Industry Standard; a piece from E&P discusses a Gallup poll on how differently Democrats and Republicans view the media; Google acquires Helsinki-based Jaiku.

#### IN UPCOMING ISSUES:

Magazine publishers and advertisers consider the future at Folio and Spectrum

An interview with Bob Sacks

Variable data publishing

# Dreamweaver Casts Its Spell on Web Site Design

By Ron Roszkiewicz

Dreamweaver is the most important Web site development tool made today. More than just a tool, it is a Web site development environment. We look at Dreamweaver from the point of view of a manager considering adopting the application for the company site.

**N**o company operating today can survive without a Web presence. Not only is such a presence important for displaying a company's mission and products, but the fit and finish of a Web site is to many viewers an indication of the level of professionalism of the company behind the digital curtain.

Creating and maintaining a polished Web site is not a trivial undertaking. Since most sites are built by committee, simplicity is usually an unattainable goal, but order and logic can be achieved by the builder with a little help from software. As part of the ongoing maintenance of a Web site, it's often necessary to revitalize a moribund presentation or redesign it to match an overall corporate re-branding.

Creating a Web site often falls to the designer on staff, someone in marketing or even a new team grafted onto the IT department specifically to build and maintain it. Web design has gotten easier over the years. Many special Web page effects are available as canned bits of code and graphics, and many tricks and tips can force pages to behave in whatever Web browser they might find themselves. Advances have been made over the years on the code side of site development and on the graphic side of page design. Both types of users appreciate applications that relieve them of repetitive tasks, inadvertent sloppy code and circuitous routes to transforming content to prepare it for Web inclusion. Dreamweaver CS3 has grown with its market and stands up to the often harsh judgment of professional programmers, many of whom are more accustomed to programming in C or VB than HTML.

## Avoiding Nightmares with Dreamweaver

Dreamweaver is the most important Web site development tool made today. It is more than a tool; it is a Web site development environment. The new version of Dreamweaver, Dreamweaver CS3 Version 9.0, was developed after Adobe acquired Macromedia in 2005. To put the effort in context, the new version was developed while the two corporate cultures were being blended with a mandate to fit into the Creative Suite 3 as a fully interactive application with a familiar Adobe

2007-style user experience. Besides blending into the development schedules of Creative Suite managed by Adobe, Dreamweaver also assumed to a degree the legacy of GoLive and a number of other Web page management tools, such as PageMill and FrontPage, which had reached their end point as far as creating sophisticated, attractive, useful sites.

GoLive and FrontPage (now called SharePoint Designer 2007) are characterized by a designer-friendly graphical user interface approach to Web page design. Experience has shown us that the trade-off for this approach is usually flawed underlying code. The rise of cascading stylesheets bridges the technological and GUI divide between purely intuitive Web design applications and pure code generation applications such as BBEdit or even Microsoft's Expression Web.

Experience with this approach shows us how limited it can be and how problematic the code generated can become. The reality is that the rise in the use of cascading stylesheets itself brought a marked level of simplicity to the building process and eliminated one reason for using these other applications.

The developers of Dreamweaver said a high priority was placed on making sure that the user interface conformed to the style and standards established by other applications in Adobe's Creative Suite. They seem to have been successful in their workspace management and the palettization of the different operational modes, though the new approach takes some getting used to. Interoperability was also a critical factor. In previous versions, particularly in the pre-acquisition days, there was a lot of clicking among Photoshop, Illustrator, Fireworks, Flash and Dreamweaver. All this moving around inevitably led to version management issues with assets and pages. The new version of Dreamweaver works better with Version Cue and Bridge, and integrates better with third-party digital asset management systems (DAMs).

We'll look at Dreamweaver from the point of view of a manager considering adopting the application for the company site. Dreamweaver is not a simple utility. For some companies it will be all they need to manage their site and begin to include Web 2.0 interactivity. For

others it will be a stepping stone to building true Web applications with programming tools such as ColdFusion.

