

April 2009 Newsletter

If you are receiving this message, it means that I have done work for you in the past, I am doing work for you now, or you have expressed interest regarding me doing work for you in the future. If you would prefer to not receive further emails, please let me know about it.

Being that it is now April, I have sent out invoices to any of you for whom I have done work in March, or for those who have not yet paid for previous months. Please remit your payment when you have a chance.

What's In a Name – I often receive files from clients in the form of text files, image files, etc. I then have to edit them, resize them, whatever; and then I usually rename them before I use them. The names you give files can either be helpful and informative or they can make things a lot more difficult. Hopefully by explaining some of the “method to my madness”, it will help some of you when you have to manage data.

First off, a little background. I have been around long enough to remember when the only format you had to name files was what we called the “8.3” method, whereby you were restricted to up to 8 characters for a prefix and 3 characters for a suffix. For example, some file names could have been “filename.txt” or “file_001.bat”. As operating systems got more sophisticated, you had a lot more flexibility so you could name a file “This is My File-name ###.html”. (Note: I put the quotes around them only to designate to you, the reader, where the file names started and ended). This makes things more user-friendly, but it complicates things somewhat on the web. Here are a couple of tips to make this a little easier:

Spaces do not “travel well” on the web. Have you ever seen strange characters between some words that make up the name of a file or a page? Since web browsers cannot handle certain symbols, they insert special characters to represent them. In the case of a space, it is “%20”. So a web page that was created as “Web Page 1.html”, would display as “Web%20Page%201.html”. To minimize this, I try my best to not use any spaces or special characters in my file names. What I usually do, and this goes back to my programming experience when I had to define variables, is to use the “underscore” character (“_”). So I would make the previous web page “Web_Page_1.html”. Underscores are not very noticeable and, in fact, when they are in a link and the link is underlined as most links are, they become practically invisible.

When you have multiple pages that are similar in nature or of the same category, how you name them can help keep things in order. A good example of this would be these newsletters that I send out each month and that I place on my website on the Newsletter Archives page. One might be tempted to name them “March Newsletter.pdf”, “April Newsletter.pdf”, etc. However, if you wanted to sequence them, other types of files, such as “Help File 1.pdf”, for example would come in between the two alphabetically. Even naming them “Newsletter March.pdf” and “Newsletter April.pdf” would not be sufficient because April would still come before March. So you should use numeric values for the months and, in fact, you should include the year if you have files for multiple years. For me, the optimal file names for these would be something like “newsletter_2009_03march.pdf” and “newsletter_2009_04april.pdf”. Although in most cases there are no differences in upper and lower case, I still prefer to keep all things lower case just to play extra safe. And, of course, I removed the spaces and inserted my underscores.

To view archives of past newsletters, go to <http://www.technicalwebsitedesign.com/newsletters.html>

Thank you all for your business (and potential business...)

Jim