



Preface

In the beginning, the Web was simple. When I first encountered it in early 1993 (working for O'Reilly's Global Network Navigator, since sold to and put to rest by America Online), there was only one browser for viewing web pages and it ran exclusively on the Unix platform. There were about a dozen tags that made any difference. Designing a web page was a relatively simple task.

It isn't so easy anymore. With the explosion of the Web came an avalanche of new technologies, proprietary tags, and acronyms. Even for someone who is immersed in the terminology and environment on a professional basis, it can be truly overwhelming. You just can't keep all this stuff in your head anymore.

Since leaving O'Reilly's Cambridge, Mass., offices for a freelance career, I never feel more alone than when I get stuck—whether it's because I don't know if it's a good idea to use style sheets for the project I'm designing, or I just can't remember what tag to put that `MARGINWIDTH` attribute in. And I'm not ashamed to admit that I've been reduced to tears after hours of battling a table that mysteriously refused to behave, despite my meticulous and earnest efforts.

It's at times like these that I wish I could walk down the hall and ask Norm Walsh what the heck is wrong with my table. In his absence, I do the best I can with the volumes of web design information available online (on the Internet, no one knows you have red, puffy eyes). Unfortunately, finding the answer to a specific question is a time-consuming and sometimes equally frustrating process in itself. Deadlines often can't accommodate a two-hour scavenger hunt.

I've often wished there was one place to go to find quick answers to my questions. That's why I wrote this book. It has the useful parts without a lot of fluff, organized so that information can be found quickly. It is based on the wish-lists—and, indeed, the contributions—of both professional and hobbyist web designers.