The following discussion looks at the adoption of Dreamweaver from several perspectives:

- What will be required to convert my current Web site to one that can be managed by Dreamweaver?
- How long will it take for my current staff to get up to speed with Dreamweaver CS3?
- Will I have to hire a code person or be committed to more programming as a result of switching to Dreamweaver?
- Can I manage a Dreamweaver-created site with marketing or sales personnel, or does everything have to funnel through a code person?

We will examine the resources available to each of these points. Adobe has been sensitive to this type of feedback from the field and has attempted to make the transition to Dreamweaver as painless as possible. Such a transition is also typically undertaken to add new layers of features and functions to the site, such as interactivity, forms and shopping carts. These new additions are more easily handled in the more robust and extensible environment Dreamweaver provides.

### Making the Transition

The first question when deciding whether to move up to Dreamweaver is how to handle the previous Web site. To satisfy users of GoLive, every copy of Dreamweaver includes an extension called GL2DW (short for GoLive to Dreamweaver). This extension converts legacy sites from one format to the other and converts the site structure, templates, components and snippets. To help guide the process, Adobe includes an online migration guide and training done in association with Lynda.com.

Making the transition from sites developed in other applications is not as complete, but here, too, Dreamweaver can provide assistance by pointing out code issues in code view and providing online help to resolve them.

Moving to a new, more powerful development environment is often an incentive to build out the site with new features. Of course, the tools in Dreamweaver can help users do what they want, but professionals and occasional site builders can achieve the same goals more easily. Adobe now sells a product called the Adobe Dreamweaver Development Toolbox. Like all developer's tools, Toolbox includes a passel of example code for doing things such as building membership-based Web sites, portals, blogs, image galleries and links to content management systems. Also included are code to client-side form validation and design with CSS customizable skins.

Since many sites depend on tables for their content organization, starting from scratch with a cascading stylesheet approach (CSS) might be the best way to do it. If the images and text content in the old site exist on the Web and in hierarchical folders, this might be a good time to adopt an off-the-shelf data repository for managing these digital assets. For users of Adobe's Creative Suite 3, this repository can very easily combine

Version Cue and Bridge. At any rate, this is a good opportunity to bring some control and discipline into the storage of the digital assets that feed the Web site.

### From GoLive to Spry

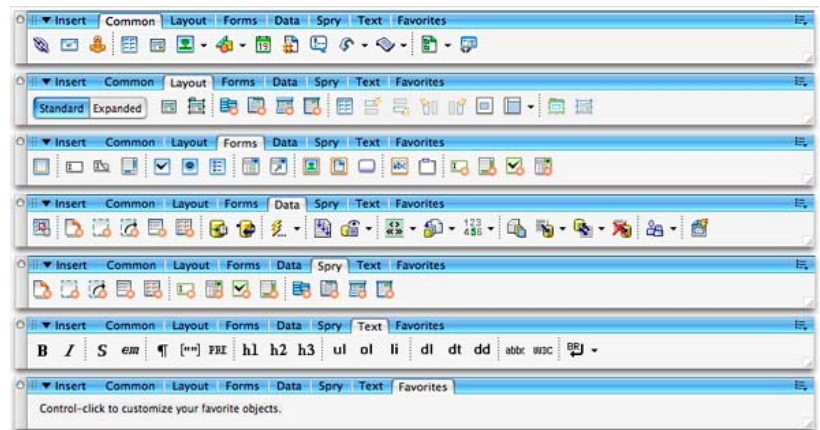
Many designers were attracted to site development by their drag-and-drop simplicity, instant gratification and the overall graphical nature of using GoLive, PageMill and FrontPage. Past versions of Dreamweaver also had graphical design tools, but the overall environment was one that emphasized code. And because it was surrounded by a very comprehensive code generation environment and all of the tools to enable element management, it felt intimidating and inaccessible.

