

John Q. Texan

Professor Graves

Web Design 101

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Annotated Bibliography

Burstein, C.D. (2002, August 14). *Viewable with any browser: Campaign for a non-browser specific WWW*. Retrieved September 7, 2002, from <http://www.anybrowser.org/campaign/>

Burstein's campaign (established in 1998) encourages designers to construct---and Internet users to demand---a "platform independent, non-browser specific World Wide Web." The campaign is structured in three parts: (1) a "design guide" offers suggestions related to a wide variety of topics that are of issue to amateur and professional web designers (color, font, cookies, java, images, etc.) as they attempt to make their sites accessible across platforms; (2) a "sample letters" link allows users a template for commenting on a specific site's design and making suggestions related to the site's usability and; (3) links detailing a compendium of sites with similar projects as well as links to the anybrowser.com site translated into a variety languages. Burstein's overarching message is that Internet users and amateur designers should become active in web design, as opposed to taking positions of passivity in which designers dictate the individual needs and technological requirements of web users.

Egyedi, T. (2001). Infrastructure flexibility created by standardized gateways: The cases of XML and the ISO container. *Knowledge Technology & Policy, 14*, 41-54.

"Entrenchment" in a system occurs when changes to the system require great effort and restructuring. For example, when you download a new program onto a computer, the current contents of the computer are entrenched---they are established and work together. Infrastructure flexibility allows that when you download a new program, the entrenched system is also flexible enough to integrate the components of the new program into its structure in order to fulfill the system user's needs/desires. Egyedi, clearly authoritative on the topic due to his research on the topic and his professorship at a well-known university, explains how two standardized gateway technologies, XML (Extensible Markup Language) and ISO containers (intermodal freight containers), are compatible and flexible within entrenched systems. However, Egyedi also suggests that just as previous languages and containers became inflexible over time, so too may XML and

ISO containers. Egyedi's argument reinforces the idea that no new advance in technology is either a panacea for current ills, or inherently permanent.

Helfand, J. (2001). *Screen: Essays on graphic design, new media, and visual culture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Helfand's collection of essays (previously published in *Eye* magazine) focuses on how technological sophistication and the power of online communications have changed the manner in which computer users perceive, critique, and embrace visual and auditory design on the World Wide Web. Her subtle thesis suggests, however, that most web "denizens" ignore the impact of design during online expeditions---unless the design imposes itself between the users and their goal. The author's experience as a visual/virtual designer leads her to offer a critical review of how the ease of electronic design (due to prefabricated software templates) may not necessarily result in the most efficient design for web audiences, and that while contemporary web designers may possess a functional design literacy, they are not equipped with the kind of critical literacy that will lead to aesthetic and performative innovations. Helfand argues that web designers should pay greater attention to the development and influence of aural design as well as the visual if they are to remain a step ahead of their online audiences.

Zhang, P., et al. (2001). Important design features in different web site domains:

An empirical study of user perceptions. *E-Service Journal*, 1, 77-91.

These authors employ comparative research methods to determine user expectations of specific types of websites. The types of websites localized for this study were organized into five categories: e-commerce, educational, medical, entertainment, government, financial. As they completed various tasks at specified sites within these categories, users were asked to determine what features were most important at each type of site. For web designers, "the result of this study implies that different domains should be designed with different foci in mind" (87). Research methodologies and results such as these would be useful in establishing standard empirical methods for determining user expectations and would also help designers during the pre-planning and testing stages of a site's development. The presentation of this study is easily accessible to non-professionals. For a student audience, this research encourages a deeper understanding of the expectations they have when they surf the web as well as gaining insight into the expectations of others.