



- [home delivery](#)
- [subscriber services](#)

Wed, Nov 29 2006

Currently
42 FNorth Andover, MA
High 58 F Low 34 F[CLICK FOR MORE WEATHER](#)

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [NH](#)
- [Haverhill](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Stocks](#)
- [Celebrations](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Wheels](#)
- [Classifieds](#)

HIGH STAKES SAVINGS  **Save \$100**
when you sign up for
our most popular package
with over 165 all digital channels

Starting At
\$29.99
a month 

SEE US ORK. Better TV for all.

Published: 11/28/2006

Web design tools for the graphically challenged

By **Al Gordon**[View as a multiple pages](#)

Given the rapid evolution of Web site design, making your site look good seemingly requires that you have a graphic specialist at your side. Fortunately, a new generation of Web software puts a virtual design team at your command.

Candor requires me to note that this very much is a case of "do as I say, not as I do." My personal site is just awful. I have used it over the years to test a variety of software and so it is a mishmash of pages created with different tools. The bottom line problem, however, is that I am, shall we say, graphically challenged.

Until now the leading solution for users like me was Microsoft FrontPage, one of those Microsoft applications people love to hate. FrontPage suffered from the typical Microsoft penchant for unnecessary complexity and proprietary technology. But that's all irrelevant now: with the release of the next version of Office, FrontPage is dead and its replacements aren't aimed at individual users. So it is time to seek out alternatives.

If you actually do have a designer at your command - perhaps you hire one to design a site for your business or maybe your Web hosting service provides you with some prefab site templates - the leading tool is Adobe Contribute 4, available for Windows and Macintosh.

Contribute does not let you create or manage a Web site; only add or edit content to an existing site. The limitations of that approach are self-evident. The advantages are that Contribute is a very easy to use editing tool that simplifies your content-modification work and, because of the limitations, will help keep you from messing up the basic design or organization of your site.

Most of us, though, need to create from scratch and would like software with a built-in design team. For Macs, the product that does just that is RapidWeaver (realmacsoftware.com); in Windows it's Site Studio (effectivestudios.com).

Both products are theme-driven. The packages include a variety of layouts and graphic designs. Users choose one for their site and that "theme" provides the template for all additional content you add. The software automatically creates the file structure and navigational elements needed for your site, all the while preserving a consistent look. Equally important for this sort of project, the themes are designed with excellent taste. They look professional, so you look professional.

Using either program is pretty much like using word processing software. You write, add graphics, attach multimedia, link to other Web sites, and so forth using techniques similar to what you employ in Microsoft Word or the like. Simple.

While the two programs are similar in overall concept, they differ greatly in pricing and features. Site Studio has a Home version suitable for personal sites priced at \$119. A Pro version aimed at small businesses costs \$389. Site Studio includes the capability to customize the templates while you build your site so it isn't a copycat of hundreds of others. Particularly handy are the alternate color schemes that let you alter your site's look with only a couple of mouse clicks.

RapidWeaver is a virtual steal at \$39.95, but it does not include built-in theme editing capabilities. You can put up a decent site with the base package, and RapidWeaver also lets you work with html code (the layout language for the Web). To get full utility from the program, though, you need to tap into the infrastructure of third-party add-ons available for it. Once you include the cost of key extras, the overall price comes out about the same as Site Studio Home.

For modifying RapidWeaver themes, a good investment is CSSEdit (\$29.95, macrabbit.com) an easy to use style sheet editor just out in a new version 2.0. "CSS" (cascading style sheets) are a standard technique for defining the look of Web pages and are the basis for Rapid Weaver templates. Note, though, that CSSEdit is not limited to RapidWeaver sites. It will simplify the often-tedious task of creating style sheets regardless of what program you are using to create a site.

Another "must have" on Rapid Weaver is Your Head Software's (yourhead.com) range of additional page templates. The centerpiece add-in, Blocks (\$19.95), adds layering (putting text over a picture, for example) and other complex layout capabilities usually found only in more expensive Web design packages. Other products include Collage (picture-based pages, \$9.95), Accordion (an interactive display menu, \$9.95), and Columns (self-explanatory, \$7.95).

Is there any downside to these tools? For me, there's only one: I am out of excuses for the way my site looks.

Al Gordon is a Massachusetts-based media and political consultant who also writes about technology. You can read more of his articles at www.algordon.com/techblog.html and e-mail him at eagle@algordon.com.

[Ads by Google](#)

[Advertise on this site](#)

Web Design Software

Easiest web software to create and manage your small business website
www.webstudio.com

5,000 Template Downloads

Download 1000's of web templates Unlimited access for only \$49.99
www.boxedart.com

23 Yr Old Makes Big Bucks

Learn Simple System That Makes Me More Than My Parents Combined
www.FastFortuneNow.com

Reliable Disposal

Dumpsters, demolition, clean outs radio dispatched 24/7, clean, fast
wetalktrash.com



Did you hear or feel the blast in Danvers?

Please e-mail staff reporter Steve Landwehr at slandwehr@ecnnews.com. Email your photos to snphotos@ecnnews.com

Search the Archives:

Search today's news:

MyTown search:

Search by date:

Election 2006
To Read Local Election Articles
Click Here

MCAS Results
Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence,
Methuen, N. Andover & State

Where We Live
A Community Handbook For
The Merrimack Valley

Find a business:

Enter name or type of business
Location:

Enter city & state, or zip code
Local Search powered by PremierGuide



HOMES NORTH

Sarah Harrington
Participating Agent



[Resources](#): [HomesNorth](#) [Help](#) [Wanted](#) [Legal Notices](#) [MA Lottery](#) [NH Lottery](#) [Maps](#) [Movies](#) [Phonebook](#) [Stocks](#) [TV](#) [Weather](#)

[About Us](#) [FAQ](#) [Advertise](#) [Subscribe](#) [Submit Ad](#) [Submit Story](#) [Contact Us](#) [Careers](#)

© Copyright Eagle Tribune Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
100 Turnpike Street, North Andover, MA 01845 978-946-2000

Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc. • CNHI Classified Advertising Network • CNHI News Service
Associated Press content © 2006. All rights reserved. AP content may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.
Our site is powered by Zope and our Internet Yellow Pages site is powered by PremierGuide.
Some parts of our site may require you to download the Flash Player Plugin.

- [The Eagle-Tribune](#)
- [Gloucester Daily Times](#)
- [Daily News of Newburyport](#)
- [Salem News](#)
- [Weekly Papers](#)
 - [Andover Townsman](#)
 - [Carriage Town News](#)
 - [Derry News](#)
 - [Haverhill Gazette](#)
 - [Town Crossings](#)