Once again, Adobe's developers were sensitive to these obstacles in attaining widespread acceptance for Dreamweaver. The very essence of GoLive seems to be assimilated into Dreamweaver CS3 as a series of icons and palettes (see illustration below). This is good news for getting the current staff up to speed. Many of the icons will be familiar and are well laid out (although they are a bit small for my eyes and screen resolution). Of course, taking advantage of some online training with Lynda.com or another service is a good idea. Not only do these online training services offer valuable information about how to use the tools, but they also provide expert workflow insights that will yield more efficient use of the application and increased overall productivity.

### Keeping It Up

The day-to-day maintenance of the Web site can take the form of fixing bugs, editing content or adding new pages. Fixing bugs and adding pages should be left to the more experienced members of the staff and should be handled from within Dreamweaver. But marketing and sales can fix typos, errors and incorrect prices in the content of a site. Mucking about in Dreamweaver with a live site or even the local version of the site is dangerous and should be avoided. For this basic maintenance, Adobe has created an application called Contribute. Contribute 3 allows anyone with the right permissions (set through the admin function) to edit a facsimile of a Web page that is reviewed and later published after it's

Palette and graphic modes for page layout.



been approved. The extent of the editing that can take place in the Contribute environment includes setting or correcting links, adding new cells to tables, editing text in text boxes or table cells, and identifying and linking to files for downloading (PDF) and placing images. Besides being a good way to control the process, it also provides an additional layer of permissions on top of those imposed by Dreamweaver and the site where the files are hosted. Contribute can be used in a simple, distributed workgroup arrangement or through the Contribute Server package.

## Standards and Practices

The most important outcome of the user's interaction with Dreamweaver is a successful Web site. Design is important, but design is the one thing that Dreamweaver does not control. Dreamweaver does guide us through the success of the user experience. The code is well-formed and efficient, and Web sites developed with Dreamweaver can interact with modern development languages and other commonly used development environments. Dreamweaver supports HTML, CSS, XML, JavaScript, AJAX, PHP, Adobe ColdFusion, ASP, ASP.NET and JSP.

Regarding the user experience, Adobe has gone to great lengths to provide templates, widgets and drag-and-drop icon-based design elements to simplify the page-building process. The illustration at the upper right shows the seven modes revealing icons that represent forms with checkboxes and other items commonly used on Web pages.

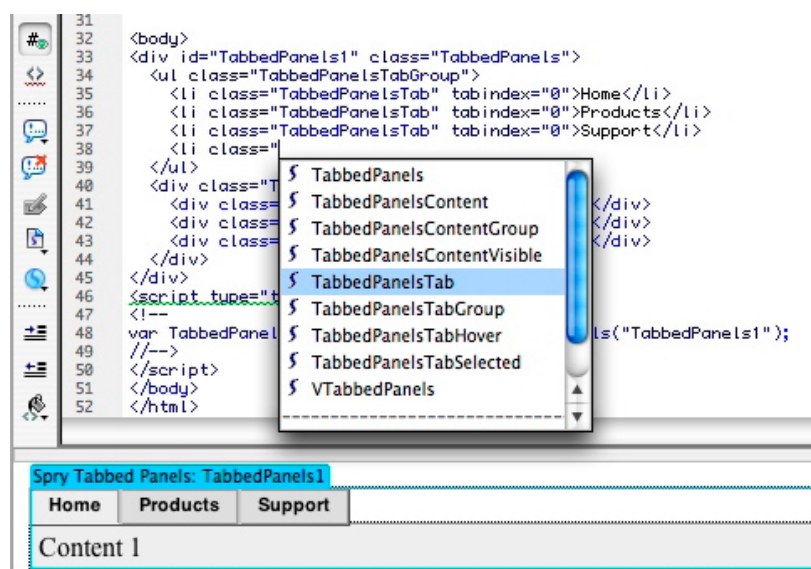
The code generated to support these templates and widgets must be well-formed. At times it is necessary to change a parameter in the code to tweak page elements. Adobe has provided expansive comments to describe what is being done in the code generated in Dreamweaver 3. These comments help the user understand the consequences of an action and also serve as a learning tool for those who don't deal with code every day. Any mistake is highlighted in the code with a green underline.

