

The Web's Next Generation



If you had been stuck on a desert island for the last several years with no Internet, you'd be surprised at the far livelier online environment today.

Webpages are no longer simple unchanging screen fillers. Today they are alive with animations and videos. Many are interactive, with content that adjusts quickly to your activity. There are huge photo, video clip, and art galleries, new places to meet people, vast online libraries, and strange new entities, like wikis and blogs.

Welcome to the World Wide Web, 2.0! It's in the midst of a major upgrade. The widespread use of highspeed broadband access has enabled faster connections with more data moving than was ever possible with dial-up. Websites are complex and responsive with new interactive features in ways that could not have been imagined just a few short years ago.

It's all about user participation and interaction now. No longer are surfers subjected to static content served up slow, but encouraged to comment and contribute in real time. New online communities of interest are forming constantly just as exciting new applications are being implemented.

Here are several of the more currently popular sites in this brave new world. There are more every day.

* **Google Earth** - <http://earth.google.com/>

The popular search engine takes on the world with this fascinating application. Cruise the planet in cool aerial shots and maps.

* **Wikipedia** - <http://en.wikipedia.org/>

A free online encyclopedia of just about everything that just about anyone can contribute their own expertise to help develop.

* **MySpace** - <http://www.myspace.com/>

A popular site where people can post their own profiles, pictures, music, and videos to connect with friends around the globe.

* **Flickr** - <http://www.flickr.com/>

A world of personal photography collections stored and shared.

* **YouTube** - <http://www.youtube.com/>

What Flickr is to still photos, YouTube, now owned by Google, is to user-created videos — from funny homemade music mashups to amazing short movies to newsclips old and new.

Blogging Made Easy

By Josh Gentry, Systems Administrator

Web-logs or "**blogs**" for short, are popping up everywhere. They are online diaries, frequently updated, which often invite links and comments from other bloggers. Blogging services make it easy for anyone who can type to create a journal on the web. Why do people blog? To keep in touch with family and friends, to release the columnist within, to promote a business. There are as many reasons as there are bloggers.

Several free services make it easy to blog. One of the most successful is Blogger. Blogger describes itself as "Push-Button Publishing." The goal is to make publishing easy. Go to <http://www.blogger.com>, and you can't miss the link to start your own blog. Creating an account means filling out a web form, like you might when ordering a product from a website. Within minutes you are ready to publish, no technical skills required.

A new blogging services that is getting buzz is <http://www.vox.com>. It improves on the ability to mix photos, audio and video with your text.

Here are some of my favorite blogs. Those with an asterisk are shameless promotion for the blogs of folks I know.

Internationally published fantasy author (and former SWCP Tech Support Director) **Daniel Abraham** -
* <http://bram452.livejournal.com/>

Nationally recognized watercolorist (and spectacular wife) **Jae Drummond** -
* <http://jkdummondart.blogspot.com/>

Web-guru **Jon Udell** - <http://blog.jonudell.net/>

Everyone's favorite cartoon geek, **Dilbert** -
<http://dilbertblog.typepad.com/>

Net Notes

Your computer may have only **one wire** that plugs into a phone jack, but it actually has over **65,000 Internet access points** known as "**ports**".

Free Images for Your Site

By Bill Slade, *General Manager*

While graphical images are not necessary for a website, they can be quite useful for improving the look and feel of any site.

Finding image files to use on your website can be as simple as searching Google Images. One important thing to consider is who is the original owner of the image and what copyrights are the owner retaining. If you take a picture with your digital camera, then that image file is yours to do with as you please. You can display it on your website, modify it, or print it and owe no one anything for its use. However, if you find a image that was taken by a professional photographer, they have the legal right to its exclusive use, or the right to be paid for its use by you. This legal environment existed before there was a World Wide Web. You can find online stock photo agencies that sell usage rights for image files.

With the widespread use of digital cameras, there are now many skilled amateur photographers producing pictures for the fun of it, not to be paid. Many of these images are available for free use on websites and in printed materials. Some websites distributing these image files include:

* **MorgueFile** - <http://www.morguefile.com/>

* **Palouse Open Source Image Bank** - <http://palousephotography.org/>

* **PD Photo** - <http://www.pdphoto.org/>

* **Stock.XCHNG** - <http://www.sxc.hu/>

* **Mayang's Free Textures** - <http://www.mayang.com/textures/>

Wherever you browse for image files be sure to check the terms and conditions under which the file you want is offered. The photographers usually like to see feedback on what you liked about their picture and how you are using it.

Getting the Best Out of Tech Support, Part 2

Having the following information handy may assist your technician to solve your problem quickly when you call:

- Your **login name** or **customer number**. It helps!
- If you've **called before** about the same problem, let the tech know right away. We have an excellent Trouble Ticket system for tracking lingering problems, but it only works if we know that your difficulty hasn't been resolved.
- **Description** of the problem, including when it started, how often and how long, and any other odd computer behavior you might have noticed, including pop-up ads that appear suddenly, and Internet activity when you're not actively doing anything online. Those could be signs of viral intruders or spyware nasties.
- If you see any **error message** write it down if you can. Try to remember exactly what you were doing when it appeared, likewise if the system freezes or crashes.
- **Your operating system** and **program version**. If you don't know, don't guess; it can be important, but it's very easy to find out, and we'll tell you how if we need to know.

The most important thing is: **If you have a problem, call**. We can't fix it if you don't tell us about it.



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