



222 Purchase Street #310, Rye, NY 10580, USA • +1(800)875-7692

Why Web Content Management is rapidly becoming more important to business and education

by Andrew Lehman

The web is about online information. The web has come to define what “online” means. It has become a phenomenal way to find information. With a few mouse-clicks you can find out something about almost anything. What would have taken a trip to the library 15 years ago, can be found today on the web in a few minutes. Also like the library, the web today is still primarily a one-way medium. It’s much easier to find information on the web than it is to get new information onto the web. On the web, the focus for the most part thus far has been on delivery, not authoring. It’s not easy for a non-technical person to add something to a web site.

But as the web has matured and we have grown accustomed to life online, what we are doing online, and the web’s role in business and education, is also changing. Today, an *intranet* has become the nexus of information at most large companies. And a company’s web site has progressed from “we need a *what* site?” to “sure, it’d be nice to have web site ...” to “we’d better get something up there!” to “is our web site good enough?” to today “what do you mean Tuesday’s press release isn’t up on the web site?” and, “that information is on the internal web site.” Today, people expect connected information to be the most current information. If information isn’t available online, it isn’t available. More and more, companies live online.

If the web is about online, shouldn’t you be able to easily manage your web content online?

If there is one thing the technology bubble gave us that hasn’t withered away, it is the web. The network has finally really arrived. It’s here and it’s fast. Only a few years ago, large companies had

what was called T1 access to the web – at the time, that was a big, expensive pipe at 1.5 megabits per second, which cost thousands of dollars per month. Today, almost everyone in the United States has access to high-speed connectivity in their homes at faster speeds than the speed of that T1, for less than most people pay for Cable TV each month, and businesses have much faster access.

Today, the web can be a secure medium, and the public is aware of it and comfortable with it. Online banking has been able to come of age as a result. Online shopping is no longer a novelty but a real and growing marketplace, a marketplace made possible by the ability of the Internet to support secure transactions, credit card payments and the like. Without the existence of the fast, ubiquitous, reliable network, the entire music file-swapping phenomenon, be it good or bad, could not be taking place – music files are large.

Banking, shopping, file swapping - these are a few examples of online applications. The idea of online applications is certainly not new, but it has taken hold only recently. This became possible because the three critical precursors necessary to make network-borne applications viable are now in place. First, the network is now fast enough to the end-users. Second, there is a general perception that the network can be secure when it needs to be. And third, there is a universal, well-accepted and well-understood platform to deliver these online applications.

That critical third element exists on virtually every network-connected computer. A platform that is sophisticated enough to deliver network-borne applications to end-users. That platform is today's web browser. Microsoft's Internet Explorer is now in version 6. Browsers and the Internet standards they implement have become quite sophisticated. Napster was a wildly popular browser-based application, as is Kazaa, its successor. Online banking is a browser-based application, as is online shopping.

But, for some reason, what seems like perhaps the most obvious online application has failed to gain wide usage. This application is online web content management. Still, today, when people need to edit a web page or add content to their web site - a new page or photo or article - it's done off-line via a web-design application that has been purchased and loaded onto a desktop computer. People edit their web sites off-line, they back up their web sites off-line and they collaborate on their web sites off-line.

But the web is about online; it's about access from anywhere. The web is a network-borne application. Why must we go off-line to manage the material on the network? Maintaining a web site as an off-line exercise makes it an awkward, cumbersome, multi-step process. You have to write up your changes, send them to someone who can make a copy of your online page for off-line editing. They then edit the page and send the copy to you for review. You may then have to send it back for revisions, and finally, once this process is completed, the editor copies the off-line page, with its updated content, up to your web site. This process has to take place no matter how sophisticated the web design program your web designer has on his desk. That's because the application she's using is on her desk, or more specifically, on her desktop computer. You shouldn't have to use a web designer to make a content change or addition to your web site. It just shouldn't be that hard.

If the web is about online, shouldn't you be able to manage it online? Shouldn't there be a way to securely manage the information on a web site, from the web site? An application that makes it as easy to edit or add content to a web site as it is to write a memo? An application smart enough to keep backups for you every time you make a change without your having to remember to make a backup or remember where you put it. An application that archives old documents automatically in case you need them in the future or in case they are mistakenly overwritten by some new document with the same name. An application that enables you to manage content, upload files, add documents, put up slides or

pictures, all without having to worry about style or formatting or navigation or anything else technical. The application should be smart enough to enable you to manage content on the site without having to worry about the site itself. The application should understand that you are a marketing executive and that you just want to get a new press release up onto the site, now. Or a teacher who just wants to make a few documents available for this evening's class. You don't want to worry about fonts or colors or navigation. You just want to get your information up there.

And it would be great if the application could be smart enough to know if anyone needed to approve your changes before they are published up to the site, and then take care of getting those approvals, and then publish your approved changes up to the site, all by itself. And, do all this through your browser. And, it should be so intuitive that it only takes a few minutes to figure out. "Sure, sure" you say "yeah, that would be great. But this isn't the Starship Enterprise." "No" we say, "but this *is* Crossbow Web..."

Secure, online web content management: *Crossbow Web* and *Crossbow Express*.

Crossbow Web is about maintaining online information.