Compatibility with the popular browsers is also important. In the past it was often necessary to handle exceptions with redundant code built to suit the unique problem of one browser or another. Adobe has built a browser compatibility tool into Dreamweaver 3 that will identify changes that need to be made to solve a problem in one browser and will also link to an Adobe Web site, where it keeps a knowledge base up to date with changes to old issues or new issues that might arise.

Compatibility with mobile devices is a new area of importance. Unfortunately, there are no set sizes and standards for the display of pages on mobile devices. Adobe's Device Central can emulate how a page will display on commonly used mobile devices and provides a way to tweak the result.

## CSS and Stylesheets for the Web

The developers of Dreamweaver 3 took cascading stylesheets to a new level by recognizing some simple

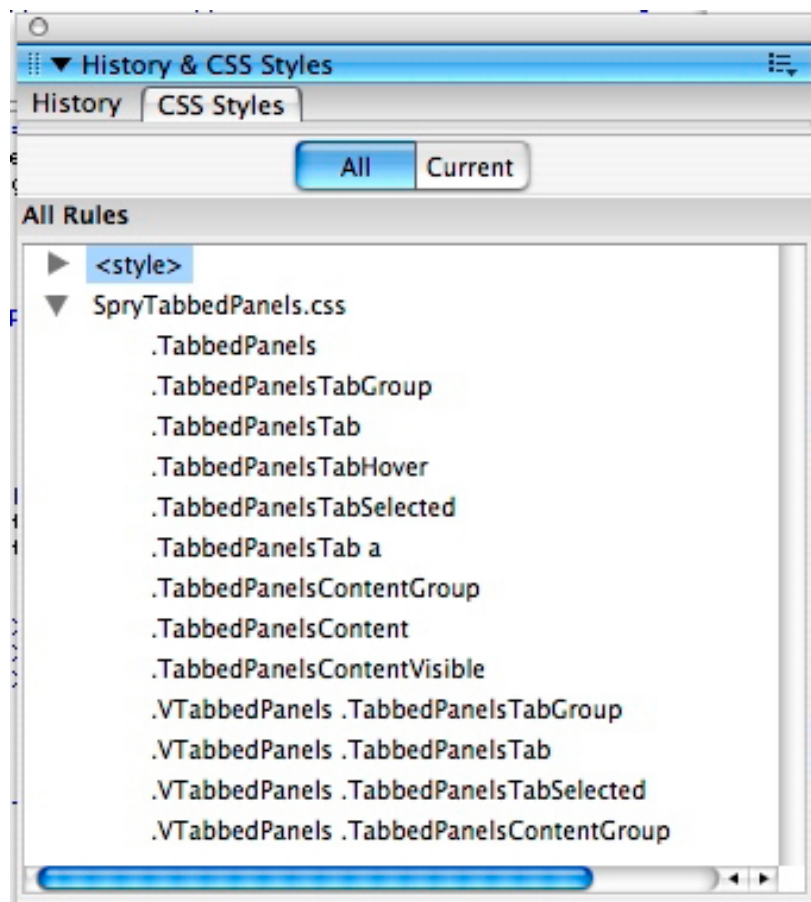


and basic realities. Users need help migrating from table-based layouts to CSS and creating reusable CSS rules. Even with the ease of use CSS provides, browsers can still cause problems and learning to use CSS, especially for those accustomed to designing visually, will be incremental. Surround these user realities with a wrapper of best practices and it becomes a learning tool (below).

**Migration.** Adobe's GL2DW extension helps get to Phase 1 of site migration. Depending on the site, it can only be relative successful and the best we can

Autofill feature with CSS styles.

Listing of CSS pre-built styles.



hope for is to transfer fundamental structure and assets. Success rates of 40-70% are likely. Most of us have been through this drill before, transferring XPress documents to InDesign or vice-versa. The result is typically good enough to rebuild with the improved tools in DWCS3. Many design elements should be converted into CSS styles and rules at this point anyway.

For many users this is also a good place to organize assets in a content or digital asset management system. Although users who buy DWCS3 with Creative Suite receive a copy of Version Cue, the built-in site management tools in DWCS3 are the way to go. For images, illustrations and text, the similarly included Bridge data repository might be of more use. The locally stored site can be viewed within Bridge and collections of assets can be stored for use when needed.

DWCS3 users should also consider the Adobe Dreamweaver Developer's Toolkit (ADDT) as a companion purchase. ADDT is fundamentally a collection of prebuilt building blocks, code examples and wizards for quickly building well-formed access to data. The ADDT is designed for static developers who want to do dynamic things on the site and for advanced coders looking to eliminate mundane or tedious code work.

### It Takes a Community

Users learning about CSS have enough problems figuring out how to use it for formatting. But not all browsers are created equal and navigating the various sink holes (such as Internet Explorer) can be a frustrating exercise and a serious time drain. Adobe introduced the CSS Advisor for the release of DWCS3 to solve the top pain point of browser compatibility. CSS Advisor, accessed through a link in DWCS3, is a knowledge base of Adobe expert and community contributions. This dynamic, searchable site links problems with suggested solutions. As new issues arise, new suggestions and fixes are added.

### Spry

One clever innovation introduced with DWCS3 is called the Spry Framework for Ajax (asynchronous JavaScript for XML). Besides being a mouthful, Spry on the face of it can easily intimidate the casual user, although it is intended to do just the opposite. For those of us accustomed to drag-and-drop design, Spry in some ways turns our draggable objects into smart objects. Spry is first of all a development technique for creating interactive Web applications. In case you missed it, interactive Web applications are "Web 2.0." Spry performs this magic using a JavaScript library that is almost entirely HTML. It is very efficient, too. Dynamic page elements created with Spry change independently, with the unaffected page elements remaining static and unchanged.

**Spry widgets.** One way designers and developers use Spry is with prebuilt but customizable elements. Customization can take place using CSS. Examples of Spry widgets include XML-driven lists and tables, accordions

(panels that slide open to reveal additional content), tabbed interfaces and page elements that require validation.

### Spry Effects

Another way to use Spry is through prebuilt effects. These effects cause page elements to grow, shrink, fade, highlight and more. Since only the affected element changes, the look is professional and clean.

### Conclusion

Dreamweaver CS3 is more than an application or a Web-development environment, it's also a point of view. It recognizes the state of the user community and what that community needs and attempts to move beyond pure utility to satisfy those needs in progressive ways. The old school software way was to create programs with lots of neat switches and knobs and just send it out. Users were overwhelmed and that was just too bad as far as the engineers were concerned; they just weren't worthy. At other times the table tilted too far with overwrought designs ready to be pumped full of content, no design skill required. Both failed to the extent that the users were not successful, rejected the program out of hand or underused it.

Adobe to its credit sidestepped many of these mistakes. It developed common types of layouts but did not go so far as to turn them into canned templates. Borrowing from the prepress playbook and drawing from a well of best practices, code is now subject to internal preflight and error checking. Not only is the bad code highlighted, but the good code is commented on so that we understand what it means. It's HTML and CSS training by osmosis.

Simple Web design programs are based on intuitive drag-and-drop interfaces, and like these programs Dreamweaver includes this basic Layout Mode. While Adobe might be politic in overemphasizing user friendliness over the code generated by Layout mode, the **Dreamweaver forum** crackles with flames against using it. Enter prebuilt Spry widgets and effects and CSS rules, layouts and visualization tools.

Many users sweat whenever they link to their site and make changes. The threat of overwriting an image map or some other key page element is always in the back of their mind. They can use Contribute for day-to-day changes and table additions; it is safety and simplicity personified.

A lot of software coders have worked through many sites in the past coding in Dreamweaver or in the early days, BBEdit. For Web design, many have made the full transition to Dreamweaver in recent years and are favorably disposed to it — or at least as favorably disposed as any engineer will allow himself to admit. For designers wanting to get a sound grounding in the functionality and workflow to effectively use Dreamweaver, the online courses at Lynda.com are highly recommended. Adobe has a free tutorial on data migration that will give a sense of the value of these courses.

**TSR**